

Social Media and the Impact on Accessibility

Honors Thesis

By Jacob Elkins

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Day by day, technology is on the rise at a rapid rate. Part of that technology growth is the advancement of cellphones. In 2004 Keith described this growth through the idea of communicating through a wireless connection emerged. A man by the name of Micheal Faraday, who was a very talented chemist, started to research the possibilities of conducting electricity through space. Many people thought scientists were crazy to have that kind of thought. Soon after around 1865, Dr. Mahlon Loomis developed a method of communicating through the earth's atmosphere by using electrical conductors. Much like Benjamin Franklin, Loomis flew 2 kites at the top of two mountains 18 miles apart that were rigged with copper screens and wires to prove his method. Forwarding into the 1900s, mobile radios were used on certain frequencies, which were reserved for emergency use and government use. When 1945 finally rolled around, the first mobile-radio-telephone service was established in ST. Louis Missouri, but unfortunately there was a massive amount of interference causing the equipment not to work. With this idea in mind, AT&T came out with the first radio-car-phones that could be only used on the highway between New York City and Boston. But just like the device in 1945, the radio-car-phone was a failure due to too much interference. After the two failed attempts at a mobile device, the FCC authorized the widespread use of many separate radio channels to other carries along with AT&T. These were the first links between mobile phones and telephone, rather than radio to radio. Over the years, the car telephone was being improved and actually worked but the units were very big and bulky. Instead of the car radios working as a push to talk, thee units required a personal radio operator to switch the calls. During 1964, a new operating

system was developed to work on a single channel, eliminating the need for push to talk operators. By 1969, self-dialing capability became standard in the United States, which improved the mobile telephone service. At the end of the decade, AT&T became the first company to propose a modern day mobile phone system that involved dividing the cities into “cells” (Keith 2004). Then finally in 1973, cellphones emerged where Martin Cooper made the first public call ever made on a cellphone; they were a luxury not many people had and all you could do was call someone. Fast forwarding to the 1990s, the first “smartphone” emerge which acted similarly to a personal digital assistant, and was really only used by business professionals (Tweedie 2015).

The 1990’s are also the time when the first notable social media came around called Six Degrees where a user could upload a profile and make friends. Social media is a “computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests, and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks” (Social Media 2017). The first popular social media started April 1, 2003 and it was called MySpace. Then soon Facebook came into the picture February of 2004. Users really only could access these social medias through a desktop or laptop. As cellphones became more of a common item, mobile social media started to grow. Around 2011 when smartphones became more prominent, about 68% of US adults had a cellphone. Not many of these people were surfing social media back in the early 2000s like the average user is doing today. This is because the advancement of mobile social media and cellphones weren’t what they are now. Back when social media was being introduced, not many people had access

to the Internet, causing social media traffic to be low. But for the ones that did have access, they were very limited on what they could do. Unlike back then, now social media has many features for customizing and communicating through social media. As of 2015, 92% of US adults owned a cellphone and 68% owned a smartphone (Anderson 2015). A vast majority of smartphone users are constantly on social media and the leading social media apps include Facebook at number one, Instagram in second and Snapchat in third. But what is the purpose of these social media apps? "Facebook is a social networking site that makes it easy for you to connect and share with your family and friends online" (What is Facebook). Starting up in 2010, "Instagram is a popular photo-sharing app for smartphones" (What is Instagram), which allows users to edit, post and browse the Instagram community at publicly posted photos. Not to far behind Instagram, in 2011 Snapchat came about. "Snapchat is a free messaging and social networking app for smartphones ...allows you to send text messages, pictures and short videos to friends and family" (What is Snapchat), what makes this unique is that each message can be customized on the amount of time the picture will last. Users can set the time between one and ten seconds or have the open to have it stay up as long as the recipient wants. Once the recipient touches the picture it will disappear and they will have one chance to replay the snap until it is gone forever. This creates a sense of privacy and security; only certain people can see it and it won't be up forever. With all these social media apps available, how does this social media impact the user? Throughout this thesis, we will look into how social medias accessibility is used among adults, how it

affects/effects adults in a positive and negative sense, how it influences growing psychology, and how it influences views on news and politics.

### What is availability and does it affect addictive behavior?

Before we can dive straight in, we have to understand what availability is in terms of social media and technology use. The basic definition of availability is the quality of being able to be used or obtained, the freedom to do something. Lets take the 68% of Americans that own a smartphone. We can take an educated guess that through out most of the day, their smartphones are connected to some kind of network that gives them Internet access. As long as this connection stays intact, the user has unlimited availability to different social media platforms. Because we are connected so often in such a digital age, users may fall into a couple different kinds of “addiction”, device addiction, information overload, net compulsion or cyber-relationship addiction. With this in mind, is social media the addictive factor or is the availability of devices to access such information. Ramasubbu states, “In a 2012 survey conducted by Common Sense Media found that [teens] are attached to their devices than their social networking sites: 41% of cell phone owners say they would describe themselves as ‘addicted’ to their phones, and 32% of iPad owners say the same. 20% of social networkers say they are ‘addicted’ to their sites” (Ramasubbu, 2017). Social networking already accounts for 28 percent of all media time spent online. So is it addictive or does the level of availability play a bigger role? The big idea is to focus on how social media overuse is classified rather than looking at it as an addiction, which is a chemical dependency like you see with alcohol and drug

addiction. It's hard to classify a social media addiction because it becomes difficult to determine if the addiction is to the medium (device) or to the interaction (using social media). To clearly distinguish how "compulsive use" of devices for social media, we need to examine how the user interacts with social media and how it affects/effects the user.

### Where is all the traffic going on Social Media?

To understand how users are being affected/effected by social media, first we have to analyze how social media and devices are being used. As social media was advancing and different users became accustom and grew up with this type of technology and it started to be incorporated into their aspect of life; a common notion is that communication is the key reason for using social media. But how is it actually being used? Bolton illustrates "Research on social media broadly classifies consumer activities as either contribution (posting) or consumption (lurking) activities; it suggests that most users consume rather than contribute to social media" (Bolton 2013). Because the user is more inclined to consume rather than contribute to social media, we are "frequently overwhelmed by too much stimulation, and too many choices instead of too few. As a result, we find ourselves looking for patterns, trying to simplify issues and giving precedence to opinions that reinforce what we already believe to be true" (McNaughton-Cassill, 2017).

When today's popular social media platforms came to be, many users would access these sites, such as Facebook, through a laptop or desktop since mobile devices were fairly new. By 2008, roughly 25% of Americans were using social media and a big 63% of those Americans being between the ages of 18 and 29

(Perrin, 2015). As time went on that number increased year after year with roughly 63% of Americans now using social media and a staggering 90% being 18-29. Focusing in on the top three social media sites due to their high volume of users, Facebook, we can see a high increase of users in 2015-2016; according to the PEW Research Center, 79% of online adults use Facebook in America in 2016 (Greenwood 2016). Facebook is very popular between adults and millennials, but interesting enough, “after a survey of more than 2,500 micro-influencers (mid-sized social media users with a large following of daily engaged users), 60% thought Instagram was the best overall platform with Facebook following at 18%” (DeMers, 2017). This is due to Instagram’s mobile functionality, visual nature, novelty and function. “Roughly six-in-ten online adults ages 18-29 (59%) use Instagram, nearly double the share among 30- to 49-year-olds (33%) and more than seven times the share among those 65 and older (8%)” (Greenwood 2016). Each social media platform wants to create a connection between using their site with boredom because every time someone has a minute, they will use that time to surf their social media. Now because Facebook is widely known across all ages, Facebook tends to have a higher popularity.

Out of the three, Snapchat is the newest, being around for only about 5 years. According to Forbes, over 60% of Americans between the ages of 13 and 38 are Snapchat users, with 37% of users falling between the ages of 18 and 24 (DeMers 2016). For Facebook, about 76% of users use the site daily, 15% use it weekly, and 7% reported less often use. Instagram, on the other hand, reported that 51% of the users access it daily, 26% use it weekly and 22% use it less than often (Greenwood

2016). As for Snapchat, Business Insider put together a guide showing how to use Snapchat where they talked to two-dozen users, ages 18-26 and asked them about their Snapchat usage. Many of the users use Snapchat multiple times a day, which includes sending 2-20 snaps a day (Kosoff 2015). A survey conducted at Curry College investigated the usage of social media among college students ages 18-23. The table below indicates the findings of the survey.

Do you use social media	Facebook	Instagram	Snapchat
100%	88.68%	82.08%	96.23%

### **Frequency of Social media use**

All Day	9-12 hours	4-8 hours	Less than 4 hours	Couple times a week
16.98%	7.55%	33.02%	35.85%	6.6%

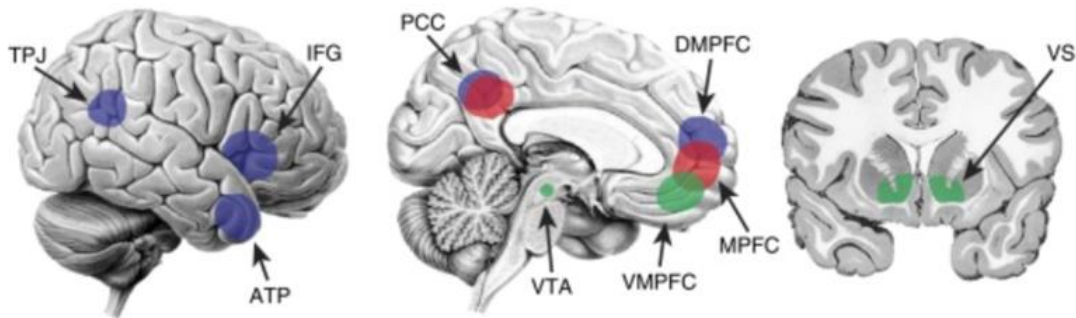
Similar to the national findings, aside from texting, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat where the top three most popular social media platforms used by individuals in this survey with access to social media. It is not uncommon to see an active social media user walking around with their head turned down to their phone.

## **The Brain vs. Social Media**

One of the main concerns people have about the high usage amounts of social media is the effect on psychology. The psychology aspect dives into the science of behavior and the brain, embracing all aspects of conscious and unconscious



experience as well as thought. Certain portions of the brain are triggered when engaging in social media: the “mentalizing network”, the “self-referential cognition network” and the “reward network”.



(Ramasubbu, 2017)

The mentalizing network consists of “dorsomedial prefrontal cortex (DMPFC), temporoparietal junction (TPJ), anterior temporal lobe (ATL), inferior frontal gyrus (IFG), and the posterior cingulate cortex/precuneus (PCC). When the human brain is not actively engaged in something, it tends to start focusing on other people to “see the world through a social lens,” – a process called “mentalizing”. In terms of neuroscience, the “dorsomedial prefrontal cortex”, the part of the brain that engages in social interaction, creates empathy to other people’s thoughts and feelings, and helps us make judgments about other people.” When any activity engages the dorsomedial prefrontal cortex, that activity is perceived as being important and thus non-optional. Because social media engages this part of the brain, it could be the reason for the natural tendency for wanting to use social media.

The self-referential cognition network is the next part of the brain that is stimulated through social media and consists of the medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) and the posterior cingulate cortex/precuneus (PCC). This is the area by which the

brain becomes selfish, thinking about ourselves is important for self-appraisal, and social competitiveness. Ramasubbu reports “In fact, humans devote about 30-40% of all speech to talking about themselves, but this number spikes to about 80% of social media posts” (Ramasubbu, 2017).

Humans have a compulsive tendency to always be comparing themselves to others, and having a social media platform allows that compulsive behavior to grow due to the vast access users have to other people. There are two types of social comparisons that occur, upward and downward social comparison. Upward social comparison can be looked at as beneficial when it can inspire people to become more like the person they are comparing themselves too. We see a lot of behavior like this when people look up to famous athletes and stars but could have the negative impact of people feeling inadequate or not good enough. On the other hand, downward social comparison leads to people feeling negative but working towards self-improvement (Social Media Use and Self-Esteem). This also could be another reason of the compulsive use of social media (Ramasubbu, 2017).

The last part of the brain that is stimulated is the reward network, which consists of ventromedial prefrontal cortex (VMPFC), ventral striatum (VS), and ventral tegmental area (VTA). This portion of the brain is possibly the most important neurological reason of compulsive use of social media among adolescents and teens. Ramasubbu claims “teens have exaggerated activity in the nucleus accumbens area (part of the ventral striatum) of the brain, which is associated with reward. This explains why pleasure and pain are more intensely felt during teenage years than

any other time of their lives. The increased activity and size of the nucleus accumbens among adolescents is the reason for social approval and social outcomes administered by peers to be highly valued” (Ramasubbu, 2017). The reward network on the other hand isn’t as prominent with older individuals because there is no exaggerated activity. We more often see this reward network being stimulated when individuals boast about various accomplishments whether it’s receiving a promotion or going on a vacation. All in all, regardless of what network of the brain is being stimulated more than the other, dopamine, understood to be a chemical that creates ‘want’, is being released during online social media use. This is a key factor on why it makes it harder for people to resist the activity, because it creates the sense of want. Interestingly enough, not only does social media cause the release of dopamine, but it also releases oxytocin, which is considered the ‘cuddle chemical’ of the brain. “It has been shown that oxytocin levels can rise as much as 13%—a spike equivalent to the spike people get when they are getting married to their love” (Ramasubbu, 2017). Social media triggers these sensations creating the need to come back for more to get that sensation again and again. The effects social media has on the brain doesn’t stop there, it also shapes identity as well.

### Social Media Shaping Identity

Social media also influences the formation of identity, which is defined as the characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is. Technology users have increased their online interaction time and through the popularity or feedback on

their interactions have influenced how the user forms their identity and understanding of one's self-image. "Goffman proposes that when an individual interacts with others, they are attempting to guide and create a certain image in which the other person sees them and attains knowledge about them" (Ganda, 2014). Social media is a way users can put on a mask and be whatever they want to be. In psychology, this is known as persona, which is defined as the aspect of someone's character that is presented to or perceived by others. "Everyone wants to look good on social media. That is why all our pictures are of us with friends or going to parties or doing some cool activity. No one is taking pictures of themselves laying on their bed watching Netflix after not having showered for the third day in a row" (Kortebein, 2017). Many people alter reality to showcase what they think people actually want to see and like. Ganda states that Goffman believes that this is just a performance for an audience and forms the idea of a back stage where an individual has a private place where they can stop performing and take off the mask they created (Ganda 2014:8,9). People form behaviors based on the rewards of conforming to the behaviors of a certain group. This comes from the social exchange theory, which is "a social psychological and sociological perspective that explains social change and stability as a process of negotiated exchanges between parties" (Social Exchange Theory 2017). We see this all the time in the way social media users act on a daily basis. People join certain groups because they enjoy the outcome of each interaction and conform to the certain group. "The relation to the social construction of reality aspect comes from the understanding/acceptance of cultural creations and the nature of the individual's environment that ultimately

dictate the way in which the individual performs the role of themselves” (Ganda 2014:9). Social media allows us to determine what we want people to see rather than every personal detail. This self-representation can come from users creating hierarchies by giving permissions to certain groups of who can receive and see the contents one posts. An analysis of popularity results, which creates the idea of more friends online as a badge of status among the younger Facebook users (Ganda 2014:12). The only way one can gain access to this realm is to contribute to it to gain a certain status. For example, my Instagram account has about 354 followers, while Jordan Speith, a 24-year-old professional golfer, has 1.3 million followers. This is an extreme example but it shows with more activity and interesting content allows a user to gain a higher status.

Social media essentially has guidelines of the standards of self-representation through trends, and what is deemed acceptable to the main stream. Ganda says the, “Individual global self which is the user conforming to generic expectations to self-representation through images and statuses that represent themselves individually; dominant representation which pertains to profile pictures and issues of gender in how we view individuals and control of representation which states that our creation of ourselves is vulnerable to the portrayal and interpretation of us by others” (Ganda 2014:12). There are certain expectations one is supposed to fulfill in order to meet the certain standards. This creates a false identity that isn’t real and causes social media users to conform to that identity in reality to be accepted among the main stream that follow various trends. A trend is classified as something that is widely mentioned or discussed on the Internet,

especially in posts on social media websites. This allows them to alter their identity to fit in. But these trends don't last; they are constantly changing which causes the followers to once again change their perception of themselves to conform to the main stream.

Experts believe that social media plays a role in how ones identity is shaped, how it affects personality, and how it has an influence on relationships and individual self esteem. As time goes by, social media is increasingly becoming more and more integrated in our social lives and professional lives the “differences between our ‘real’ and online identities can shape not only how other perceive us but our self-perceptions, creating pressure to be more like the often idealized digital versions of ourselves and peers” (The Self in Selfie, 2016). According to Elaina Zachos, just by using a device can cause younger individuals brains to develop differently because of the almost constant interaction with technology. Researchers at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing, found that there are changes in the way the prefrontal cortex, cerebellum and parietal lobe matures based on how social media is being used (Zachos, 2016). In addition, experts say technology use can affect the parts of the brain that control a person's personality ranging from how they work in a team to hand gestures and expressions (Zachos 2016). How does this come about? Everything from ones profile picture, updates or daily interactions, they all revolve around how someone wants their peers to see them. This has developed a unique persona/personal brand that is close to unique for each individual (Moore 2014). Moore suggests that social media has distinguished five different social media-induced traits.

## Expressiveness In Social Media

The First social media trait is expressiveness. Tekano notes, “In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it [social media] contributes a large amount of information regarding each individual, and holds each individual accountable for a certain social standard. The way we portray ourselves on social media platforms such as twitter, Instagram and YouTube, is often a relatively embellished version of our everyday lives” (Tekano, 2016). Social media platforms embellish what people can see and not see about the user. Creating these filters brings up the idea Sarah Hernholm portrays in a TED talk about authentic self-expression versus what users think other people want to see. Especially in the younger generations, users are more focused on impressing everyone rather than expressing themselves. She observes, “When you want to impress, we walk in a world of desire to get; things such as likes or comments on social media” (Hernholm, 2014). Rather than showing their true identity, many users choose to alter their self-image in different ways based on what social media deems expectable or what will generate the most social capital in terms of likes and comments. In a survey conducted at Elon University, out of the 93 participants, 97.8% reported that they determine another person’s popularity based on how many “likes” or comments that person’s profile picture or status update received (Wickel, 2015). This is a big reason on why it is hard to distinguish authentic self-expression from filtered self-expression. Users are more worried about pleasing a so-called audience rather than expressing their true self due to fear of judgment and rejection and the need for peer approval.

## Impatience In Social Media

The second trait is impatience. With the advancements in mobile technology, social media users have information that is instant and easily accessible, so shouldn't everything be the same? Moore emphasizes, "Today's college students expect an automatic response to any inquiry, request or message they send out" (Moore 2014). If a user doesn't get a response within what they think is a reasonable time, the frustration starts to kick in. A study conducted at the University of Melbourne in Australia subjected 173 college students to test measuring risk for problematic Internet problems. After the conclusion of the study, data showed that 10 percent of the students posted high enough scores to label them as at risk for Internet "addiction". Nicki Dowling, a clinical psychologist, states "technology use was clearly interfering with the students' daily lives, but it may be going too far to call it an addiction" (Parker-pope, 2010). Dowling classifies this so called addiction as "Internet dependence". Researchers think this is because of the immediacy of the Internet, the efficiency of the iPhone and the anonymity of the chat room. Nicholas Carr, author of the new book "The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains", informs that "The deeper a technology is woven into the patterns of everyday life, the less choice we have about whether and how we use that technology" (Parker-pope, 2010). Similarly, a study conducted at the University of Maryland asked 200 students to refrain from using electronic media for a day. The study suggested that giving up technology not only made lives logistically difficult, but also changes our ability to connect with others. Having the accessibility of being able to connect with the people around us at such an easy and rapid pace causes



experts to start thinking that technology is making us impatient. To support this idea, a couple informal interviews were conducted for examples of everyday experiences with delayed responses when connecting with people around us. The first interviewee was a junior nursing major at Curry College. When asked if she got annoyed with delayed responses, she replied with “if it’s an important conversation than yes but if it’s just casual texting than no because I understand that people can actually be busy because if we are in an important consistent back and fourth conversation it’s kind of disheartening when someone seems to go MIA”. As a general concept, people do get annoyed with someone on a delayed response if it is important or needs a quick answer. To get a better understanding, I ask a senior nursing student at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, what she thought. “Females are more emotional than males and I think we expect more out of a conversation, where as boys just text to ask questions”. Having two students’ opinions doesn’t just declare how everyone is affected by delayed responses.

### Connection In Social Media

The third trait is connection. Social media gives the ability to connect with your friends, family, strangers, celebrities, and anyone you can think of. With all these connections, how can we tell what is real or not? Just because you are connected with a super star doesn’t mean you’re connected on a personal level. “The average person has about double the amount of friends online as they do in real life” (Poole, 2017). We un-friend, un-follow and even block people on social media, but to their faces, we act like nothing is wrong. Social media causes the user to have a false sense of intimacy and closeness with people that we actually know nothing about.

One of your friends on social media could be posting about how happy they are but in reality they could be falling apart. Why? On social media people want to portray the best version of themselves, whether it is true at the moment or not. In reality, we just know the false perception of someone rather than actually knowing him or her. Are we slowly losing the sense of a real connection and this false connection is actually turning into a disconnection? It is very important to understand to whom you are actually connected versus to whom you are only virtually connected. Take your favorite celebrity we follow on Twitter or Instagram, we may feel some kind of connection because we know so much about them from their social media account. But when it comes to reality, we only know what they want us to know about them, your just another fan; there is no real connection.

### Impersonal In Social Media

The fourth trait is impersonal. Moore suggests, “Living life and interacting hidden behind a computer or cell phone screen is commonplace for younger users” (Moore 2014). Data from the Curry College survey showed that almost 50% of the students reported they would rather text than call or face-time, which is a video call. This is because they believed it was more convenient based on the survey conducted earlier. Texting allows for rapid-fire, single sentence thoughts rather than other means of communication. This is where accessibility comes to play, users find it easier to send a quick text rather than stop what they are doing to make a phone call. Does this cause us to communicate more or less? Depending how one looks at

this question, it can go either way. Keith N. Hampton, a professor at Rutgers University of Communication and Information says, “Technology is enriching our social relationships”. Maybe the form of creating these relationships have changed but actually creating them hasn’t. In fact, one of Hampton’s studies shows that students have many more close relationships because of their cellphones and media usage than the older colleagues. Hampton may be right about social media allowing users to create more relationships, but how genuine are those relationships? Larry Rosen, a professor from the University of California State, Dominguez Hills, thinks the opposite of Professor Hampton. He believes one may in fact hold all these relationships, but these relationships do not completely consist of really close friends. “The total effect has been to allow us to connect more with the people in our virtual world – but communicate less with those who are in our real world” (Is Technology Really Making Us Less Social?, 2015). Both views are correct; yes we are making more and more connections, but how many of those are genuine connects.

### Knowledge in Social Media

The last trait is a sense of being knowledgeable. Everything now is just a button click away. Everything is online and if we don’t know something, just “Google it”. So are technology users genuinely knowledgeable or is it a false sense of knowledge? The other issue with that is distinguishing the true information from the false information. Researchers at Stanford’s Graduate School of Education conducted a study of more than 7,800 middle school, high school and college students in 12 states to find out if they can evaluate online sources of information.

Astonishingly, researchers found a “stunning and dismaying consistency” of not looking for high-level analysis of data but just looking for basic reasonable information such as telling a fake account from a real account. Most people are just looking for a quick trending answer regardless of where it comes from. This ties back to the more social capital something has, the more attractive it is. For example, a professional and a polished “about” section would easily persuade students to believe the site was authentic and credible even if the information is false.

### Social Media influencing the News

Along with social media impacting how one represents their identity, it also can impact how social media users gain knowledge of various news and political information. The means of getting the daily news is starting to change. Back in the day everyone read the newspaper to catch up on daily news. Now all you have to do is take out your smartphone and do a quick search. Now with the different social media applications, various companies, like Snapchat and Facebook, are starting to offer different news feeds and profiles that offer various types of news whether it is global news or local news. We do not need to read the paper to figure out what is going on in the world anymore or wait till the newspaper comes. But just because it is there, does it actually mean social media users care about it? The concern is that users “do not visit news sites, read print newspapers, watch television news, or seek out news in great numbers. This generation, instead, spends more time on social networks, often on mobile devices” (Young 2015:1). Social media users are more concerned about different trends and what their friend’s latest update was. This

causes the issue of social media users having an inaccurate awareness of what is going on in the world. Young states that 64% of millennials regularly keep up with what's going on in the world and/or read or watch news. But the problem is, what do millennials consider news and how reliable is it? Back in the beginning of the year (2017), President Trump signed an executive order to keep refugees from entering the country for 120 days and immigrants from seven predominantly Muslim nations out for three months. This event was all over social media with people contributing their ideas about this issue whether it was for or against it. It was clear that this news was everywhere, but how reliable was the information people were seeing? Clearly the topic was real but was the information being stretched from the truth or was the background of the issue fully examined before someone took a side on the issue? For social media users, when news comes out, the only thing that matters is the basic information and do I agree or disagree with it. For students in New York City, this was just the case. Hundreds of students walked out of class to protest against Trump's temporary travel ban, which was arranged on Facebook. To investigate this event, Jesse Watters, who is an American critic on the Fox News Channel, went out to interview some of the students to figure out why they were protesting the travel ban (Watter's World). He asked questions, in regards to which nations were on the temporary travel ban, and why don't you want people coming from those countries to be extremely vetted before coming to the U.S. All the students interviewed really had no idea, which nations were on the temporary ban list, some students were just naming random countries in the Middle East if they could even think of them. Then when asked if immigrants from those

countries should be vetted, which means to investigate someone thoroughly, especially in order to ensure that they are suitable for something that requires secrecy, loyalty and trustworthiness, they really did not understand the matter at hand. None of the students realized it was a precaution aiming at terrorism, and one student even claimed that Iran wasn't a terrorist country, which in reality Iran is the number one sponsor of terrorism in the world. Many of these students didn't have a clue about actual information about the matter at hand from loosely distributed news on social media.

This leads me to believe that it was based around following a trend put forth through social media. Social media users see a small bit of information and make big conclusions from it when in reality they don't know anything about it. In the end, Watter's pointed out that one of the students protesting was actually in support of the travel ban based on his misconception of information he was given. Even though Young's report deals with social media users engaging in getting news and staying up to date, the real problem is, is how social media users interpret and use such information.

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