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*L'usage de tout système électronique ou informatique est interdit dans cette épreuve.*

*Rédiger en anglais et en 400 mots (plus ou moins 10 %) une synthèse des documents proposés, qui devra obligatoirement comporter un titre. Indiquer avec précision, à la fin du travail, le nombre de mots utilisés (titre inclus).*

Ce sujet comporte les 4 documents suivants :

- un dessin paru dans *Facebook* de Grizelda Cartoons, le 26 janvier 2019 ;
- un article de Roisin KIBERD publié dans *The Guardian*, le 19 mars 2019 ;
- un article de Perri KLASS publié dans *The New York Times*, le 3 juin 2019 ;
- une lettre ouverte de Clarissa BUSTAMANTE publié sur le site *the Odyssey online*, le 25 avril 2016.

*L'ordre dans lequel se présentent les documents est arbitraire et ne revêt aucune signification.*



“Mum, Dad...I think I’m addicted to social media.”

Source: CARTOON BY GRIZELDA, *Private Eye*, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018

Roisin KIBERD, 19th March 2019

Is social media addictive? The issue is complex, and probably generational.

It's obvious that what social media does to us, especially those of us who are heavy users, is not natural, or normal. It's not normal to submit opinions for approval every day to an online crowd, nor is it normal to consume the opinions of strangers in bulk. It's not normal to live under the surveillance of software companies, which tailor their advertising with such eerie precision that it seems impossible that they are not listening in on our conversations. It's definitely not normal to wake in the night to use social media, or to spend roughly 24 hours a week on it, returning again and again even though it can make us feel depressed and alone. None of these behaviours were normal a few decades ago, nor are they especially useful to us today, but they're practised by billions of people across the world.

On Monday a report was published by an all-party parliamentary group (APPG), proposing that internet addiction could be classified as a disease, and that research into its impact on mental health could be funded by a taxing social media companies. The paper includes surveys showing that 27% of children who spend three or more hours a day online show symptoms of mental ill health, and called for "robust, longitudinal research" into the possibility of social media addiction.

Addiction is characterised by abnormal behaviour, but what is "normal" any more? Could anyone stand to live without a smartphone, in 2019, and to go without social media? There will be readers who argue it's easy, but for a vast number trying to stay afloat in a precarious, internet-ravaged job market, the answer is no.

The stereotype of the basement-dwelling internet addict is not new – it's more than two decades since Japanese psychologist Tamaki Saitō coined the term *hikikomori* to describe a generation of recluses in Japan, who traded their social lives for internet, video-game and media consumption and a state of "adolescence without end". In 1995, The Unabomber manifesto asked that we "never forget that a human being with technology is exactly like an alcoholic with a barrel of wine". Its author, Ted Kaczynski, is, of course, a murderer and a terrorist, and steeped in his own rigidly biased view of civilisation, but the line is prescient: we are the alcoholics, and the barrel is a collection of scrolling feeds we gorge on, drowning before we've had our fill. Add social media, and the result is a

toxic brew of solipsism and information overload, the kind that one is either overwhelmed by, or turns one into a monster in order to survive. The UX design employed by these platforms is a maze of dark patterns and cues borrowed from the world of gambling. To use these sites is to become "addicted" – it's in their interest that you never sign out, and keep generating data indefinitely.

Three years ago I was advised by psychiatrists to avoid social media. 2016 was, by anyone's standards, a fairly difficult year to be on the internet, but the experience had left me neurotic and self-loathing, experiencing multiple panic attacks every day. I spent more time online than with other people, and social media had narrowed my view of the world, encouraging me to think in binary terms of good and bad, like and dislike, the kind of black-and-white thinking common to personality disorders and depression.

The link between social media and this narrowing of perspective is well documented: back in 2011, the term "filter bubble" was popularised by Eli Pariser in his book of the same name. It describes the algorithmic hypnosis that companies like Google, Facebook and Twitter perform on their users, learning their habits and reinforcing them with tailored content. Social media, which once promised to act as a window to the world, has slowly but surely become an engine for a kind of global solipsism, a breeding ground for "fake news", bias, compulsion and vanity – which profit the shareholders of these platforms.

One benefit of a disease classification would be that psychiatric professionals might take social media more seriously. On the other hand, it risks shifting focus away from governments, which have failed to regulate platforms, encouraging a culture where vulnerable individuals are at fault. While, in the US, the senator Elizabeth Warren recently proposed to break apart tech multinationals and rework antitrust laws, the MPs' report feels unambitious, and more like a palliative measure.

Any resulting regulation must focus on living with social media, rather than abandoning, restricting or censoring it – even for children and young adults. We're all cyborgs now: we outsource our emotions, our relationships and our working lives to the internet. Could this behaviour be a "disease", when it threatens more than 3 billion users? For better or worse, might it not be an evolution? We should be focusing on living with it, rather than abandoning, restricting or censoring it.

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Perri KLASS, M.D., June 3, 2019

There has been a lot of worry about adolescents and social media over the past couple of weeks, with new studies and reports raising questions about mental health and vulnerability, sleep and suicide. I recently wrote about the question of whether the word “addiction” is helpful in understanding our worries about adolescents and their relationships to the devices that connect them to their friends and their world.

In mid-May, a report in JAMA looked at suicide rates among those aged 10 to 19 over the period from 1975 to 2016; boys have traditionally had higher suicide rates, but the gap has narrowed as rates rose among adolescent girls, with the largest percentage increases among girls aged 10 to 14. The study was accompanied by an editorial calling the role of social media use among adolescents “an urgent public health issue that merits further investigation.”

Another study, just published in JAMA Psychiatry, showed a suicide bump among 10- to 19-year-olds (both boys and girls, but a larger increase in girls) at the time of the release of the Netflix series “13 Reasons Why”; the study shows association, not causation, but raises the question of “media contagion” — that is, the possibility that the show and the intense discussion of it on social media may have led to some imitative behavior, and cites “the need for safer and more thoughtful portrayal of suicide in the media.”

Dr. Michael Rich, an associate professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and the director of the Center on Media and Child Health at Boston Children’s Hospital, cautioned against the impulse to look for binary answers to complex problems by drawing too-simple conclusions.

“What we need to do is look at the whole picture around these young people; we need to look at how kids and how we all are using social media,” he said.

Children may use interactive media in problematic or dangerous ways because of underlying problems, or they may be particularly vulnerable to what they find on social media. And even while the specific links between social media use and mental health (in both directions) are debated, and researchers try to elucidate the connections and the risks, there is a general acknowledgment that the emotional landscape of the next generation is increasingly tied to those online connections, for better and for worse.

“The technology isn’t the problem, we’re the problem,” Dr. Rich said. “It’s the interactivity that draws some kids in.” At Boston Children’s Hospital’s Clinic for Interactive Media and Internet Disorders, he said, they are seeing four manifestations of what they call

problematic interactive media use, including gaming (mostly boys), and social media (mostly girls). And then there is pornography, “which is touching kids younger and more profoundly than anyone imagines,” he said. And finally there is “information bingeing,” with kids “disappearing down a rabbit warren of hot links.”

What these different problematic behaviors have in common, Dr. Rich said, is that many of the children involved had underlying issues to start with, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, social anxiety or depression. He and his colleagues are coming to believe, he said, that the problematic use of interactive media “is not a diagnosis at all, but is a syndrome of these other already established psychiatric disorders.”

And when kids get treatment for that underlying problem, he said, “We often find these behaviors disappear or get much more manageable.”

Dr. Ana Radovic, an assistant professor of pediatrics at UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh, an adolescent medicine specialist who does research in mental health services, said that only about a third of teenagers with depression get treatment, and it can take a long time.

At a clinic that serves teenagers who are severely depressed or suicidal, she began doing interviews about how they were using social media, and found she was hearing both positive and negative stories. “For example, there was one teen who shared with me that she enjoyed following a band that she liked on Instagram, and it made her feel better,” Dr. Radovic said. “And then all of a sudden she saw a picture of the band member self-harming and cutting her arm.”

Other adolescents talked about finding help through online groups — perhaps they found support through L.G.B.T.Q. sites which they didn’t find at home with their families — or about being talked out of suicidal thoughts on Reddit. “It’s a balancing act for some of these teens, finding help and support online but not being able to filter out the negative things,” Dr. Radovic said.

And a great deal of that balancing act may have to do with how teenagers are feeling before they go on social media, which then affects what they do on their devices, as well as how they react. Kids who are already feeling depressed have a negative cognitive bias, which affects how they interpret what happens on social media, Dr. Radovic said: “It’s a complex relationship, where you start off, what happens to you online, how you interpret what happens to you.”

“Teens are really driven by their peers, really rewarded by peer interactions,” Dr. Radovic said. “They’re exploring their identity, being creative, and sharing things that they’ve done, but it’s difficult for them to filter out the negative,” she said, and even more so when they are already vulnerable.

There are changes that tech companies could make in how social media works, Dr. Radovic said, which might reduce some of those negatives and change the online experience. For example, Instagram is looking at doing away with “likes” in a pilot program in Canada, to reduce social pressure and comparisons. There are ways to make things safer, she said, and even helpful; social media could play a part in the “safety plans” that teenagers make to handle suicidal feelings, if they come.

On the other hand, Dr. Radovic said, “there’s more and more evidence about sleep and suicidality,” with poor sleep a risk factor. And a new report from Common Sense Media emphasizes the ways that mobile devices have invaded our bedrooms, with both teenagers and their parents reporting waking up to check their

devices, and using them right before falling asleep — and first thing on waking up.

The ways we use our devices, and the ways our children use their devices reflect who we are and how we’re doing, but they also reflect the power of the technology. Dr. Radovic asked, “Can we change how people are using their social media so they’re not multitasking constantly, not having it keep them up?” Can we help teenagers filter their online experience to stay away from negative exposure? Or even help them figure out how to use social media to get help when they need it?

“We have sort of checked out of parenting in the digital domain and had them do their own thing both because we felt completely inept next to them, but also because they said, ‘this is my space, not yours,’” Dr. Rich said.

“They need us in that space — we draw an artificial distinction between online and offline, real world and virtual world,” while for them it is a seamless reality, he said. “We need to parent them in that space.”



ODYSSEY

## An Open Letter To Social Media

Clarissa BUSTAMANTE, April 25, 2016

Dear Social Media,

I love to hate you and hate to love you. I love your constant stream of adorable puppies, heartwarming videos, and posts from my friends. I love how you’re there anytime I need you, and I can access you from multiple devices. I love the fact that every time I look at you I see something new. I also love how you connect me to people and how you give me inspiration every day. I love all of your many facets, and how they all have a different purpose. Facebook is great for keeping in touch with people who are far away, Instagram is great for freezing moments in life and sharing them, Twitter is great for sharing quick, random thoughts, and Tumblr is great for expressing oneself and thinking deeply.

I love how I can bounce from app to app and always be entertained. But on the other hand, I hate you. I hate your constant stream of things that don’t matter, articles that are not true and posts from people who rant about things they don’t understand. I hate how you’re there anytime I need you, and I can access you from multiple devices. I hate the fact that every time I look at you, there is something new that I soak in as truth. I hate how you constantly overwhelm me by connecting me with people from all over the world and I hate how you inspire me to be like them. I hate you for inspiring me to look at these people and making me question myself. Making me wonder; Why am I not more attractive? Why do I not have more money? Why can’t I live a life like them?

I hate all of your many facets, giving me endless reasons to stay on my phone and ignore the outside world. Making me wonder; What’s out in the world that’s not already in my phone? Why travel when I can follow an Instagram account that will show me the same thing? I hate you for limiting my creativity and forcing me to limit my ideas to 140 characters for instant gratification. I hate how much I care about likes and “retweets.” I hate my attachment to you and the feeling of separation anxiety when I’m not with you. I love to hate you and hate to love you.