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RAISING THE MEDIA GENERATION: HOW WEB BASED MEDIA
INFLUENCES ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

The average American adolescent spends roughly seven and a half hours consuming media a day, in addition to academic related media consumption. While mobile devices and web-based media presents many benefits to its users, the effects of media consumption can differ for younger users. During adolescence children develop their own sense of themselves and their opinions; however, todays adolescents are experiencing a world with added social media pressure. With obsessions over "likes", "favorites," and "followers"; are todays adolescents more prone to mold their actions to match their new social pressures? This thesis will look at adolescent development and the influences that can impede the development of young and moldable brains.

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Introduction:

In an age of smart phones, smart TVs, and "at home assistants" mobile technology has found its way into the majority of American homes, with the promise of streamlined processes, simplified lives, and high-speed connections. These devices serve as a means of simplifying daily operations and connecting our world on a global level. The majority of the technology is owned and purchased by fully developed adults who view mobile devices as a way to connect their family. While technology can offer connection to many educational programs to improve the educational development of young children across the country, it can also have negative impacts on children as they age. Web-based media creates an expectation to present one's best self to the general public. This message is engrained in user's brains through a variety of targeted ads, social media algorithms, and photo manipulation. When users are younger they neglect to consider the manipulation that many photos or advertisements undergo prior to being published to the internet. Adolescence is a fragile time in development where children begin to develop their own sense of identity. Individuals begin the search to find and understand themselves, continue to develop their self-esteem, and discover where they fall within society. While this period of development is an engaging time of self-discovery, hyper fixation on web-based media can have an impact on a child's self-esteem, attention to societal conformity, and mental wellbeing during adolescence.

Our infatuation with mobile devices draws our focus to our screens. This new phenomenon has the largest impact on the mental development of younger generations. With their eyes fixated on screens, users pay less attention to those around them. Web based media and technology provides new ways to form connections digitally but can inhibit our ability to properly form face to face connections. Exposure to screens and devices now begins when

children are able to sit up straight on their own, with a highly moldable brain. As children develop into adolescence their media exposure often increases. During childhood, the brain is able to synthesize vast knowledge of the environment to teach life skills and survival skills. However, as adolescents transition into adulthood their moldable brains begin to develop their sense of individuality, and opinions. Many adolescents have access to social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, and Twitter. Social media creates an atmosphere where users can control society's perception of them and every aspect of their image on the profiles. Social media has the ability to influence the development of young users in a multitude of ways. These include perception of one's beliefs, the beliefs of peers and strangers, self-esteem, and mental health.

Chapter 1: Adolescence

Commonly, the general population tends to categorize individuals who fall under the broad category of young people as adolescents. This is not necessarily the case, adolescence is classified by the World Health Organization as the developmental period between ages 10 to 19 where individuals develop their sense of identity, sense of control over independent decision making, sense of their respective place in the greater world around them (Recognizing Adolescence, 2014). This is a time period after childhood in which individuals mature emotionally, socially, and sexually. During this transition from childhood to adulthood individuals begin to develop their own opinions of themselves and their world, and typically separate their beliefs from those of their parents and authority figures. With cognitive adolescent development and the emergence of one's social self, developing individuals also tend to increase focus on how others think of them. Developing individuals begin to obsess over their physical

appearance and other people's views of themselves. According to Piaget's stages of development, around age 11 children begin to develop "formal operational thought." This development allows children to separate their own mental ideas of an object and the societal perception of it. While developing formal operational thought children begin to accurately think in hypothetical scenarios and are able to weigh all possible outcomes of scenarios (Bärbel, Piaget, 2013) This allows children to recognize and begin to comprehend their own thoughts, while beginning to recognize other individual's viewpoints. During formal operational thought adolescents also begin to conceptualize others perspectives, to better understand their viewpoints. (Choudhry, Blakemore, Charman 2006)

During adolescence the brain undergoes considerable changes in the frontal and parietal lobes of the brain. According to the Harvard Medical School, in adolescence there is a spike in accidental deaths, and homicides (Harvard Health Publishing, 2011). During adolescence there is also a greater likelihood of an individual developing psychosis, an eating disorder, or addiction. Harvard surveys also indicate that everyday unhappiness peaks in later adolescence. Although abstract reasoning skills are on par with adults by the ages of 15 or 16, many adolescents tend to act with the intention to seek strong feelings or sensations. The desire to seek new experiences can inhibit someone's judgment. Adolescents are also presented with high social pressure to conform with their peers and are more likely to take "risky" chances on tasks when in the presence of friends, for instance running a red light (Harvard Health Publishing, 2011).

One of the last areas to fully develop in the brain is the prefrontal cortex. This section of the brain operates formation of judgement, problem-solving capabilities, the amygdala and the emotional centers of the limbic system. Prior to puberty the frontal cortex is largely comprised

of grey matter and synapses, they get pruned throughout adolescence. This process begins at the onset of puberty for an individual and typically is not completed until their early 20s (Harvard Health Publishing, 2011). Due to the slower development of the emotion regulating centers of the brain, adolescents are more likely to act on emotion rather than reasoning; despite their reasoning capabilities being essentially equivalent to that of adults.   For example, when asked a hypothetical question involving abstract reasoning such as, "Would you get in the car with a drunk driver? A majority of adolescents would answer no, however the emotional state of the individual when the question is asked is likely to be very different than the emotional state of an individual when they are faced with that instance in real life" (Harvard Health Publishing, 2011). Adolescents act on seeking out experiences that are new and exciting. While they are able to reason potential hazards of risky situations the novelty of an experience can overshadow the possible safety issues that can arise.

The circuitry that links the prefrontal cortex to the brains reward system continues to develop well into adolescence.   When children undergo development in ages 10 - 19 they are susceptible to the impacts of many external influences, including social pressures, family pressures, substances and more. These influences mixed with the fragile developmental period of adolescence can impact how an individual develops through their teen years, and into adulthood.

Chapter 2: Technology

Generally, the conversation surrounding media and technology is a positive one, focusing on its ability to connect us to each other. Adversely, the conversation gives little regard to what technology can do to our ability to communicate face to face. In order to understand the extent in which web-based media can affect adolescent development, one must understand the extent of adolescent media usage. The following data is presented to give readers a quantitative basis of media use in children ages eight to 18.

Technology and media have become a consuming part of American society. In response to this our government and educators have integrated technology training very early into school curriculum. This is done with the intention of preparing children with the skills necessary to function in the majority of America's workplaces today. As more research is being done on the impact of media use in tweens and teens, parents are slowly becoming more aware of the potential effects of unsupervised media exposure. Of families surveyed in the 2019 Common Sense Media Census, 50 percent of parents with tweens who have their own smartphone or tablet monitored their web activity. Monitoring dropped by almost half for parents with teenagers, with only 26 percent of parents monitoring what their child does on the internet (Common Sense Media Census, 2019).

In 2007 FCC commissioner Michael Copps motioned for a sustainable media literacy program for students in kindergarten through 12th grade (Wan, Gut 2008). The American education system has integrated various types of technology into their pedagogy in order to develop well-rounded students who will become adults in our constantly evolving, technology dependent world. A 2003 study by the National Center for Education Statistics showed that 91 percent of students ages three and older used computers and 59 percent of those students used the

internet (Computer and Internet use, 2006). Combining media education and literacy, teachers create a well-rounded approach to an evolving form of communication for their students. Incorporating Thoman's three stages of media literacy (Wan, Gut 2008) teachers create an environment for their students where they must analyze not only why media exists but what it exists for. Thoman's three stages incorporate critical thinking and planning into media exposure to teach children to be smart consumers of web-based media. Stage one presents children with the task of managing their time on media and making smart choices on which forms of media to use. The second stage focuses on critical thinking. This is the stage where children begin to discern which website are reliable sources for information and are taught that website with outdated information or misspellings may not be an accurate source for information. The last stage is when children learn to question the creation of the media and the purpose behind it. Children begin to understand that media is a business, and thus begin to understand ad placement within media. The final stage teaches children to question the purpose of media before buying into it, therefore turning them into smart consumers of daily media (Wan, Gut 2008). This method models that of teaching an author's purpose to children, with an emphasis on whether the media was created with the intention of informing a reader, entertaining a reader, or persuading a reader.

The integration of technology in schooling, as well as media literacy methods, begin when pupils are approximately seven years of age and commonly continues through college. "The 2019 Common Sense Media Census reported that six out of 10 teenagers surveyed reported that they use the computer daily for homework (Common Sense Media Census, 2019). This number has grown since 2015 when only 29 percent of teens reported daily computer use for school (Common Sense Media Census, 2019).   America's influence on media literacy has

caused the country to be the most technologically literate in the world, with China's population ranking second (Wan, Gut 2008). While newer media like computers, social media, and video games are becoming increasingly popular among adolescents, the most popular form of media in both America and China respectively is television. Common Sense Media's online census reports regularly on the media usage of children ages eight to eighteen in America. Measuring characteristics like gender, economic class, and age Common Sense media tracks usage of both web-based media and print media. The census classifies adolescents "low income" if they reside in a house that has a collective income that is less than $35,000 per year. Whereas "higher income" adolescent is an individual who resides in a household with a total income of $100,000 or more a year. The census also classifies adolescents into two groups. Children ages eight to 12 are considered tweens in the census, individuals ages 13-18 are labeled as teenagers in the study.

"The 2019 Common Sense Media census reported that by age 11, 53 percent of kids own their own smartphone, and that number increases to 69 percent by age 12 "(Common Sense Media Census, 2019). While web media has become increasingly accessible for individuals regardless of income, there is still discrepancy on what form of technology is used to access the media. In 2019 teens from higher income households reported an average of 55 minutes using a computer for homework and 12 minutes using a phone for homework. Their peers in lower income households reported an average of 34 minutes spent using a computer for homework and 21 minutes using a smartphone. The 2019 Common Sense Media Census did not include data in regards to media use and family size, and only provided nuances for age, economic status, and gender.

Socially human beings crave acceptance and validation within their relationships. With the ever-growing presence of social media and digital communication, a new layer of validation

has been added to the social sphere of our society. Human beings crave social acceptance and view it as a framework in order to develop long-lasting relationships (Dewall, Bushman 2011). Due to the cravings for acceptance that are specifically prominent in adolescence and young adulthood, the "digital native" generation places significant worth on their media communication.   This attention shift from interpersonal communication to digital communication via smartphones and tablets, has inhibited the "digital native" generations ability to properly communicate interpersonally (Turkle, 2015). The emphasis on digital communication also normalizes the casual slang filled conversations that often take place over social media.

The quantitative aspect of social media gives teens a tangible way to monitor their level of validation within their social circles and peer groups. Seeing the number of likes associated with their pictures and tweets, teens are able to compare their "success" to their peers. Although social media provides teens an accessible way to stay connected to the world, it can also be detrimental to their self-esteem and self-perception.

The addictive forces of our devices have even found their way into our interpersonal interactions. Now as a means to combat the place that our devices have taken in our personal lives, adolescents subconsciously develop unspoken rules about when it is permitted to check your personal device while with friends. Subconsciously adolescents operate under the "rule of three" where they convince themselves it is okay to check their phones if three other people within the group are in conversation with each other (Turkle, 2015). While this phenomenon allows adolescents to relieve some cognitive dissonance in regards to their behavior," conversation is fragmented, and everyone tries to keep it light" (Turkle, 2015).

Income disparity in America has played a major role in media accessibility and exposure and has allowed technology and media use to become a status symbol. The Common-sense

media census reports there is a correlation with adolescents who come from higher income

households being exposed to more media (Common Sense Media Census, 2015). While

household income does play a role, it is not the only factor in media exposure. American

adolescents spend an average of six to nine hours consuming media each day; excluding media

required for school or homework. Adolescent media use is widely mobilized, with roughly 40

percent of adolescent's media consumption being through mobile devices (Common Sense

Media Census, 2015). As more and more entertainment moves into a mobile form, usage of

online video viewing and social media has gone up. In 2015, 34 percent of teenagers reported

that they watched online videos every day, that number has grown to 69 percent in 2019

(Common Sense Media Census, 2019).

Chapter 3: Social Media

The Pew Research Center's 2012 study concluded that roughly half of all adults in the

United States are smartphone users. Additionally, smartphone users outnumber basic phone users

in America (Irby, Strong 2015). Communication via online applications has sky-rocketed over

the years, with applications like Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp. These

applications are able to virtually connect the user to the world around them. While these

applications possess abilities to globally connect users, they can cause adverse effects in the

user's daily life. Sharing applications like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook allows users to

"like," "favorite," or "retweet" other content on the platform. Another feature of these

applications is the explore pages where users are able to see content that is "trending" or has the

most likes out of a certain genre of content. The usage of these pages on these apps has allowed

a select group of people to be deemed "influencers" which allows them to earn an income by

creating branded advertising content for companies that pay them for social media promotion. This phenomenon allows social media communities to rally around certain individuals and put them on a pedestal creating an idol for communities to support. The trending and branding phenomena promote the idea that "likes" on social media can dictate the perceived worth of the user, which in turn can skew an individual's perception of their worth within a society. Positive attention on social media triggers the brain circuitry associated with rewards, which leads the brain to view likes on their profiles as rewards. When positive attention is received on social media, the brain activates the ventral tegmental area which fires dopamine neurons into the brain (Psychology of Social Media, 2019).

We as a species, yearn to be accepted by our respective communities and societies. We seek this acceptance through a variety of social interactions. In the first years of a child's schooling, children are taught about the importance of community, friendship, and how to safely seek validation from family members and peers. As children age past the formative years they are introduced to many different forms of technology and different ways of thinking. Social media provides a tangible and accessible way for quantitative social connection. This allows an individual social media user to engage with their "friends" or "followers" on a tangible level, despite this interaction not being at all physical. This tangible validation can also become highly enjoyable for users, which in turn can impact how users interact with their friends and family members. The fifth version of the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders does not qualify "internet addiction" as a mental disorder, but it can be a result of other pre-existing mental disorders (Turel, Serenko, Giles, 2011).

While all humans seek acceptance and validation through interaction, increasingly interactions are taking place through media platforms. With social media usage being as common

as it is, users often correlate their self-esteem to the quantitative aspects of social media. This phenomenon can promote negative self-esteem and cause metal health issues for social media users. Technological developments have now allowed those with web access the ability to alter, edit, and falsify pictures with just a few clicks. The pictures clutter the internet and create a false sense of what a body should look like for social medias younger users. This technology in turn can promote the development of negative self-esteem, body dysmorphia, body image issues, and possible eating disorders in adolescents. Social media websites such as Tumblr, Instagram, and Twitter have a history of idolizing certain body types which can perpetuate eating disorders in younger viewers with addictive or obsessive traits. A study done by the Florida House Experience surveyed 1,000 people, 87 percent of women and 65 percent of men compare their bodies to images consumed on media platforms. Within that comparison 50 percent of women and 37 percent of men compared their bodies unfavorably to the images consumed on social media ("The Link Between Social Media and Body Image," 2019). According to the National Eating Disorders Association, American children ages 8-18 spend roughly seven and a half hours per day consuming some form of media, most commonly television. A 2001 study found that over half of all weight loss advertising featured falsehoods and unsubstantiated claims about the products and its effectiveness (National Eating Disorders Association, 2018). These falsehoods include heavily editing pictures to make models appear thinner than they actually are and utilizing fitness models and actors for advertising as opposed to an actual weight loss consumer. The 2001 study looks at whether media impacts children's self-esteem. A survey done by the National Eating Disorder Association concluded that the edited weight loss pictures can influence a girl's concept of what an ideal body shape is, and 47 percent of those girls feel the need to lose weight after seeing those pictures publicized. Men also report body dissatisfaction

due to the mass media portraying mainly muscular men (National Eating Disorders Association, 2018). The advertising industry can function as an "authoritative" voice, enabling a sort of consumer culture through technology. By creating an "aesthetic" to gain their audience, the advertising industry has adapted their practices to fit the mold of our public technology mediums. The ethics behind advertising strategies have evolved from straight forward product descriptions to pitches, branding and product placement (Solues, 2015). The internet is an ocean for all information and advertising to flow into, and advertising companies have had to adapt their approaches to make their products stand out above the rest. New advertising practices create an "aesthetic" brand that appeals to the values and emotions of consumers.

However, media can also influence younger consumers is positive ways. The National Eating Disorders Association also found shows more oriented to black culture may serve as a protective function to developing self-esteem. African American and Hispanic girls and consumers of black oriented media content report higher levels of body satisfaction than Caucasian girls (National Eating Disorder Association, 2018). Social media can serve as a negative or positive influence in user's body dissatisfaction. Exposure to photos that have been heavily edited can influences younger user's perception on what an "ideal and healthy" body type is in our society. If this belief is not undone through teaching and positive media, users can detrimentally impact their health.

Technology advancements today allows individuals to become "influencers" and allow them to work through their phones and earn a living via ad revenue. This lifestyle is idolized by the normal population, which increases the phenomenon of self-comparison. Influencers on social media possess the unique capability to build communities within their online following. As social media becomes more and more personalized, users can share select aspects of their

lives. Media influencers can make positive impacts in their respective followings or "communities." An example of this is body positivity on social media. As web-based media develops, more inclusive spaces are being created for people outside the "ideal body types" or "stereotypical attractiveness standards." The prevalence of body positivity in a social space like online media can do wonders for those going though eating disorders ("The Link Between Social Media and Body Image," 2019). In addition to positive community-building, security settings on social media platforms can make certain words unsearchable for the user. Limiting exposure and access to triggering content involving words like "inspiration, skinny, thigh gap", empowers those struggling with eating disorders to focus on developing a healthier view of their body image. Many social media accounts have the ability to mass deliver health and wellness information, which allows nutrition information and health tips to be distributed at an accessible level regardless of social or economic class.

The quantitative aspect of social media gives teens a tangible way to monitor their level of validation within their social circles and peer groups. Seeing the number of "likes" associated with their pictures and "tweets", teens are able to compare their "successes to their peers. Although social media provides teens an accessible way to stay connected to the world it can also be detrimental to their self-esteem and self-perception. Commonly, we present ourselves to society in a variety of ways. Adults commonly present themselves in a professional light, in addition to having a personal life. According to Yale University press, social media offers its users many affordances. Examples of these, include the flexibility to communicate whenever users desire, the opportunity to control the content received via security controls, and the jurisdiction to control what parts of themselves are available to the public, and which parts of themselves are private (Valkenburg, Piotrowski 221). These affordances, along with the

accessibility of mobile technology, grant adolescents the ability to mold their online identity, while also giving them the ability to alter their online persona at the drop of a hat. While this may be beneficial for teens who are coming into their own through puberty, it also poses a challenge of dissonance in the teens minds. The goal of adolescence is to create autonomy in one's sense of self. Adolescence is a developmental time period during which individuals create and understand a strong sense of themselves and the trajectory of where they would like their lives to go in the future (Valkenburg, Piotrowski 221). The added pressure to develop a "social media personality" that meets the standards of their peers can create issues in an individual's developmental trek through adolescence if not enough focus is given to their actual personality and development.

The quantitative aspect of "followers" and "likes" can distort a user's perception of themselves within society at the fragile point of development also known as adolescence. Between ages 10-19 children begin to develop their sense of self identity separate from their parents and guardians. Going through adolescence with the expectation to be an active consumer of social media, places pressure among the consumer to conform to an ever-changing expectation of fashion choices, social pressures, and participation in activities. School-aged children often experience a societal pressure to hit a certain quotient of "followers" and "likes" on social media to be considered "normal and cool." This phenomenon causes adolescents and young media users to become obsessed with their profiles and what version of themselves is shown to the public via their social media. This can also cause adolescents to struggle to develop a true concept of their identity as well as their self-esteem.

Social media allows users to feel connected without tangible interpersonal interaction. This enables people to interact boldly and can create a breeding ground for cyberbullying.

Ample usage of social media can also lead to isolation in social settings, in and out of media usage. While web-based media provides connection to the world at our fingertips, it can sacrifice the development of face to face communications skills as well as person-to-person social interaction. This impact is specifically seen in social medias younger demographic group that are still going through developmental stages. These younger users are known as the "digital natives" due to their world experiences happening in a world full of mobile technology.

According to studies like the Cyber ball study (Crone, Konjin 2018), there is growing evidence that the internet can promote exclusionary ideals that have drastic impacts on adolescent communication and self-perception. Researchers developed the Cyber ball study, in which an individual passes a ball to two digital players. After one round, the two digital players begin to pass the ball between themselves, test subject. While this is taking place, the tests subject is undergoing a functional MRI to monitor brain activity levels. Researchers have found that during the experiment, brain activity peaks in the anterior cingulate cortex of the excluded individual. Activity in this sector of the brain is common in individuals who have experienced bullying, maltreatment, or insecure attachment. Although this experiment was not developed with the purpose of studying media exclusions, it is laying the group work for exclusionary studies regarding "likes" on websites like Facebook and Instagram (Crone, Konjin 2018).

Social media stimulates the brain in different and unique ways. For example, social media stimulates the brain in such a way that receiving "likes" on a post releases dopamine in the brain. The positive attention the brain reacts to with "likes" is countered by negative chemicals when an individual view a picture they posted that with fewer likes than their average (Psychology of Social Media, 2019). Researchers at King University posit that an individual's desire to post on social media and sometimes overshare fulfills the social and emotional aspects

of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This desire fuels the need for validation via likes and retweets (Psychology of Social Media, 2019). The need for validation via social media is beginning to impact how adolescents develop their identities. Researchers attribute higher likes to higher self-esteem in school-aged social media users.

Chapter 4: The long-lasting effects

Adolescence presents individuals with a wild developmental period where they begin to test their limits. Commonly during teenage years, individuals also begin to experiment with behaviors that can impede their health and wellbeing. Individuals ages 8-18 today spend an average of six to eight hours on various media platforms daily (Escobar-Chaves, Anderson 2008). Overconsumption of forms of media like social media, streaming cites, and online video games can increase an adolescent's likelihood to develop health issues that can become more prevalent as they get older. These health issues include Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, orthopedic and sleep disorders. Common causes of these disorders are lack of movement and physical activity, as well as over exposure to light.   These health issues are common effects of sedentary activity. With majority of media consumption taking place in a relaxed position either seated or laying down for prolonged periods, overuse of sedentary media can increase user risk of health problems associated with sedentary activity. Some video games have begun to capitalize on the physical issues traditional media and video games can cause. These video games try to market themselves as a workout and a game to appeal to users battling obesity or having issues with inactivity in their daily lives. Anecdotal evidence suggests that video games such as "Dance Dance Revolution" are working to make a positive difference in relational statistics of video games and obesity (Escobar-Chaves, Anderson 2008).

The advertising industry has adapted along with technology and social media trends. With platforms having a high percentage of user traffic, advertising agencies have adapted their practices to have their products "stick out" above the rest. Agencies have turned to tactics that aim to entertain, appeal to viewers emotions, or function as a "why us" pitch (Soules, 2015). Product placement advertisements within internet and television media target children with food ads from companies like Kellogg's, McDonalds, and Hostess. These food companies use television and video game characters for endorsements to make their products more appealing to younger audiences. Tobacco and alcohol companies often sensationalize the use of cigarettes and alcohol products in their advertisements. Within the advertisements are often themes of financial successes, sexuality, and love which appeal to adolescents. Advertising companies love to create an "aesthetic brand" where they can paint the users of a product in an appealing way, which can garner more sales for the company (Soules, 2015). These themed advertisements paint the use of cigarettes and alcohol as a stepping stone to success and love. Internet advertisements that glorify sexual activity, drugs, and alcohol have a direct correlation to behavior in adolescents with regular exposure to those specific internet ads (Escobar-Chaves, Anderson 2008). Many longitudinal studies on media exposure and adolescent behavior have linked correlations to media exposure and increased risky behavior. Risky behavior includes early sexual initiation, early desire to use alcohol and drugs, and more susceptibility to aggressive behavior.

As previously discussed in this essay, addiction to the web-based media is more likely if an individual is diagnosed with a pre-existing mental illness such as depression, anxiety, or obsessive-compulsive disorder. As individuals age from childhood through adolescence their behaviors become more independent and less tied to their parents or guardians. In 2019 roughly,

28 percent of tween parents monitored their child's time on mobile devices, and 50 percent of tween parents monitored what their child was using mobile devices for. As a child goes further into development these numbers trail off. In 2019 only, 14 percent of parents with teenagers reported monitoring their child's time spent on devices (Common Sense Media Census, 2019). Prolonged exposure to unmonitored media has the ability to influence the individual's behaviors and cognitive developments through their lives. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness 50 percent of all lifetime mental illnesses begin by age 14, and 75 percent by age 24 (Mental Health by the Numbers, 2019). While monitoring a child's online activity is very important, it is prudent to sustain the monitoring of their online activity through high school. One in six American youth experience a mental health disorder each year, with the likelihood of experiencing mental illness becoming greater with age. Seventeen percent of high school students surveyed by the National Alliance on Mental Illness reported serious thoughts of suicide (Mental Health by the Numbers, 2019). Parental supervision of media use and open conversation can go a long way in controlling the development or severity of disorders like anorexia, bulimia, depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Open monitoring of media use can also promote conversations about smart media use, social pressures, and body image which can go a long way in ensuring that a child develops a full sense of themselves.

We develop tactics as a society to limit the influence that media has on us. Shannon Vallor classifies early social platforms as organic networks, meant to share information. More recent social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube focus more on user content and collaboration. Social networks divert organic realities by allowing users to offer the world "stylized versions" of themselves (Vallor, 2012).   These hyper realities on social media create ethical concerns due to the camouflage of social realities. Technology can mask our reality,

which poses the potential to create blurred lines in our brains.   The lines between our organic being and our constructed social presence can give a false sense of self.   Operating our social media presence with honesty and morality, we work to eliminate the need to sensationalize and glamorize our social media profiles (Vallor, 2012). By cleansing our profiles of the sensationalized versions of ourselves, we are able to restore social media to its true intention of networking.   While it is important to accurately portray ourselves on social media, it can raise other ethical concerns regarding user information. Some major concerns include user's data being available to third party companies. This can lead to an influx of targeted ads as well as nonconsensual research (Vallor, 2012). Social networks user agreements feature often overlooked "opt in" agreements for user data that allow the social media platform to distribute your data without your knowledge. Facebook is a notable social media network that often comes under fire for their practices regarding user data. With the swirling web of unethical advertising practices, societal pressures of media use, and the separation of an online persona and real-life persona, society owes it to emerging adults to teach them logical media practices to ensure that future generations are smart and safe media consumers.

Conclusion:

America's technology industry has experienced a "boom" in production and development. The effects of this boom have caused various industries to automate their operations and streamline processes to computers and databases as opposed to physical work and forms. Technology has mobilized rapidly over the last three decades. Today's children and adolescents have a societal expectation of each other to be active on web-based media and video game platforms. Adolescents in 2020 have never known a world without personal computers, smartphones, tablets, and digitized education. Web-based media creates an atmosphere of self-autonomy, where users are able to shape their own experiences on websites and mobile applications.

Social media is a breeding ground with many ethical challenges in which to overcome. Users are exposed to a variety of advertisements that are often enhanced to appeal to their social and emotional desires. The construction of these ads often features edited and saturated images and users accounts, deliberately constructed to make the brand and products sound appealing. Additionally, social media usage also subjects users to instances where their personal data could be shared to third party companies, researchers, or the government.   Social media also allows users the opportunity to sensationalize their profiles and present the world with an enhanced version of themselves. Adults have a moral obligation to discuss media use with their children regularly. Understanding what risks are posed in social media use allow the child to better comprehend the digital world. While the media has an influence on how adolescents behave, adults have the ability to ensure that children consume media in a smart and safe way, so they are able to reap the benefits of web communication and information.

Web-based media challenges users critical thinking to determine the content creator's intention and audience. Interaction over web-based media allows young users to develop

additional critical thinking skills after exercises in schooling as well as real world experiences. Mobile devices focus user attention on their devices and mobile applications as opposed to their physical surroundings, and potential connections around them. Adolescents use of social media, while connecting them with friends and family can pose many issues developmentally. Depending on types of media consumed, users are more prone to develop perception issues, anger issues, and conduct issues. Historically, media use photo editing for advertisement models to portray a "perfect" but unattainable body type for both men and women. Social media grants users the opportunity to engage with their world through their personal device, supplanting the physical interactions users can have. Social media grants young users the opportunity to interact with friends and loved ones despite physical locations or time zone constraints. Internet advertisements on websites and video games feature substances, food and behavior in them that suggest adult behaviors earlier in life; are correlated to the engagement of late adolescents in riskier behaviors. These behaviors can cause individuals to develop bad habits early that translate into problems in adult hood. Many social media platforms use a system of "likes", "retweets", or "favorites" to determine content popularity on the platform. This aspect of various popular social media applications such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook present a quantitative element of popularity. By placing numbers on popularity, young users as well as users with obsessive personalities establish certain "popular" users as influencers.

Web-based media can offer users of any age benefits that make the internet, video games, and media appealing to use. However, overexposure and hyper fixation to media in any regard can influence the behavior, perception and conduct of users in adolescence not only in their teenage years, but beyond. Web based media in small increments can offer various social and

educational benefits to a user's, however over exposure or hyper focused exposure can impede

the development and conduct of younger users in adolescence.

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Academic Vita

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EDUCATION:	**THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY** UNIVERSITY PARK, PENNSYLVANIA B. A. in Broadcast Journalism, expected graduation date, May 2020 Theatre Minor Dean's List: Fall 2016- Spring 2018
HONORS:	Schreyer Honors College (June 2018- Present)

VIDEO/ MULTIMEDIA EXPERIENCE

Valley Video Staff Current
Penn State University VALLEY Magazine STATE COLLEGE, PA
- Produced and edited original video content for Penn State's VALLEY Magazine
- All videos made in groups of four to six staff members

Here for a reason: The Isabella Messina Story Fall 2019
Student video STATE COLLEGE, PA
- Independently produced story of a Four Diamonds Child turned Penn State THON volunteer

Production Intern Summer 2019
The Workshop Content Studios RADNOR, PA
- Intern for the launch of Netflix original "Basketball or Nothing"
- Assisted Producers and Directors with preproduction research, concept development
- Edited photos and social media videos

Production Assistant Summer 2019
Marketing video (Positive Vibes) RADNOR, PA
- Assisted in commercial video shoot for Philadelphia area clothing company

Sober at a Party School Spring 2019
Student video STATE COLLEGE, PA
- Profiled a student recovering from alcohol and drug addiction at Penn State
- Focused on recovery programs and relationships that contributed to her achieving 9 months sobriety

Live! (On Tape) Spring 2019
Writer, Production assistant STATE COLLEGE, PA
- Wrote script for Colbert report style newscast at Penn State Network Television
- Ran teleprompter and sound checks during show tapings

Collegiate Recovery Community Spring 2019
Student Video STATE COLLEGE, PA
- Featured a Penn State student affairs program for students recovering from various substance abuse disorders

• Showcased aspects of the program such as recovery housing, fellowship, and student testimony

SKILLS:
- Adobe Creative Cloud
- Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat
- Microsoft Office, Google Drive
- Panasonic DVX 200, Nikon D610, Canon T7. Nikon D7500

COMMUNITY   **Penn State Dance Marathon Volunteer (2016-2020)**