**Critical Analysis Portfolio**

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**Topic Introduction:**

Social media has been growing rapidly over the years since the first social media platform debuted in 1997. With advances in technology, social media platforms have evolved tremendously from just a small site where you could post a picture and add friends. Now days, users can send instant messages, play games, and even sell items through these social media platforms. Social media platforms can now be accessed from anywhere thanks to mobile devices. Below we will look through the four main educational lenses to see how social media has helped shaped society and the world we live in.

**Lens Connections:**

**History**

Looking at how social media has helped shape society from a historical point of view, we need to look back at where social media got its start. While it is often mentioned that social media began when inventions such as the telegraph were introduced, many believe the real beginning of social media began with the birth of the internet and the first true online social media platform Six Degrees in 1997 (Jones, 2015). Six Degrees was a very simple site where users could create an account and upload a picture of themselves and add friends from around the world. This has evolved tremendously over the years and current social media platforms now allow users to video chat, post on timelines and reply to one another, and even create special groups to share interests. This is not the only view that needs to be considered through the historical lens when looking at social media. Social media has also become a powerful tool in how we look at history as a whole. With social media comes a large flow of information and the interconnectedness of the world and various cultures. Much of this information can be false, however, and can result in an inaccurate depiction of historical events (Bousalis et al., 2020). This is why it has become even more important to do our own research on topics and ensure that we are taking in the information from credible sources. This is often seen in schools where children see something via social media and believe it to be true. This can make it harder for those teaching about history as they now have to fight against historical inaccuracies that stem from social media.

**Humanities**

One thing social media has done is created a place where users can open up and share. This is very true looking from the perspective of humanities. In the past, we would need to travel to museums to see artifacts and treasures. Social media has disrupted this norm and paved the way for a new means by which museums and other institutions operate. “Social media creates new leadership concerns by accelerating an ongoing change of museums, as they move from being the ‘gods of knowledge’ to becoming the ‘servants of knowledge’” (as cited in Booth et al., 2019). This is fascinating as museums and their curators used to be the all knowing that many went to see to get answers. In today’s world, these same museums work to bring the answers to the public via social media and the internet. One thing that social media has done extremely well is opened the stage for creative people to share their work quickly and around the world. This has created a new way for many to share their creative talents and changed social media from being just a place to talk with friends to a place where you can also quickly rise up into fame (Blumenfeld, 2018). Users can now utilize the social media platforms to share their talents and make money while doing it, sometimes without even leaving their home.

**Natural and Applied Science**

The sciences have also been swept up in the social media craze. When users look to find what is going on in the world, they often turn to social media to find answers as opposed to traditional methods such as TV news or papers (Lewandowsky et al., 2019). Take the recent Covid-19 pandemic for example. Many people turned to discussions on news articles in social media in regard to the pandemic and research on vaccines. Not only does social media provide an outlet for discussion of current events, it can also be heavily utilized as a way to be proactive, especially when it comes to health. Many physicians utilize social media as another means to communicate information about health and educate users about health risks (Sobral, 2020). This again turns social media into a platform that is not just for chatting with friends and posting pictures of oneself but a vital tool that can be utilized by many professionals in various fields, including medicine, to help be both proactive and, when needed, reactive in communicating to a wide range of individuals very quickly. This is not limited to the medical field. Social media has become one of the largest tools leveraged in the event of natural disasters. Sites such as GoFundMe and Facebook have become powerful tools in rallying people together to help one another during disastrous events, providing help physically and financially. Utilizing GoFundMe, users can quickly raise funds from donators around the world to help people in need. This is something that would have been much more difficult in the past.

**Social Science**

Likely the lens most impacted by social media is the lens of social science. This lens has seen a large impact as social media has opened the door to a world-wide view of various cultures, religions, and social differences. Social media has become a place for groups to raise awareness about social issues and injustices, such as the more recent Black Lives Matter movement. There are other impacts though that may not seem as noticeable from the outside, one such social impact being conformity. According to Lewandowsky et al. (2019), even if their opinions differ, people tend to cave and conform to what the popular opinion is. This can be for fear of being shunned or otherwise demeaned for viewing the topic or issue differently than the majority. This problem has only increased over time, resulting in skewed views or posts that end up with heated debates over indifference and which answer is correct. Social media has also been the birthplace of the influencer. These users utilize their large list of followers to help promote products and other various things through their social media. Many companies leverage these influencers to help promote their business and products. This can end up being very good or very bad for the brand. Influencers are human and do not technically belong to the company. Being human, they are able to make mistakes that can hurt the credibility and perception of a brand (Kintu & Ben-Slimane, 2020). One post that is viewed negatively by the social media community can send a shockwave through the company and damage their reputation. This helps show the impact that social media can have on a user and their opinion.

**Historical Lens Analysis:**

Social media itself is nothing new, it is the method by which it is delivered that has changed throughout the years. Gone are the days when a town crier would stand in the streets and shout news and information to the public. In today’s digital age, the amount of information we receive from social media is growing, outperforming print media (Shearer, 2018). As this trend continues to grow, more and more people will turn to social media to find out what is happening or what has happened in our past. While the availability to quickly spread information via these social media channels has helped in many areas, there are still many ways it can have a negative impact.

We must consider what happens when the information being received on social media is falsified. Many people are quick to post information without taking the time to check the validity of said information. This can result in the falsified information spreading quickly, raising the amount of people who believe the information and causing their perception of the topic of the information to be skewed. History is just as vulnerable to the spread of misinformation and can affect how many view historical events or figures (Bousalis et al., 2020). This conflict of information between what was and what is perceived can play a large impact on how many learn about our history and what they believe transpired.

Recently, the growth of social media has played a huge role in how history is viewed and even the key component in change throughout the world. Many groups have started to rise up and demand change to many historical symbols across the nation and throughout the world. In Germany, social media played a key role in the battle to change the name of a town square that was named after General Paul Von Hindenburg after it was found he had ties to the rise of Hitler, resulting in the town square being renamed (Birkner & Donk. 2020). This social movement to things representative of historical figures continues to progress throughout the world.

**Humanities Lens Analysis:**

Social media has opened a door for creation and expression in the digital age. Many people have flocked to these social media platforms to utilize them as ways to make money and grow their audience. Tik-Tok and Facebook have become popular places to create videos and content that can be shared around the world, putting on skits and short plays to grow their follower base. Many others use these platforms to express themselves through posts, videos, or other avenues.

While these new digital platforms have brought new ways to create and share those creations, it also brings a new set of problems with it. Typically, it is not hard to tell who is associated with a piece of art. Movies and productions have credits, paintings are usually signed by the painter, and books contain the information of the author(s) and illustrator(s). What is easy to associate for larger companies and works of art becomes much more difficult for many online creators. Many times, content shared through social media can be taken and repurposed by many users, making it hard to tell where actual credit is due (Blumenfeld, 2019). This has opened discussion on how we can better protect the content created by these social media artists.

One huge upside to social media is the communication that occurs via the numerous platforms. With the change from the old ways of communicating, which was typically one way, social media allows for two way communication where artists and other creators can not only share with their followers but also hear back from them as well (Franek, 2018). This allows artists to closely collaborate with their audience, gaining feedback in large amounts. This is quite different to the feedback of the past, which was largely from ratings and reviews. This brings artists and creators much closer to their fan base.

While social media is opening new avenues of creation, facilities such as museums and galleries are changing the way they display their collection to adapt to the new medium and keep up with the times and remain relevant to younger generations. Many institutions are moving to social media to advertise and display their collections. This change impacts the role museums and other art institutions play. Instead of having people flock to these brick and mortar locations to learn about art and other creative pieces, they have turned to bringing museums and galleries to the people (Booth et al., 2019). This helps keep the institutions alive and remain relevant to younger generations who have turned to social media as the preferred medium for engaging in the arts.

**Natural and Applied Science Lens Analysis:**

While many may view social media as just another platform for talking with friends and sharing what is going on during their day, it has become much more than that. Social media has become the norm when searching for feedback and opinions, as it provides easy access to a much broader audience. This is one reason for the increase in scientific data being posted through social media avenues, easy social evaluation (Kowalska-Chrzanowska & Krysiński, 2020). This also allows scientists from all over the world a way to quickly communicate ideas and theories with one another without the need for extensive emails or phone calls.

Recently, social media has been a vital tool for scientists working in the healthcare field. With the global pandemic surrounding us, many took to social media as their main source of news surrounding Covid-19. For this reason, social media became an important resource in the battle against the epidemic, allowing scientists a way to communicate important information quickly to a large population (Sobral, 2020). This helps deter some of the misinformation that can be spread by social media and help mitigate the spread of Covid-19 by providing individuals with correct information and allows scientists and healthcare officials to be proactive in the battle against the pandemic.

While social media has been of great use to the scientific community for theorizing and gaining social input, it has also been a resource of great importance during natural disasters as well. Social media provides a way for many to organize and come together during natural disasters. This can be seen in various ways, such as volunteering time or even through financial aid by utilizing sites such as GoFundMe, which allows users to raise funds quickly from virtually anyone, anywhere. This has been extremely beneficial during times of natural disasters when supplies are low, helping find funding or organizing donations.

**Social Science Lens Analysis:**

Social science is the lens that most directly relates to social media, after all, the initial purpose of social media was to provide people around the world with a way to communicate, share, and grow. This has led to the interconnectedness of various cultures from everywhere around the world. The way social media connects all these cultures has brought on some interesting results when it comes to personal opinions. Many people, regardless of what they believe, will often times side with the popular opinion on a topic (Lewandowsky et al., 2019).

Social media has not only been affected by the various cultures of the world, however, since social media is an online network that is made up of a large human population, it can develop its own cultures as well (Chai, 2020). It is essentially a new world away from the offline world. This not only leads to the development of online cultures but also the creation of online personas. Each individual can become someone completely different online, creating a presence that is far different from their offline self. While this has led to many people finding a place where they are more comfortable and can better express themselves, others have utilized social media to bring out their negative side. This unethical behavior can include cyber-bullying and posting comments that are lude or disrespectful (Chai, 2020).

While many utilize social media as a place to stay in touch with friends and family and grow their pool of acquaintances, others have leveraged the numerous platforms to bring them fame and fortune. Streaming, content creation, and influencing are just a few of the interesting ways that users have found to utilize social media to help them financially. Influencers use their social media to help promote brands and generate sales for the companies that are sponsoring them. While this is an easy way for companies to get there product out there and known around the world, they need to be careful in who they choose to represent them and their products. If the influencer slips and lets their personal bias get in the way, as has been seen on occasion, they can say or do something that can have a large negative impact to the brand they are promoting (Kintu & Ben-Slimane, 2020). This would be going out to that same large follower pool all around the world and result in a negative perception of the company due to the association with the influencer.

**Conclusion**

**Technological Impact**

Technology continues to play a large role in society, including both our personal and professional lives. As technology advances, the line between the two rapidly blurs. In todays world, it is not uncommon to see people who have lost their job due to something posted on social media during off work hours. This can be something that is said about an individual or a comment made about their place of employment. It is important to understand the impact that technology can have on us. Utilizing the four lenses helps provide a wider view of the vast impact that technology can have both at home and at work, or even a combination of both.

**Social Practices**

With the continuous change in technology comes change in social practices, as social norms change and adapt to various technologies at our disposal. In a world where news used to travel by paper or email, now travels even faster through the various social media platforms. This is the newest way to find out what is going on in the world. This is unfortunately also where many people are led astray by the influx of opinions and information that is posted. It has become normal for many to rapidly change their view on a matter if it does not match the popular opinion. It has also become the go to place to vent frustrations about a company or business when something goes wrong. No longer do people typically call the business first, rather, they take to posting on social media, or the companies social media site, noting their frustration and the issues that they had.

**Benefits and Challenges**

Technology presents a double-edged sword situation in many scenarios. While much of the technology that has been given to us helps move us forward and bring many quality of life changes to the world, it also has the ability to hinder us greatly. Social media is a prime example of this. Social media has many times brough millions together during times of need, helped lost family and friends find one another, and provided a place for people to share and grow. However, it has also been a place that harbors cyber-bullying, loss of privacy, and massive amounts of misinformation. While social media platforms allow you to communicate with the world, they have also been turned into a tool for technologies such as targeted advertising and a way for companies to collect vast amounts of data. Many see this as a large invasion of privacy; however, they continue to utilize the social media sites that use these tactics. Technology remains a balancing act between the good it brings and the harm it can cause. While there are continuously new methods being developed to try and fight these negative impacts, the issues are still present and growing.

**Social Interactions**

One thing that technology and social media along with it have done is made it much easier to learn about various cultures around the world and help offer unique perspectives into the lives of those around the world. What would have taken a large trip and many hours of studying, can now be quickly learned from right where you are. Various cultures share their way of life, including recipes, religions, and social norms. Analyzing technology can also help understand those who do not believe in or use technology or who use it very little. A great example of this is how the current generation looks at and utilizes technology over older generations. Many newer generations are quick to learn and adapt to technologies, trading in their phones every sic months for the current model. However, older generations may view this as unnecessary and find the idea to be a waste of money. This can be due to the popular opinion discussed before. Newer generations want to be relevant and up to date with the popular technologies while older generations are just as satisfied with the same item and do not find the need to replace it until it no longer works. This is an interesting view of the differing perspectives between those who grew up without technologies like social media and those who have grown up in the online world.

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