

The Influence of Social Media and Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

Thanks to modern technology, social media has flourished and allowed us to stay connected to friends, families, celebrities, influencers, total strangers (anyone really) easily. While there are many benefits to this, there are also many dangerous aspects to online communication, especially for young people. Numerous studies note that about 90% of young people of ages roughly between 13 and 30 use social media, and are the most active age group using it. Studies from recent years have also recorded some of the highest rates of mental health problems among teenagers, with depression and anxiety being the most common. The goal of this research is to present a review of the current state of the research on the correlation between teens increased mental health problems and frequent social media consumption. Because this young age group is the most easily affected by the stressors of social media, they are the focus of much research on this topic. Many studies have concluded that high social media use contributes to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt that lead to

depression through means like social comparisons and the strong influence of our peers in our youth. Social media messages that are received and transmuted into psychological ideas and unconscious comparison contribute to deteriorating mental health. Through thorough research, I've observed that the two primary factors relating to lowered self-esteem on social media are 1.) the way one perceives his or herself and their identity and 2.) the ways in which they perceive others. This has guided the direction of my thesis and conclusion that through the influence of peers and need to draw comparisons between self and others, increased social media use contributes negatively to self-esteem and other mental health conditions because of the narrow and often unrealistic way individuals are presented and perceived on their online platforms.

INTRODUCTION

The idea to put a small camera inside a cell phone probably seemed absurd to some at first, but for most people it was very exciting. For the first time, we could use a mobile device for relaying one-to-one communication verbally, using text, and now send images. Shortly after, in 2007, Apple released a phone with a camera that could also play music. The iPhone at the time, with its sleek and futuristic touch screen design, was considered a luxury item. However, as more competitors to the iPhone

were released, in under a decade this smartphone technology became a standard part of everyday life. We became fully immersed in the digital age, and these innovations have totally changed how we socialize and interact with one another. While Facebook did predate the iPhone as a highly popular social media platform, social media truly flourished when it became easily accessible from our pockets, particularly for teenagers for whom many of their socialization occurs through their phones. It was this idea to incorporate a camera in a phone, two inventions that have very little to do with each other, for the purpose of sharing photos with our friends and family that laid the foundation for social media to develop into what we have today.

There is a generational shift in the way young people interact with each other. Teens today spend less time together face-to-face and more alone time spent online, connecting with friends through social media or social networking sites (SNS) rather than in person. The entertainment factor of smartphones, even the ability to connect to the internet on any device, could contribute to the trend of teens staying home more and going out with friends less than in prior generations. They miss opportunities to develop social skills like the ability to read social cues and appropriately react to them. Perhaps as a result, many teens are critical of themselves for being too awkward. Many highly-active social media consumers of this age group exhibit identity-seeking behaviors on social media, such as comparing themselves with everyone they see online to gain a better understanding of themselves. Understanding how others perceive you and letting that influence how you view

yourself tends to have very negative psychological effects that are only intensified on social media where people usually only show us the good sides of life.

The goal of my research is to compile and assess current research findings and ideas about the relationship between increased social media activity and declining mental health and self-esteem. In this review, I will discuss the correlation between increased social media use and increased mental health obstacles; such as depression, anxiety, and loneliness; focusing specifically on how today's teenage population is affected due to their being the most active users of social media.

PERCEPTION OF SELF

Identity and self-expression

Learning how to engage with the world around us, especially socializing with other people and the ability to read and react to social cues, is critical while we are young. This is a time for figuring out who we are among familiar others, like our peers and family. The rise of social media and quick integration into our daily lives and habits throws a wrench into this task because far too many of us use social media as a mask. We use it to hide our imperfections and our typical, mundane and dysfunctional lives. Other's opinions of ourselves will always have a role in the way we

personally view ourselves, regardless of one's social media following. However, expect to find that the increased use of social media amplifies this effect.

According to one study that analyzed peer relationships of people ages 14-25, "adolescent identity development is positively associated with an attachment to peers... Desire to belong to a peer group and active involvement and participation in various peer groups activities are also linked with a reached identity. This could be explained by the fact that peer groups become the place where adolescents can compare themselves with each other and achieve a personal sense of identity which may be constructed in the context of social relationships" (Ragelienė). Social media has become a place for adolescents to find a place they feel they belong among peers, and feel accepted. There is a lot of room to control your identity on social media. It makes us hyper-aware of others spying on our lives, and helps explain why many of us have become so particular about the way we present ourselves online. Feeling under this pressure to be perfect, which many avid social media users do, can have many negative effects on mental health, including social stress, anxiety, and depression.

Identity development during the formative years of young adulthood is strongly influenced by others, including our peers and experiences in public. A significant part of social communication, and communication of identity and personality, is told using our bodies. Our body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, and even our clothing. What we say, how we say it, and the way we act in front of others are all part

of identity performance. The reactions of others to our performance, and how we interpret those reactions, are a key part to identity formation while we're still young. Meaning, if you interpret that others see you as *cool* you are more likely to also believe you are cool. The same concept goes for when you think others see you as uncool. Most young minds that are still piecing together their own concept of themselves are easily influenced by the opinions of others, and many will adjust their performances to get the desired reactions from others. The process of performance, interpretation, and adjustment is known as impression management, according to Erving Goffman's "presentation of self in everyday life". On social media, the lack of physical presence means that the performance, interpretation, and adjustment occurs via a personal profile and posts that vary from text, photo, video, or music/audio depending on the chosen platform.

Forming and Sharing of Identity

Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, to name some of today's most popular social media platforms, all feature a profile that consists of one identifying photo (profile picture), some basic information about the person (a "Bio") and a stream of posts created or shared by that person. It is through these profiles and posts that a person can control and manipulate the impression others will have of them. It can be controlled more meticulously than physical and verbal ways of communication because users can easily filter out any information that we don't want known, whether

it be for privacy reasons or other reasons. With social media impression management, the user is building their identity from the ground up. If one wishes, they can heavily edit photos and content to their liking. While maintaining a vague or more private online identity is always an option, users can share in great detail any events in their lives from major milestones to their daily cup of coffee, and edit them to either conceal information or contribute to a profile's aesthetic or personal preferences.

Snapchat is unique because it's for messaging via photo or video between friends or groups of friends. It is not a platform which it is easy to stumble upon new accounts. Profiles provide little to no background information about the person, and one typically has to have previous knowledge of that person, either through an offline connection or through other social media platforms, in order to search for their profile. Snapchat users can view their friends' public "stories" and message with them directly; however, they cannot view data such as who else viewed or replied to a public post. Only the poster of the content has access to that information. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram all make this information public as an accompaniment to the original post, although they do all also feature private direct messaging.

Content and frequency of posts will both affect one's impression. Posting consistently on platforms that use a combination of photos and text is important if one wants to appear more intimate and close with their following. This always helps an audience gain a more well-rounded impression of this person. Teenagers using social

media typically have a social media following that consists of friends and peers they know offline. While their online identity may be consistent with their offline one, it is through a more narrow lens that we can come to understand them. In some cases, an online identity offers only one aspect of a fuller identity which we can only understand if we personally know them. In cases where we may not know the person, users may still feel a strong sense of familiarity with that person and understand their identity when the communication is consistent in messaging and frequent. This experience on social media is more typical of those whose business demands an online presence, such as some celebrities or public figures.

The chosen social media platform can also play a contributing role in how one is perceived. According to one study in 2016 by Matt Pittman, perceived social connectedness and therefore loneliness varies depending on the use of images and visuals in online communication. Image-based social media platforms, like Instagram and Snapchat, contribute to increased feelings of happiness and satisfaction with life (SWL) more so than the use of text-based platforms, like Twitter.

This ability to mitigate an undesirable psychological state and induce positives ones may be due to the ability of images to facilitate social presence, or the sense that one is communicating with an actual person instead of an object... Although Twitter, for example, does have some social utility, the advent of more specific and intimate platforms for use between friends has likely modified its role to be more centered around

general news and alleviating boredom. It makes sense, then, that we observed virtually no relationship between text-based social media use and psychological well-being (Pittman, Reich).

Use of images in online communication contribute to feelings of closeness and intimacy with others because images are better at recreating the experience of face-to-face interactions. A platform like Snapchat which includes less quantitative data in one's user profile could be especially suited for developing positive peer relationships. It uses images as the primary form of communication, with the option to include overlapping text. Sharing photos of oneself and activities with friends either individually through direct messages or generally through public posts help build and facilitate relationships better than text-only media. Text alone make deciphering emotion and tone more difficult as these implicit messages are muddled and more easily taken out of context.

PERCEPTION OF OTHERS

Social Comparison

With the global embracement of social media, we are now more connected to each other than we've ever been. Their parents may have had pen pals they were

young, but this current generation of teenagers has the benefit of connecting with people their age from almost anywhere in the world with access to internet. So whether they're connecting with friends over great distances that they may have never met in person, or more likely their friends from school, social media sites are the new spot for teenagers to "hang out", to put it simply. Our human need to communicate in a social context serves a number of functions, such as finding a sense of community and belonging, regulating our emotions, influencing decisions, and self-evaluation (Vogel, et al.). According to Leon Festinger's Social Comparison Theory, the need for self-evaluation motivates us to compare ourselves to similar others while we're young to gauge our capabilities and social acceptance. Upward social comparisons occur when comparing oneself with the perceived superior, positive characteristics of others, while downward social comparison occur when we compare ourselves to perceived inferior, negative characteristics of others. Typically, downward comparisons lead to feelings of greater adequacy and positive self-perception, while upward comparisons can inspire one to want to be more like their superior peers or feel more inadequate and dissatisfied with oneself.

On image-based platforms such as Instagram, young people have endless opportunities to make social comparisons. The common habit on social media is to share the positive aspects of our lives, and hide or avoid discussing the negative aspects. Meaning, we tend to share our vacations, accomplishments, and loved ones more often than our failures and shortcomings. This would have researchers from the

University of Toledo believe that we make more upward social comparisons on social media often, making downward comparisons more rare. By using a method that manipulated profiles and posts for the purposes of studying participants reactions, these authors tested their hypothesis that increased upward comparisons among frequent users of social media (this study focused specifically on Facebook) contributes to decreased self-esteem. Using profiles that are specifically targeted at producing either a downward comparison or an upward comparison from the viewer, they found that the upward comparison targets did generate lowered state self esteem in participants. However, the downward comparison target did not lead to an increased state self esteem. Instead, users reported having similar views about themselves as they did with these downward-comparison targets (Vogel, et al. 216).

It's been suggested many times that individuals with an already lowered self-esteem or otherwise mentally unhealthy disposition may be more drawn to communicating over social media, and be the main reason for this correlation. However, social psychologist Jean Twenge has observed that those who are already highly social individuals tend to be more socially engaged in both online platforms and offline ones. When taken into consideration the common subjects young people post about on social media, which include mainly positive events like vacations, accomplishments, or even mundane experiences with a fun or positive outlook, it seems very likely that the reason young people tend to believe others are superior in any sense is because they are constantly bombarded with evidence suggesting it.

Always seeing posts of peers' positive life experiences, and rarely ever seeing each other struggle may make them feel like they're the only ones going through difficult stages.

Loneliness

Twenge's book "iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy— and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood" provides some very interesting research on how this generation born *roughly* between 1995 and 2010 has been shaped by the sudden rise of smart technology and social media alongside their adolescent years, and how this sets them apart from their predecessors. She argues that social media does seem to cause increased loneliness, rather than the other way around.

"It's possible that loneliness causes smartphone use instead of smartphone use causing loneliness, but the abrupt increase in loneliness makes this alternative much less likely. If loneliness causes smartphone use, a sudden increase in loneliness with no known cause would lead to smartphones suddenly becoming more popular. It seems much more likely that smartphones became popular, screen time increased, and thus teens' loneliness increases" (99).

These observations are very interesting to compare to Pittman's research which was discussed earlier, suggesting that because of the more personal aspect of sharing

photos, image-based social media should actually contribute to a decrease in loneliness. This research seems to be designed with the thought that there are more benefits to social media than there are negatives, particularly with regard to ease and speed of connecting others with friends and peers at any time, regardless of distance. Social media certainly helps fulfill a need for social belonging; however, the other aspects that lead to dispositions such as lowered self-esteem may also contribute to feelings of isolation while teens and young people view their friends on social media, and therefore loneliness. Social media can help mitigate loneliness when users are having positive experiences rather than experiences that lead to upward social comparisons.

While the onset of social media generally has been beneficial for society as a whole because of the way it connects us all through this instant communication despite distance or cultural differences, other research seems to suggest that on an individual basis, social media is more detrimental to one's personal health and well-being because of the way it seems to exacerbate the self-doubt that is natural for teens to experience while their growing. It's this self-doubt and need to understand how one is perceived in the minds of others that leads to social comparisons, and the apparent sweeping of upward comparisons on social media sites.

The way social media connects us to the rest of the world so easily contributes to the generation of young people who so emphasize tolerance, inclusivity, and

broadcasting of social justice issues that Twenge observes in her book. This connectedness is a benefit, and Pittman's research suggests that "the increasingly ubiquitous image-based social media platforms that are connecting people in new ways can actually facilitate a kind of human connection that mitigates loneliness and cultivates happiness and social well-being." This makes sense considering that it is now more common and accepted for young social media users to build friendships with people they've never met in real life. Friendships are built often from shared experiences, so when we see a large influx of upward social comparison occurring on social media, perhaps there's more going on that causes users to feel less connected to and more in competition with their social media friends.

Peer Influence

Peer influence, or even the mere presence of others, can have a profound impact on the way young people behave and form beliefs about the world and themselves. Social Comparison Theory begins to explain this, giving us some reasons for the motivation to compare (such as self-evaluation), and the concluding results of these comparisons are highly influential in future decision-making. One study from researchers from the University of California Los Angeles looks at the neural and behavioral responses as evidence that peer influence is just as powerful on social media as it is in person. Given that teenagers are the most active age group using social

media with 90% of American teens reported as active users (Sherman et al.), it is interesting to see how these social dynamics like peer influence and comparison that once required physical presence now occur in almost the same fashion from a neurological standpoint, but in digital format. Perhaps it is this influence of our peers that also drove the popularity of smartphones and social media so high in the first place.

This research from 2016 titled “The Power of LIKE in Adolescence: Effects of Peer Influence on Neural and Behavioral Responses to Social Media” is unique in that it’s one of the first of its kind to monitor the neural patterns of social media activity. Due to the sensitive cognitive stage of adolescence, these researchers also chose to focus on the behavior of young people. “Adolescence is especially important for social cognitive development; it is theorized to be a sensitive period during which young people are uniquely attuned to the complexities of interpersonal relationships” (Sherman, et al.). This group of scientists highlighted the two factors associated with increased activity in reward centers of young brains: risk-taking behaviors and approval from peers.

Using a mock Instagram app, researchers asked participants to scroll through a variety of images classified as either neutral or depicting risky behavior. Many photos were actually supplied by participants themselves, although researchers also obtained photos from other sources for the purposes of this study. Attached to each photo is

the purported number of likes it received from peers, and were controlled in such a way that each participant has a similar gauge of the popularity of each photo. By comparing the brain activity of participants while they viewed images with the various combinations of neutral or risky with many or few likes, researchers analyzed for how the given information influenced participants' choices to either like or pass every photo. According to their findings, adolescents were more likely to like photo that received many likes, regardless of portraying risking behaviors. This was especially true for the photos supplied by the participants.

We all have a natural need to not only feel *liked* in the quantifiable sense but also to feel accepted and appreciated by our friends, families, and peers. We look for cues to signal to others that we are likeable, and we find these cues by becoming interested in what others seem to like or accept. This study from the University of California Los Angeles makes a strong case for quantifiable social endorsement as a significant influence on one's choice to like a social media post, or feel satisfied with the amount of likes on their own posts.

"Adolescence is a period during which self presentation is particularly important, including on social media; thus, this significantly greater effect may reflect the relative importance of self-presentation versus providing feedback to others. ... The ability to like an image, text, or other piece of

information, allowing for a simple, straightforward measure of peers' endorsement. For adolescents, who are particularly attuned to peer opinion, this quantifiable social endorsement may serve as a powerful motivator"

Likes, comments and followers on social media are all forms of social currency, and because of this sensitive stage of life in which we are generally more concerned with our peers' opinions of us, this social currency is much more valuable for young adolescents than other adults, making them more likely to experience stress, anxiety, and depression associated with high social media use. Developing an unhealthy relationship with social media, or worse, an unhealthy relationship with yourself at this early a stage in life could very well lead to those conditions continuing or worsening later in life if ignored. While researching for this thesis, it became obvious to me that the general population doesn't quite grasp the seriousness of these psychological effects of social media. After all, it does seem quite innocent to scroll through social media and hear from other people, whether that be friends and family or celebrities and total strangers that we don't perceive as strangers because of their strong social media presence. In actuality, most people on social media still only talk about the highlights of their life, and avoid talking about their personal struggles, which every person goes through. Our fear of being judged or not being accepted by others drives this need to appear perfect and happy all the time, when that's just not realistic.

Growth of social media has really bolstered these negative effects of socialization, and by creating social currencies, users can now put a numerical gauge on their own personal value. It's as if our fears and insecurities of being inadequate have become more tangible and more real. This silence on the mundane or stressful parts of life worsens these conditions that lead to stress, anxiety, and depression because it makes us think we're alone. While cyberbullying has surely played a part in this trend as well, and is a very serious form of harassment, even small gestures and observations on social media that we easily disregard as insignificant, such as one rude comment or one photo that received less likes than our other photos, can have a lasting impression on our mental health. This summation of all these small moments of sadness or lack of confidence add up to greater problems of depression and anxiety.

SEEKING PERFECTION

Location Sharing

When social media began introducing location-based features on their apps, users were afforded another object to link themselves to and use to gain social currency. Connecting an online identity with a city, restaurant, or event for example

provides context for the person's social media post, but does not necessarily serve a practical use in social media. After location sharing on social media was introduced and became popular, Raz Schwartz, then a postdoctoral researcher at Cornell Tech NYC and has since move on to become Facebook's research manager, along with University of Kansas professor Germaine R Haleboua conducted research on how these services were being used and some of the psychological processes behind it. According their research, "although location-based social media have been promoted in terms of coordination or meeting up with other users in physical space, many users choose to selectively broadcast their location even when there is limited or no possibility for a face-to-face meeting" (Schwartz, Haleboua). Some of the motivating factors for sharing a location They noted several motivating factors for sharing or keeping a record of locations, including self-promotion, bragging or "showing off", recording places as a memory aid, and to receive points or rewards for particular actions. Consumers are selective about which locations they share. They're only going to share a country, city, restaurant or event if that location adds value to their online persona because it is trending or relevant to their online life and aesthetic of their profile.

Schwartz and Haleboua refer to this reinforcement of online profiles and identities through location sharing as the spatial self. The use of location sharing services to associate the location with their online persona or to influence others

influence others and associate. This kind of self-presentation or identity performance “sometimes idealized performances of who a user is, based on where they go.” For example, in an interview conducted by Halegoua, one food blogger reflected that she would only use location sharing services for restaurants that she personally recommended and that “mesh with her tastes and sensibilities displayed on other online profiles and sites.” This is a perfect example of one of the many ways media consumers and users meticulously curate their self-presentations on social media.

Being “Instagramable”

Location sharing adds to the data sets that teens and some older consumers as well use to make comparisons between themselves and their peers as well as a means to influence their social media following. One example of this not mentioned in Schwartz and Halegoua’s research is the music festival industry. Perhaps the most famous annual festival, Coachella, is well-known for being one of the most “instagrammable” events of the year because of the beautiful scenery, colorful photo-ops and outfits, and of course the musical performances. While Coachella was always regarded as one of the best music events of the year since it began in 1999, popularity and competitive ticket prices increased dramatically around 2011, meaning shortly after social media took power over so many of our decisions it had a huge influence on the event’s success even today.

The influence of social media is so far-reaching that this Coachella craze inspired competitors attempting to create an even more impressive experience. Fyre Festival in 2017 was advertised as being a “Coachella in the Bahamas.” The event, which was a massive failure resulting in two documentaries function simultaneously as a public relations stunt and to reveal what went wrong in the planning. Fyre Festival used social media as its primary platform for advertising, recruiting celebrities and influencers to be part of the ad campaign while remaining vague on the details of the event. This attracted many wealthy millennials eager to share their experiences online. Despite the clear contrast of these two events’ success, both were greatly influential on social media. It’s obvious that for both events, a huge reason why people purchased tickets is because of what they saw on social media. Comparing these events is very revealing of how easily our perception of others’ lives and the desire to be perceived positively influences our decisions.

CONCLUSION

Given these ideas that we use social media to improve upon and control other’s impressions of ourselves as well as gauge where we stand among our peers, there’s an apparent lack of authentic self-expression on social media. More often than not, our motivation to post on social media is driven by a need to be seen and a need to be

liked more so than a desire to share stories and experiences with friends and family. Today's adolescents are using social media to compare and copy what they see others doing. While peer influence is not new, it has become a strong driver of social media use, and its quantifiable aspects of peer approval too easily lead to perceived inadequacy in one's own self-image.

In *The Precession of the Simulacra*, Jean Baudrillard expressed that truth and authenticity have essentially disappeared and been replaced with hyperbolic versions of reality. "When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning." On social media, it's not only teens that are assuming this nostalgia as reality, but everyone that looks at someone's "highlight reel" of their life on social media and see it as a window into their everyday life. However, younger consumers of social media are more susceptible to the negative effects this can have on mental health. Constantly viewing friends and family members' on social media looking like they're having a great day everyday can easily confuse consumers into believing their own lives are mundane, and consumers are in competition with one another over who gets the most peer approval and quantifiable social endorsements, because it feels good to be well-liked by your community.

It is for these reasons that former Facebook senior executive Chamath Palihapitiya says that his kids are not allowed to use any social media. He heavily criticised the structure of social media that leads to not only mental health problems

but other mistruths and communication problems as well in one interview at Stanford University.

It's a really, really bad state of affairs. We compound the problem. We curate our lives around this perceived sense of perfection because we get rewarded in these short term signals— hearts, likes, thumbs up— and we conflate that with value and we conflate it with truth. Instead, what it really is is fake, brittle popularity that's short term and leaves you even more— *and admit it*— vacant and empty than before you did it. Because then it forces you into this vicious cycle where you're like what's the next thing I need to do now, because I need it back.

Other than stress, anxiety, and depression, others like Palihapitiya have likened this kind of social media stress to addiction, making this need to compare and gain approval more grim than it seemed. He also notes that overall Facebook as well as other platforms do overwhelming positive good for the world. The speed and ease of connecting with just about anyone has many benefits. However, consumers will need to be more conscious about the way we use social media to curb these aspects that harm mental health. Curbing this danger is especially important in our youngest consumers of social media because they are more prone to these dangers that could follow them throughout life.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bashir, Hilal, and Bhat, Shabir. "Effects of Social Media on Mental Health: A Review." *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Jan. 2016, doi:10.25215/0403.134.

In this brief review, Bashir and Bhat presents the state of the relationship between social media and mental health as of 2016 when the review was published, and concludes that there is a positive correlation between increased social media usage and increased mental health obstacles like anxiety, depression, and loneliness. At times, they likens increases social media use to an addiction, referring to certain behavior patterns related to social media use. This article points out that this is particularly dangerous for younger generations that happen to be some of the most common users of social media because being at a sensitive stage in development, mental health issues are more likely to become a life-long struggle. This further emphasises the need for research on the relationship between mental health and social media usage.

Baudrillard, Jean, and Sheila Faria. Glaser. *Simulacra and Simulation*. The University of Michigan Press, 2014.

Breaking down the layers of reality and representations, Baudrillard argues that highly saturated simulation and representation displaces what is real and authentic. In the realm of social media, there is no need to be physically present to participate, making the content even more representational, and making the authenticity of content uncertain. Without any grounding in what is genuine and what is not, many adolescents navigate social media thinking that everyone is living an exceptionally fun and fulfilling life because that is what they chose to show on social media, even if it's not consistent with reality, which can lead to upward social comparisons and negatively influence mental health.

Boyd, Danah. "Why Youth Heart Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life." 2017, doi:10.31219/osf.io/22hq2.

Teenagers were always the early adopters of social media, and this new way to interact with our peers also introduced new modes of self-expression and identity formation. This article focuses on how identity development is influenced by the public arena, while the very definition of public is shifting due to your online existence. The relationships that are formed or otherwise facilitated online also help with identity development.

Goffman, Ervin. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Harmondsworth, 1978.

It's well-known that social media users tend to put their best foot forward in terms of how they present themselves on social media, just like we tend to do in real-life. Goffman's work on the presentation of the self helps us understand that the way we are perceived by others has a profound effect on the way we perceive ourselves

Moreno, Megan A, and Koff, Rosalind. "Media Theories and the Facebook Influence Model."

The Psychology of Social Networking Vol.1, 31 Jan. 2015, doi:10.1515/9783110473780-013.

By synthesizing previous media theory and their applications to "new media" (defined here by characteristics of interactivity and interconnectedness among users), Moreno and Koff point out some of the gaps in understanding of social media. Theories like Uses and Gratifications Theory, Cultivation Analysis, and Media Ecology Theory help us understand our motivations and relationship with technology and media as well as how they shape and influence our perception of reality, but, as Moreno and Koff point out, there is still a growing need for further research on how media influence health behaviors. The

Facebook Influence model is demonstrated here as a model for future research on how media influences behavior. The Facebook Influence model provides interesting insight as to how Facebook influences and helps establish social norms.

Pittman, Matthew, and Brandon Reich. "Social Media and Loneliness: Why an Instagram Picture May Be Worth More than a Thousand Twitter Words." *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 62, 2016, pp. 155–167., doi:10.1016/j.chb.2016.03.084.

Through research survey consisting of over 200 undergraduate social media users, Pittman and Reich make the argument that because of greater perceived intimacy of image-based social media (like Instagram) versus text-based social media (like Twitter) actually contribute to decreased levels of loneliness and increased happiness and satisfaction with life, and note the role of media that combines image and text, like Facebook. While we benefit from all social media in terms of immediacy of information and greater chances of connecting with other users despite physical distance, image-based media offers more opportunity for perceived intimacy and closeness with others, and therefore should contribute happier, less-lonely participants of media. The authors also point out that lonely people are more likely to use Facebook or other social networks for making online connections when they lack or do not benefit from their offline relationships. This article provides an interesting opposition to my own research by reminding me of some of the benefits of social media, helping to inform my perception of the relationship between social media and mental health throughout my research.

Qi, Jiayin, et al. "Theories of Social Media: Philosophical Foundations." *Engineering*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2018, pp. 94–102., doi:10.1016/j.eng.2018.02.009.

This research Provides some theoretical framework and philosophy that can be useful for my own inquiries of social media. The researchers focused on four archetypal theories from Goffman, Bourdieu, Sarte, and

Heidegger and their applications in social media. What I found very interesting is that the authors of this article offer a comparison of this theoretical framework with information systems (IS) research findings on the same subject, noting similar conclusions about motivation for using social media involving personal, social gain.

Ragelienė, Tija. "Links of Adolescents Identity Development and Relationship with Peers: A Systematic Literature Review." *Journal of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, May 2016, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4879949/#.

Ragelienė's research argues that the way we are perceived by our peers, as well as the way we believe we are perceived by our peers, has a significant role in identity formation in adolescents. The implications this has for social media and how peers see our *online* selves, which are often skewed versions of reality focusing on the positive aspects of our lives, can lead to uncertainty in youth's friendships and self-identities. The importance of peer-relationships and peer-acceptance in identity formation, highlighted in this article, helps inform my research on how increases social media use can lead to dissatisfaction with one's self and life.

Schwartz, Raz, and Germaine R Halegoua. "The Spatial Self: Location-Based Identity Performance on Social Media." *New Media & Society*, vol. 17, no. 10, 2014, pp. 1643–1660., doi:10.1177/1461444814531364.

When social media began adding location-based features, it gave users another element of their identity to control. Location can have a surprising impact on how we are perceived by others, particularly when it involves a social event (such as music festivals, for example). The authors equate location sharing services with an online performance of identity by connecting that individual with their location. As this study points out, location is one element social media that contributes to one's perceived social status, and creates more opportunity for social comparison.

Sherman, Lauren E., et al. "The Power of the *Like* in Adolescence." *Association for Psychological Science*, May 2016, doi:10.1177/0956797616645673.

In this article, the authors produce practical research on how adolescent peer influence occurs on social media by analyzing the participants neural responses to Instagram using fMRI technology, and measuring quantitative data in the form of *likes*. They conclude that the popularity of a photo has significant influence over how it's perceived by others, highlighting the idea of quantifiable social endorsement. Noticing greater brain activity in participants when they view a photo with many likes, researchers note that we perceive information differently when we believed it's highly valued by our peers.

Twenge, Jean M. *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy--and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood: and What That Means for the Rest of Us*. Atria Paperback, 2017.

Twenge's book offers insight as to why young minds are so captivated by social media and online connections. She points out that today's teens favor online social experiences more often than in-person experiences. Compared to previous generations, iGen is spending about the same amount of time on homework, but less time hanging out with friends, replacing this time with screen time and chatting with friends online. The chapters I found most useful detail how the popularity of smartphones and social media among young people lead to a generation that is more socially conscious and inclusive than ever before, and yet very insecure and lack confidence in social abilities (according to research presented in this book). Twenge attributes this trend to the rise in popularity of online communication, made easy by smartphones and social networks.

Vogel, Erin A., et al. "Social Comparison, Social Media, and Self-Esteem." *American Psychological Association*, 3(4), Oct. 2014, doi:10.1037/ppm0000047.

This psychology research study use Social Comparison Theory as the basis for understanding the relationship between social media and self-esteem, concluding that there is a relationship between increased social media use and increased upward social comparisons among users. While we've always made social comparisons from childhood to gain social footing and to understand how we're perceived by peers, social media offers a platform to comparison to occur in a more intense and quantitative way.