

ID: 7231

Social media, what once was a fun application to share photos, memories, and updates about our lives, has unfortunately become a space for judgment and social status. Gone are the days of Instagram and Facebook being spaces for sharing niche hobbies or fun pictures. Social media has now become an extension of oneself in which you are constantly perceived by strangers, employers, and friends.

William James' theory of social self, highlights the influence of social interactions and perceptions on our identity, this idea can be applied to our use of Instagram, and all other social media platforms. Each person creates their own social media profile, to highlight certain aspects of their life, personality, and interests. Carefully picking photos and drafting up captions that aim to set us aside from other users and show our originality. As well as engaging with the content we believe reflects how we want to be perceived as users, which similarly relates to James' idea, that our sense of self, our personality, is created through social interactions and the comments we receive from other users. The content that we choose to share on our social media pages feeds into our idea of social self, which also influences the idea of social comparison to others. The comparison of oneself to others influences how we as individuals perceive our own self-worth and identity. James recognized the significance of our social comparison to others in shaping our self-concept, as we often decide our worth and success based on how we measure up or compare to others in our social circles, both online and in person. The content that we come across daily on social media, posts from our friends, influencers, and brands, shapes our attitudes, ideas, and behaviors. We are influenced by the values and lifestyles that are portrayed in the posts and narratives we are shown online, which allows us to exhibit certain behaviors and adopt ideals.

identity and guiding our behavior within various social media contexts.

Similarly, Michel Foucault's concept of surveillance offers insights into how power operates within social structures, and how we as individuals are subjected to various forms of surveillance, such as observation, monitoring, and control.

Foucault introduced the idea of the Panopticon, a hypothetical prison that is designed with an observation tower located in the central part of the prison. In this hypothetical prison, prisoners are always visible to the watchtower in the center, creating a sense of surveillance and discipline since they are being watched. This can be adapted to the idea that on social media, you are also constantly surveilled. On social media, we are aware that our posts are out there for anyone to see, our posts, comments, likes, and follows. Everything is 'under surveillance' this creates a virtual version of the Panopticon, where users voluntarily offer aspects of their lives to the public community to judge. There are obviously ways to combat this, like separate "burner" accounts and just regulating what you interact with so people cannot publicly see. This also aligns with an idea Foucault presented that as well with the idea of an outside surveillance, there is also an internal surveillance through which each of us monitor our own actions and interactions online and in public. The constant possibility of our interactions being widely available to public users, allows us to regulate our own interactions to keep up an image or an idea that we are doing the right thing, as if we are being watched from the watchtower. This highlights how surveillance monitors the normalization of society or the status quo. Individuals adhere to established standards and normal practices under the fear of scrutiny from others. This can be highlighted through social media's influencer culture, that because these people live their lives a certain way, I have a responsibility to do so as well. We feel pressure to adhere to these ideas and standard

worth. Another idea that relates to Foucault's surveillance is the literal surveillance that social media allows. When you sign up for social media accounts, they are allowed to collect your data to varying degrees. This is what fuels each platform's algorithms. They take the data of the content you interact with the most and create a feed that is personalized to you. This allows platforms to control users interactions and content consumption online and influence their own preferences and behaviors.

In conclusion, the evolution of the platform and community of social media from sharing memories, hobbies, and such, has evolved into what can be a judgemental and scrutinizing space at times. The theories that William James and Michel Foucault have brought forth can be adapted to this platform of social media in varying ways, they show how our skilfully crafted online personas are extensions of ourselves and are consistently being monitored and surveilled. Navigating the landscape of social media is difficult, there's so much influence on who we are as people, and keeping in mind these ideas presented can allow us to navigate this online third-place in a more careful and aware manner.