

# **Plug-in and Live**



## **Voices from the Digital Natives**

**Edited by Dr. Alecea Standlee**

**Plug-in and Live**  
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**By**

Adam Belcher  
Jonathan Brown  
Dustin Donohoe  
Kaylyn Jennings  
Kishonna Horton  
Jonathan A. Lloyd  
Jarod Tupper

**Edited by Dr. Alecea Standlee**  
[astandlee@concord.edu](mailto:astandlee@concord.edu)

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## Preface

*By Dr. Alecea Standlee*

The following is a collection of essays, written, edited and compiled by seven extraordinary young adults, from different walks of life, who are seeking to share a glimpse of the world in which they inhabit. They work to give the reader a sense of what it is like to be a digital native in the United States. The origin of this project was a course Digital Culture and Social Behavior in the fall of 2012 at the small liberal arts university where I teach, Concord University. The students in this upper division sociology elective took up a difficult task in September of 2012. They elected to speak to the world in the form of this ebook, not as academic experts but rather as themselves, as digital natives.

In 2008 John Palfrey and Urs Gasser coined the phrase digital native. Digital natives are the generation of young adults in the US for whom computers, cell phones and computer-mediated communication are so familiar that they are unremarkable. This group is the first generation to have grown up primarily within the information revolution, and perhaps on the edges of a new network society (Castells 2004; Palfrey and Gasser 2008).

For digital native there is no first time, no memories of learning to use a computer or learning about the Internet. Like learning to walk, these memories of technological introduction occur when children are too young to remember. Computers and the Internet are, in a very real way, just one more aspect of their lives that is inevitable and "normal." Yet computer-mediated communication is a relatively new phenomenon; and widespread use of the home computer and the Internet has emerged primarily in the last two decades.

Thus emerges an intergenerational conflict in which young adults struggle to speak to their parents and teachers across a digital divide. Faced with both the fears and misunderstandings of their elders and the expectations of technological compliance by their peers, digital natives stand at a crossroads in history. They are the first generation born into cyber-technological world. Today, the Internet continues to make inroads into societies across the globe, in which a quarter of the global population has access and the numbers continue to rise (Miniwatts 2009). Current statistical research found that in the US, while only about 81% of the population use the Internet 18-29 year olds and those with college education, have usage rates between 95 and 97%% (Pew Internet 2013). The Net Gen, the millennials, children born into and raised as a part of the techno-mediated world, relationships and knowledge mediated by the screen, deeply embedded in the cyber-cultural superstructure of the late 20th and early 21st century. The pervasiveness of this technology is only matched by its transformative power for human society. Yet, we still know very little about how this technology might impact our society in the long term.

In part because of this fact, that we know so little about the longer-term impact of technological development this project is very important. These young men and women accepted the charge to try and speak, not for their generation, but from their generation, to share their own experiences and the experiences of their peers, as digital natives, as young people and as members of a broader digital society. They went where I, as a

teacher and academic, could not into the homes and game spaces of their peers, they became the outsiders within.

These essays are divided into four categories. The first is a selection of essays in which student authors present historical or cultural analysis of digital culture. These essays explore the history and cultural norms of the digital world, from the perspective of one born an insider. They attempt to lay the foundation for a broader discussion of digital culture by discussing issues that are central to contemporary technology. Issues such as: censorship, the representation of technology in popular culture and gender inequality.

In the second and third sets of essays, the students set out to explore digital culture as both an internal and collective experience. Students used a variety of ethnographic, auto-ethnographic, observational and participant observational methods to produce a thoughtful analysis of their peers. In the second set of essays, they focus on the norms, trends and expectation of gaming and video game culture. These essays range from discussions of casual gamers and stereotypes of gamers to online gaming, and offline game experiences and desires.

The third set of essays works to examine the norms, trends and expectation of social media use among young people. The authors present us with a series of thoughtful essays on one of the most controversial and pervasive technologies of the last decade, social media, specifically Facebook. Essays move from discussions of how young people use social media to what they think about it and what it gives them in terms of social capital and entertainment. However, the authors also discuss some of the risks and fears of social media use, as understood by digital natives.

Finally, in the last set of essays presented here, students consider their own relationship with technology through thoughtful discussions of their own patterns of technology use and the use of others around them. These are deeply self-reflective essays that consider both issues of identity and the role of technology of society. Ultimately, these essays seek to answer the question, what does it mean to be a member of "digital culture"?

The students in this course, and young people all over the world are today faced with a series of questions. The questions are navigated everyday, through social interactions, through technological use and behavior, through simply experiencing the realities of living in a techno-mediated world. As much as answer these questions, this collection of essays seeks to bring these questions into the public sphere, and perhaps suggest that the answers to them will be found only when digital natives and digital immigrants work together across the generational divide. These questions are simple and complex, at once. What is happening in my world? Who am I, who are you, what does the social world look like, when the medium of communication is changed, transformed? Are we in a moment of transformation, as we become increasingly techno-mediated? Are we in the midst of a true technological revolution or have we already become a networked society, and are only just beginning to notice?

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**SECTION I**  
**Mapping the Digital Landscape**

## [It Has You: The Matrix and Fear of the Future](#)

*By Adam Belcher*

The movie *The Matrix* came out in 1999, right on the cusp of emerging technology. The world was unsure of how to take the reality of technology as it quickly advanced in front of them. Was technology going to become something more than human, something greater that could eventually edge out our superiority? Or would be able to keep control of it and usher in a new era of human/AI symbiosis. Movies in the past had touched on this subject, such as *Terminator* or *Blade Runner*, and books such as *Neuromancer* would cover this subject, but they are limited by the technology of their time. *The Matrix* came at almost a perfect time, the internet was still a fairly new invention, people were completely unsure of the effect that it would have on society. Still, to this day, people are still unsure of the effect the internet has on society. There is only starting to be an idea of the effect the internet and computers are having in our society, and this is more than a decade later after *The Matrix* was released. While the *Matrix* gives viewers a view into a dystopian future where we are ruled by technology, more than a decade after its release, it still calls into question viewers reliance on technology and makes them think about how far this technology is going to go.

The main plot of *The Matrix* is that sometime in humanity's future, we gave birth to AI, or artificial intelligence, and eventually humans turned against AI, or vice versa (the movie never truly clarifies). In the end, the AI, or machines as the movie terms them, wins and manages to enslave humanity. The slavery the machines put the humans into however is not the kind of slavery that one usually thinks of when they think of slavery. Instead, they hook up the humans to machines that take the energy that human beings produce and use it to power themselves. They had to resort to this because humanity, in a last-ditch effort to defeat the machines, caused the sun to be blocked out, attempting to take away the power source of the machines, which was the sun. They create this fantasy world, mimicking 1990's Earth in order to create a world in which humans can live in and be unaware of the harsh reality of their situation.

The heroes of this tale, Morpheus, Trinity, and the others are humans who have freed themselves and others from the *Matrix* and their attempt to defeat the machines and free every human from their unknowing enslavement. They find Neo, who has been prophesied to be *The One* who was to change the tide of the war between human and machines, and the movie turns into his journey and how he discovers that he is in fact *The One*. The movie ends with his realization, him defeating the Agents, who are the machines' agents in *The Matrix*, and his declaration that he "is going to show them a world ... without you, a world without rules and controls, without borders or boundaries; a world where anything is possible. Where we go from there is a choice I leave to you," and he impossibly flies off into the sky, giving the viewer an idea of what he is now capable of (*The Matrix*).

Now, where does technology fit into all this? One can write volumes and volumes about the philosophical impact the *Matrix* had. But what is greater than that is how this movie

reflects fears about technology at the time, and how these fears have changed in the years following the release of the film. The first thing is to look at the idea of the machines themselves, the malevolent machines that have turned humanity into nothing more than a battery. This almost falls into line with previous ideas of machine overlords in movies past, such as Terminator. This plays into the greatest idea of fear of the machine. While we created machines to mimic our own ways, they lack the emotional capacity we have, and it is some people's fear that the machines would decide that they would no longer need us, and eliminate us with no emotional response, or just take control, seeing themselves as the pinnacle of perfection because of their lack of emotion. In the time since the release of the Matrix, technology has changed so quickly that it feels like the technology used in the movie is incredibly outdated, much like how a 1980s technology movie such as WarGames looked to us.

Scott R. Stroud, in his article, *Technology and Mythic Narrative: The Matrix as Technological Hero-Quest* that "Modern technology has an unusual penchant for severely alienating some individuals and greatly empowering others" (416). He sees the Matrix as a film expressing the fears of alienation that come out of emerging technology. Through the movie, the viewer can see the fear of the future; does humanity perhaps hit a utopia or a peaceful coexistence with itself that allows us to reach farther than we have ever reached before, or does technology outpace us and eventually replace us, turning us into the batteries that the movie describes? This rings true today more than it did during the time that Stroud read, which makes it seem so far away, but it is important to emphasize the fact that the movie came out a little over a decade ago. Look at technology today, children gain technological prowess much quicker than the previous generations. There is very clearly a generation gap when it comes to technology. This leads older generations to feel out of touch with society and some rebel against technology because they do not trust it. This mistrust stems from not understanding how technology works, or horror stories that surround new inventions.

Stroud goes on to say, "Film has been noted as a potentially effective medium for addressing issues of technological estrangement" (416). The Matrix shows the nascent fear that is in society as technology becomes more and more advanced before their eyes. At the time of the movie, the move to digitizing data was beginning. Everything a person was, from social security number, bank account numbers, and everything else about them was quickly becoming more and more digitized. While it was digital in the past, at the time of the movie, the technological age is now upon them. The internet was just starting to allow purchases online. Jim Rovira, in his article *Baudrillard and Hollywood: subverting the mechanism of control and The Matrix* says that technology has created a world in which we "work to earn money, spending the money in grocery or clothing stores, paying our mortgages, living as model citizens (just as Neo was pressured to do) for the sake of our own survival" (Rovira 2012).

In this world, technology plays a very important role. It is that which guides people to their destination, such as our GPS, or how people communicate with each other through cell phones or internet messaging (whether it is Facebook, any sort of Instant Messaging service, or Skype). Our jobs and money are becoming increasingly technology based. With a swipe of plastic people deduct money from their account, or charge it to an

account, people can take the numbers off of the same plastic card and make purchases online. The entire world is quickly becoming technological and digital. Even the writing of an essay now necessitates the use of a computer in order for formatting to be correct. This brings out a fear shown in film and media, such as *The Matrix*, where it is unsure what the future of humanity is. But the idea presented in these films is that humanity will eventually be taken over and enslaved by our own creation, the machine that we created to think for us. As Agent Smith, played by Hugo Weaving said, "as soon as we start thinking for you, it really becomes our civilization." (*The Matrix*). Technology has advanced greatly since the release of *The Matrix*, and for some, the fear has not died yet. In fact, it can be said that the fear is getting closer and closer to becoming reality as computer programs become more and more advanced. They have robots that can mimic human face patterns, complete complex operations, and eventually becoming able to think for themselves, much like the AI in the film. Humanity is reaching the future of *The Matrix*, it just leaves one to wonder if it will be utopia or dystopia.

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## Censorship In America

*By Jonathan Brown*

Who is raising the children of America? The media or the parents? There are many ways that the media censors what we watch, read and listen to. There are many boards of people that censor everything that the public hears and sees, such as: The Federal Communications Commission (FCC.), The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), and The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). These groups of individuals tell the parents of America what to let their children watch and what not to let them watch.

In 1909 The New York Board of Motion Pictures was formed to approve any and all films before released to the public. In 1914 a bill was introduced working to establish a federal censorship board, thus the Federal Motion Picture Censorship Commission was born. Although the federal board was censoring every motion picture, some communities and cities took it upon themselves to form boards of their own to decide what could and couldn't be shown in their communities. In 1922, The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America was formed, where Hollywood studios formed a trade association. By 1945, this association was renamed to the current, The Motion Picture Association of America. Although the censorship laws have changed a bit over the years, they basically have the same system for rating motion pictures. Groups who wanted to protect their children from mature content in movies established the rating system for movies in 1968. Originally there were four ratings for movies, but now there are five, which include: G, PG, PG-13, R and NC-17. Each rating is determined by the amount of adult content in the movie. The G rating on a movie stands for General Audience, which means the movie contains no nudity, sexual content, strong language or drug usage. Although there is still violence in G rated movies, it is minimal. A PG rated movie stands for Parental Guidance is suggested. Some content in a PG movie may not be suitable for children. PG-13 is a rating that strongly cautions parents about the adult content of this film. This rating was added in 1984 to show that the film had enough language, violence or sexual content for some parents to find inappropriate. The R rating on this system stands for restricted, meaning that no one under the age of 17 without a parent or guardian is permitted to watch that movie. The last on the system is NC-17, which means that no one under the age of 17 is permitted to watch the movie, because of the intense adult content the movie has.

The next board is the FCC, the board who has become infamous for censoring music on the radio. Censoring music isn't all the FCC does, according to the official FCC website, "The FCC is barred by law from trying to prevent the broadcast of any point of view. The Communications Act prohibits the FCC from censoring broadcast material, in most cases, and from making any regulation that would interfere with freedom of speech. Expressions of views that do not involve a "clear and present danger of serious substantive evil" come under the protection of the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press." The FCC censors any type of media sent out through the airwaves, whether it be television stations, radio waves, or anything put

on a compact disc. The FCC has been trying to censor one of my favorite television shows, South Park, for almost 15 years now, until in 2001, they allowed the television show to push the envelope and say the word "shit" over one hundred and sixty times in a single episode. Since then, many other shows have slowly been putting more and more controversial content in their television shows and radio stations.

The last board is the ESRB. The ESRB is in charge of rating video games and mobile apps based on adult content. Unlike movies, games are released to the public before they are tested by the ESRB. How are the video games processed? Game companies, after completing a game will fill out a long questionnaire about the game it's content, bonus materials, language, controlled substances and sexual content featured within the game. After the questionnaire is complete, the companies must send in a DVD with pertinent content on it, including game play, missions/quests, and cut scenes, along with the most extreme instances of any relevant content. According to the ESRB official website, "All games rated in this manner are tested by ESRB shortly after they become publicly available to ensure that appropriate ratings have been assigned. In the event content was not fully or accurately disclosed by the publisher, either the rating displayed in the store will be promptly corrected or, in egregious cases, the game may be removed from the store."

The ESRB has six different ratings: Early Childhood, Everyone, Everyone 10+, Teen, Mature, and Adult Only. The Early Childhood rating means that the content within the game is intended for young children and has no form of violence or language in it. The Everyone rating can contain mild cartoon violence or mild language, but is not enough to be of any concern for the parents. Where as the rating Everyone 10+ may have suggestive material not intended for children under the age of 10. The teen rating may have violence, more intense language and more adult situations and are only intended for players 13 years of age and above. The Mature rating for games means that the game contains strong language, drug usage, alcohol, nudity or strong violence and is not intended for anyone under the age of 17. There have been very few games to receive the Adults Only rating, these games have graphic adult content not suitable for anyone under the age of 18 In 2005, Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas was recalled due to a very mature secret scene that slipped by the ESRB. This game was only rated M when it was reviewed by the board, by hidden material was embedded in the games coding. This material consisted of strong graphic adult material that was far above a mature rating.

Social media has been subject to censorship for years. Through organizations such as the ESRB, FCC, and MPAA all the social media in America has channels through which media has to go and through which it gets censored. Each of these organizations cover their own specific types of media and has their own set of rules for what is permissible. The MPAA covers the movies released in the United States and give them each appropriate ratings depending on content. The ESRB covers all video games and mobile apps and gives them ratings due their content. The FCC covers music, radio, anything that is released on compact disc format, and anything that is viewed on television has to go through them. The organizations will continue to control social media through censorship for many years to come.

For More information consult:

[www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov)

[www.mpa.org](http://www.mpa.org)

[www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org)

[www.censorshipinamerica.com](http://www.censorshipinamerica.com)

[www.gamecensorship.com](http://www.gamecensorship.com)

## Gaming and Gender: A Revolution in Gender Roles

*By Kaylyn Jennings*

When someone hears the term "gamer" they may immediately think of a male in his late teens and early twenties, who is the stereotypical "nerd." Women are normally thought of as being a good student, having a respectable job, raising a family, or being "in the kitchen." However, in today's society more women are playing games, it is no longer a male dominated activity. More women are becoming interested in games because gaming companies are creating more games for them. For young girls, they often have dress up games or simulations of taking care of animals or babies. As they get older they tend to start playing some of the same games as boys. For example, girls may start to play Pokémon; it is a game that allows for both genders to enjoy themselves equally in a strategy type game. There are still some games that have a gender divide, but as the years go by, more games are being developed to target both males and females. In a 2005 survey, more men (53%) reported playing video games than women (17%). Men (19%) reported playing computer games and women (32%). For Internet games, men (12%) played them a little less than women (15%) (Jones 15).

Women are also becoming more interested in massively multiplayer online (MMO) games. There are no significant gender differences among adult internet users who play online games, men (86%) report more online gaming than women (76%) (Lenhart, Hitlin & Madden 7). From this data, it demonstrates that there are not big differences for men and women who play online games. These games may try to bring women into them by giving them the choice to choose cute characters or the ability to have cute animals. Many men may play these games because they want to feel accomplished about themselves; as a result they become competitive to try to be the best they can be at that game. They may also play these games as a means of escape from the real world and in the process it allows them to have fun at the same time. Men also reported that their main reason for playing games was for fun (45%), whereas most women reported playing them because they were bored (33%) (Jones 16). However, more women are playing MMOs for the same reason that men are; they may want to escape everyday life by having fun on a game.

Women who play many games (a gamer) usually do not tell people that they like playing video games. They are afraid of being judged for playing a game instead of "being in the kitchen," (Yee 28). Women tend to care more about what other people think about them, so telling someone that they play all types of games on a daily basis is just asking for trouble. They may also tend to keep quiet that they are women who play games due to the fear of being harassed by men (Yee 28). This harassment is verbal; the men may try to put down the woman because they think that she may suck because she is a female playing a game. They may also harass them by constantly talking to them only because they are female, and it is usually considered rare for women to play video games.

Men tend to assume that women who play games suck (Yee 30). It is never good to assume anything about anyone. Some women may be bad at a game because they are too

afraid to ask for help, or maybe they just started the game and are not quite sure how the game is supposed to be played. Most men already know most of this information because they have been playing games longer than women (Yee 30). There are some women who are as good as men if not better. A lot of men who play games will use a guide of some kind to help them through a game or to do some research on how to improve their gaming. Women do this as well; it is not only men who want to better themselves at the games they play. "Nearly half of boy gamers (47%) visit such sites and read reviews and chats about games they play, compared with less than a quarter (23%) of girls who game," (Lenhart, Kahne, Middaugh, Macgill, Evans 26).

There are some games that men do not want to play because they are seen as a "girly game." For example, The Sims is a game that is a real life simulation; a lot of males do not want to be seen as playing this game because it is not action packed. Females enjoy this game because there is not a lot of action and it is full of possibilities; they can "live" through their characters and experience life from a different perspective. In 2008, a study was conducted with gender differences among gaming devices. Eighty-six percent of all teens reported playing a game console, of these eighty-six percent, ninety-six percent of boys reported playing a game console and seventy-six percent of women (Lenhart, Kahne, Middaugh, Macgill, Evans, & Vitak 27). There are still gender lines (just not as defined) when it comes to some genres of games. Over the past couple of years, these gender lines have gradually been disappearing. Since the feministic movement the gender line has been gradually vanishing; fields that were once dominated by males (psychology for example) is now female dominated. In the Internet generation, in the beginning, there were gender lines for many different games, but now those lines have been fading.

Throughout the years, men and women have slowly been doing things together. The gaming community is a new opportunity that has been appearing over the past few decades. It is a new form of entertainment that allows people to come together and talk about games they enjoy. This is a growing trend for men and women. Digital culture is a growing community that incorporates people of all ages, gender, and race. With this new type of community there are new technologies that are arising.

With this new type of community there are many problems. Some women in these communities may be new and seek help; some men may actually help those women whereas others may try to steer them in the wrong direction for the enjoyment of seeing them do the wrong thing (Moeller, Esplin, & Conway 6). There seems to be a growing number of the type of people who try to steer others wrong. It seems as though these people want to show off and impress other people in the community by showing how "cool" they are. Women are especially targeted because they are seen as easy prey. These women may try and cling to the men who are helpful and nice in order to be protected from getting constantly harassed by other men or they may leave the gaming community altogether (Moeller, Esplin, & Conway 8).

However, not only bad comes from this new type of community. A good thing that comes out of it is that women are joining a mostly male dominated community, making it more balanced as time goes by. Women are slowly getting their own "rights" in this type of community and might become respected (Krotoski 9). Men and women can then coincide and continue to play their games with the approval of both genders.

It seems as though this gaming community started like real society. Men dominated many things, and gaming was considered one of those things. However, as the years go by it seems as though women are gaining their own "rights" in the gaming community after not having any at all. Women are becoming equally active as men in the community, and will in a few years have the same amount of "rights" women do in today's society. Women will eventually have the same respect as men in gaming. They would also be more accepted in the gaming community and be able to do the same things as men without getting harassed.

Overall, gaming communities are becoming popular and may stick around for a long time. It was male dominated, and over time more women have joined. Women may often feel timid towards the gaming community because it is new to them and they do not know much about. However, over time, more women are joining this type of community and are forming friendships with both genders. This community needs to be looked at just as much as any other type of community because it is rapidly developing and it has an effect on people. Gaming communities also include a lot of interesting gender role stereotypes.

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## **SECTION II**

### **Plug in and Play: Gaming and the Digital Native**

## [Video Gaming: A Social Experience](#)

*By Jonathan A. Lloyd*

Whenever one plays a video game, in addition to seeing the words "PRESS START", one will often notice two basic options that appear on the handheld device, computer, or television screen. Though oftentimes worded differently, these options ultimately boil down to and can be easily described as "Single- Player" and "Multi-Player". For each player, a different experience can be found in each option. The question that is to be answered regarding these experiences is two-fold. That is to say, the main questions of this analysis are "How and why do people play single player games?" and "How and why do people play multi-player games?"

Though research has been done into the effects of single-player and multi-player games on individuals and social groups, especially with Internet gaming in the case of the latter, it is difficult to find any sort of research done into what shapes an individual's preferences for either option. To illustrate, in Steve Jones's 2003 report, "Let the games begin: Gaming technology and college students", much research and speculation is done into the realm of online gaming in the lives of students, the study itself coming to the "conclusion that gaming is less a solitary activity and more one that is shared with friends and others." (Jones) While studies such as Jones's do provide valuable background and analysis on trends and possible effects of gaming on society, they probe very little in the "how's" and "why's" of video gamers preferences in terms of socialization.

In order to gain greater knowledge to these "how's" and "why's", I conducted a study in Athens, West Virginia on Friday, October 12, 2012 between the hours of two and five p.m. In my study, I took five volunteers, each one having had unique experiences with video games, and interviewed them at varying lengths before observing them play single player as well as multiplayer games in "co-op" or competition.

The volunteers, to retain anonymity, were permitted to choose their own aliases for this study, and said aliases are as follows. Tom Cruise, the oldest of the group, is the son of a businessman and a nurse, a West Virginia native currently studying Criminal Justice at Concord University. The second is Stripes, a nineteen year old gamer, daughter of a correction officer, and stepdaughter of a truck driver, who is not currently attending any college. Next is Alexandra, a nineteen-year-old daughter of a housewife and a retired army officer, now working in administration for Veteran's Affairs, she is currently double majoring in both Psychology and Social Work at Concord University. The next to be interviewed did not give an alias, but for this study he will be referred to as Light Yagami. Light is an eighteen-year-old Biology student at Concord, who wants to go into the field of endocrinology and is a fan of RPGS. Finally, there is Frodo, the youngest of the group at eighteen, a student at Appalachian Bible College, son of a social worker and a parole officer, and an avid basketball player.

In the interviews, the subjects revealed some similarities between their backgrounds. For instance, all are long-time West Virginia citizens, though in the case of some such as

Alexandra, who was born on a military base overseas, not all are natives. Another similarity between the subjects, relating to their knowledge of gaming, is their knowledge of the ESRB. All had a basic knowledge of the rating system and the general idea behind it. All found it to be largely ineffective due to the parental factor but at the same time agreed with the general ethics behind the ESRB system. As Light said, the purpose of the game was to prevent children from buying adult games and though the system stopped him personally from buying M rated games in his youth, he was able to easily circumvent this by gaining parental consent. As he said:

*"[The ESRB's goals are] to keep younger children away from games that are more intended towards adults....[It's not effective because] children, if they see a game that they want, they're just going to have their parents buy it for them and the parents usually don't care nowadays." "Kids shouldn't play Resident Evil," added Frodo.*

However, in the course of the interviews, several distinctions were found between the subjects as well. The most obvious distinction came from the subject's unique preferences in terms of genre, and their reasons for their preferences. For example, Tom Cruise has a preference for computer MMO's such as Guild Wars and World of Warcraft due to their challenging nature, and plays very few single player games, though he is a fan of the Resident Evil series for its horror-themed storyline.

Alexandra on the other hand, is a fan of multiple genres of game, including RPGS, Action-Adventure games, Fighting Games, as well as casual games such as Words with Friends. As Alexandra explained,

*"In fighting games and in Words with Friends, I love being competitive. In RPGS, I like the fact that I can level up to accomplish stuff...like say, in Pokémon, when you level up enough you can defeat a Gym...or in Final Fantasy you know, beating a Boss....with adventure games like The Legend of Zelda, I'm really interested in storyline more than the actual gameplay...I usually play, I never it play by myself, and I like the competition...I've been playing since about...nine years old? And it started because my older brother was really into video games and he introduced me to them and it was a way for us to bond...we'd play every day."*

Light is similar in that he is a fan of RPGS for the deep stories and character development inherent in the genre, Real Time Strategy Games for their mental stimulation factor, and First-Person Shooters for the action and fast paced gameplay. Light plays video games on a daily basis, and enjoys both single-player and multi-player.

*"I feel like [games] are a good outlet for most people to relieve stress from daily activities, although there are the people that take video games too seriously. Whenever I'm stressed out, usually I'll play a game with my friends like the online game League of Legends, the online strategy, and that usually calms my nerves and relaxes me. But...I have a friend...he plays videogames, but he's one of those people that takes them incredibly too seriously. I was watching him play Modern Warfare 2 one day and he died...once. Like, he was playing really well but just the fact that he died pissed him off to the point of no return and he picked up his controller and threw it into his wall and it just exploded," explained Light.*

Frodo, for his part, plays video games sometimes when he is bored or as a social activity, albeit not very often. He enjoys RPGs for their entertainment value, First Person Shooters for their war-like structure, and Temple Run as a time occupier. He generally dislikes sports games, with the exception of Madden football games for their ability to keep his attention. Frodo got his start playing Ace Combat for the Playstation as a child, but doesn't play much non-casual games anymore due to his negative childhood experiences. As he explained, "When I was little I played them [console games] too much, I'd sit around and get fat all day."

Finally, Stripes is a fan of RPGS for their immersive nature and the unique storyline options they offer. She typically plays on either a Playstation 2 or a Nintendo DS, but unlike the others, she plays in spurts, meaning there are intervals where she plays games on a daily basis, similar to Light and there are intervals where she rarely plays games, similar to Frodo. Her first game was King of Fighters '99 for the Playstation. She enjoys single player games as well as multiplayer, but is not keen on online gaming. As she explained, "Well, if it's like a [Xbox] Live game system, I think they're [the players are] more rude....they get more friendly if you're in the same room, I guess."

The interviews served as a good path to answering the "why" portion of the single/multi player dichotomy. After completing the final interview, subjects were observed playing video games in order to provide clarity to the "how" portion.

Over the course of three hours, three different games were played by the five volunteers. The first game played was Soul Calibur IV: a weapons-based fighting game for the Xbox 360. Light Yagami was playing in the single-player training mode shortly after the interviews were completed.

After this, Light Yagami and Tom Cruise battled each other for two rounds. The round was mostly dominated by Light, who voiced minor frustration that Tom's character was too small to hit, and thus was able to dodge his attacks. Tom, for his part, grew more frustrated with his lack of skill in the game, and his frustration slowly mounted. The two maintained a friendly atmosphere, however. Light would provide Tom with helpful tips, and the two laughed over their frustration, with adult language often present. This style continued until approximately 3:45 p.m., when Tom Cruise had to leave the group due to other obligations.

At this point, Frodo took over for Tom. Despite some adult language in his banter, Light was visibly enjoying winning but didn't seem too competitive. Stripes and Alexandra were observing and waiting for their turn to play a game, the latter quiet and reserved and the former laughing with the two players. "It's the...midget wars [and] we're just button mashing," said Light.

The next game played was Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven for the Playstation 2. The game was broken into three separate styles of play (co-op, competition, and single player for Alexandra) with her and Stripes as the participants, while the previous two players casually observed. Alexandra claimed that this was her favorite video game, potentially rivaled by Dynasty Warriors 4, and as such was familiar with the controls and story of the game. She expressed minor discomfort at the lack of unlocked material. Beyond that, she

simply alternated between bouts of quiet and laughing. At first competitive, Alexandra later mellowed and helped Stripes to learn the controls of the game. The atmosphere remained civil, albeit quiet at times when Alexandra was heavily focused on the game. For example, one phrase that was commonly heard was "Neen-ja!" as Stripes, Light, and Frodo joked amongst themselves regarding the AI's repeated exclamation towards the player characters.

Alexandra finished her single player round with a score of 250, a "Ninja" rating, during which she noted she did not have as many "stealth kills" as she would have desired. After this, both she and Stripes left the building at approximately 4:30 p.m.

The final game played was Dragonball Z: Ultimate Tenkaichi, a fighting game based off the anime of the same name for the Xbox 360. The two players, Light Yagami and Frodo, noted during the game that they were both "gratuitous button mashers" and as before, there was no harsh style of competition, both laughed and joked with one another as they played the game. Finally, Light saw defeat at the hands of Frodo. After this battle, the observations ended at 5:00 p.m.

In conclusion, through the interviews with the five players: Tom Cruise, Light Yagami, Alexandra, Stripes, and Frodo, I was able to acquire an answer as to "why" people play multi-player and single-player video games, respectively. In the case of the former, it would appear to mostly be a mix of competition and social activity, especially in the case of local gaming. In the case of single player, the greatest appeal would seem to lie in the reward system and story development that players experience in certain types of games.

Next, through these interviews and my observations of the players, I was able to discern the different ways people play certain games or learn "how" people play single and multi-player games. In the case of online gaming, competitiveness would seem to be turned up at the cost of friendly social interaction if the testimony of these five players is to be believed. In the case of local gaming, however, competition may still be present, but it is not as harsh and friendly social interaction has a greater chance to foment. It is the hope of this student that he has been able to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding gaming and socialization and perhaps provide a way for more detailed research to be performed on this topic.

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## Online Gaming and Social Interaction

*By Adam Belcher*

The study of online gaming is a fairly new field, with many differing aspects to it, such as the effect that gaming has on the person, on society, or the personality of person, of their relations to other people, and even the current trends of video games and whether or not the material on them has gone too far in terms of violence or suggestive themes. The main question I want to focus on is: How does online gaming impact social interactions. By "social interaction" I mean the interaction that one has within the game, as well as how it affects the people they socialize with and how it influences their behavior both online and offline (meaning real world interactions). I believe the influence of online gaming not only extends into the interactions people have within the game, but also it bleeds out into the world outside of the game, in real world relationships.

There has been some studies done on this subject before, for example, the article written by Castulus Kolo and Timo Baur, as represented in their article, "Living a Virtual Life: Social Dynamics of Online Gaming." In their article, as they researched into the players of Ultima Online they found that "it may be justified to say that at least the most intensive players lived with Ultima Online or even "in" Ultima Online" (21). These games become part of their lives, the players can center their entire lives on these games and these games become a sort of "second life" for these players. They also discovered that the dominant players were "younger, predominantly male and more frequently engaged online" (21). Compare this with the study done by Mark Griffiths, Mark Davies, and Darren Chappell, in their article "Breaking the Stereotype: The Case of Online Gaming" where they found that "game clientele is very much an adult profile and suggest a different picture to the stereotypical image of an adolescent online gamer" (81). Based off the two studies addressed here, there seems to be a breadth of age groups in online gaming, and that could be because of a certain reason. Perhaps the games that were focuses on were focuses on a specific age group, Ultima Online for younger online games, and Everquest for older gamers. The discrepancy could be attributed to the target audience of the game, rather than there being a specific age group that is playing this game. My research discovered that perhaps the age group of these games vary immensely, and the basis may not exactly be on games, as more of a "luck of the draw," meaning that the interviewees were of a specific age group rather by chance than anything else. Also, my research focuses on the social interactions of these specific groups and how it affects their lives.

My method was relatively simple; I conducted informal interviews where I asked the interviewees varying questions about their online experience, eventually gearing the conversation towards their online experiences. If they could give examples, I would listen to the stories that they presented. Most of the responses I got from these questions were of a general nature. I would ask them about the people they interacted with on each type of game, from MMORPGs (Mass Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games) to online first-person shooters such as Halo or Call of Duty. The responses were quite different based off of the type of game that was played. MMORPGs, such as World of Warcraft attracted a certain kind of player, while Call of Duty attracted a completely different kind

of player. I conducted two interviews, one participant was male, the other female, and the results presented completely varying experiences on online gaming.

The first interviewee I want to discuss, Sophie, had a particularly negative experience with online gaming to the extent that she no longer participates in them. She said that in her experience with a World of Warcraft (WoW) guild, which is a group of people under a common banner or name those associate and complete objectives together, that "no one cares about anyone except themselves." She found the guild she was in as very "cutthroat," and very quick to pass the blame "onto the healer" (whom is responsible for keeping the group alive in-game) quickly shirking their role in what happened to them and shifting the blame onto her, who was the healer. The second experience she talked about was from the game Call of Duty that seemed to be more of a positive experience, although she characterized most of the players as "13 year old boys." She described the experience as hilarious with the games consisting of a lot of jokes and "shit-talking,"

She went on to describe the effects that it had on their social interactions either online or offline (real life). In the realm of real world social interactions, she did not see much of an effect outside of perhaps influencing grades in academia, interfering with life, and interactions with other people. She believed it impeded social progress and these people have a tendency to withdraw from society completely to play their game, forsaking previous social connections. An example of this is how online trends and saying tend to bleed over into real life, with certain catch phrases and memes becoming common place and used as slang. As for in the game itself, she described the game as being "online, but there's not many that are willing to help you."

The second interviewee I had, Andrew, had a completely different opinion than Sophie on online gaming. He did not associate in game with people he did not already know; these people were the gateway for him into these communities. Instead of Sophie's experience where she found the majority the other guild members to be unhelpful and quick to blame someone else, his experience was that the people he met through the guild were "usually helpful." He found himself most "ambivalent" towards online gaming and its social impact. Although, he did admit to the point that people's lives can become too focused on the game. But contrary to Sophie's experience, he found that people were "mostly the same in real life and online." He placed online gaming experience on a "level below real life interaction."

The results of these two interviews give a very interesting viewpoint into how these games can affect people and how different people act from one kind of game to another. In the first experience, Sophie found the online community largely a self-centered atmosphere, while Andrew found the community he was in largely benevolent and helpful. This does not paint these communities in a negative light, nor does it make them particularly positive. In the results I have found, they are largely neutral, with some of both aspects existing simultaneously, much like conventional social gatherings.

Regardless of the opinion people may have on online gaming, whether it have positive aspects, or negative aspects, the fact remains that it is an ever-present factor in society now. Its advent has created a completely different world in which the online interactions people have from either online gaming or social media have a direct impact on a person's

personality, and this effect should not be ignored. Social media and online gaming are now deeply entrenched in society, and have just as much an impact as conventional social gatherings, such as school, clubs, café's, or any other number of real life social hotspots.

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## Social Media and Gender

*By Kaylyn Jennings*

Many years ago people had fun by going out to the movies, hanging out with friends, or staying home and reading a book. In today's society more people are playing video games that have only just started to evolve. In the beginning, companies were creating games that targeted the young male audience (Pitofsky, Anthony, Thompson, Swindle, & Leary 10). Over the years more people of different ages, gender, and ethnicity have started playing these games. As a result, the gaming industries have started to make games for all these factors. Women were interested in puzzle and simulation games but as time goes by they are more interested in different types of games. As a result, more women are becoming interested in video games altogether. There are many stereotypes of women who play video games; these stereotypes vary from what males think, what females think, what experienced gamers think, and what inexperienced gamers think.

In today's society, 17% of female college students play video games, 32% play computer games, and 15% play internet games (Jones 8). From these numbers, people can see that more females are starting to play video games more than they did before. With the growing numbers of female players, stereotypes about these female gamers are starting to emerge. One stereotype includes the genre of games they play. Many boys tend to play a wide variety of genres of games and tend to play more frequently than girls. Girls tend to play a less variety of genres; boys play an average of eight different genres whereas girls play about six different types of genres (Vitak). As a result, this creates a stereotype that woman who try to play genres such as first-person shooters, fighting games, or action games might not be as good as males because there are not as many females playing that genre and the ones who have played them have not been playing for very long. The Sims is a popular game that 15% of girls play and only 1% of boys play (Vitak 7). The Sims is a simulation game that allows people to create a character and basically control that character's life. Another game, Madden is an NFL football game that allows people to play opponents and chose the type of offensive and defensive plays that their team makes. 28% of boys play Madden, compared to 2% of girls who play (Vitak 7). The Sims is more of an imaginative game that deals with a real life simulator whereas Madden is an action sports game; some women would rather play a life simulator game than a sports game. Females are encouraged to play in sedate, nurturing types of activities; so playing nonviolent video games would be what is socially accepted (Hayes 11).

Another stereotype that has been looked at is females being competitive. In one study done, they found that in competitive settings, females were absent. Giving the illusion that females are not very competitive at games and therefore must not really care about doing their best in the games (Bryce & Rutter 13). When they were seen they were just playing the feminine role and supporting their sons or boyfriends as they compete in these competitive settings. Female gamers tended to report that the competitive and masculine natures of public gaming made them feel unwelcomed and threatened. Schott and Horrell's (2000) ethnographic work showed how male members of a family tended to take on the role of being an 'expert' in games, undermining female skills and knowledge

(Bryce & Rutter 14). These men tend to think that since they have been playing games longer and more than women that these women automatically are not as good as them. Women who play video games also tend to get harassed (Yee 12). Online games tend to be a place where women get harassed the most because of its social aspect. However, over the years, it has become less acceptable to harass women for playing games than it used to be (Bryce & Rutter 15).

### **Methods**

In this research, I interviewed 4 people, (2 females and 2 males). I asked each of these people a set of questions regarding who they were, if they played video games, what kind of games do they play and why, and what their thoughts on female gamers were. The interview ended up lasting about 30-45 minutes.

### **Results & Discussion**

After doing the interviews, I looked at their data. Everyone I talked to was between the ages of 18 and 22. There were 2 females, and 2 males. All of them currently live in Southern West Virginia, and one lives in New York. When asked if she played video games, Sally responded:

*"No, it is something that I really have not been into. I remember playing games with my brother when I was little but I just do not have the time and I feel that most the games out there are centered on males."*

She grew up playing a few games with her brother but she thinks that most of the games are centered for the male audience; however, there are a lot of games in today's society that have been produce strictly for the female audience. Three of the four people I interviewed said they either did not have time to play games or they had very little time to play; the other person said they always play video games. The types of games people played and why they played those games also varied immensely. Michael said:

*"I mainly play causal games, or platform games like Mario. I like simulation games like The Sims and Rollercoaster Tycoon. I also like Rollercoaster Tycoon because I have a huge interest in the theme park industry. I think these types of games are somewhat addicting, and probably do not take a lot of thought to play, whereas strategy games you have to think hard to win."*

The statistics shown earlier on how many men tend to play simulation games was very low (1%); Michael breaks that stereotype in that mostly the only games he plays are simulation games because he does not want to think hard for strategy games. For Zoey, she was mostly focused on the family aspect:

*"I mostly play Pokémon games and recently Call of Duty. Pokémon is fun and I have grown up playing that series of game. Call of Duty is a kind of bonding time for me and my oldest brother. It is also very challenging and makes me push myself to get better."*

Yet again, the stereotype that women do not play violent video games is not supported. Zoey not only likes to play a more nonviolent video game but she also enjoys violent

video games as well, as a means of bonding with her siblings. Her brother lives in California and she does not get to see him that much so she uses Call of Duty as a way to spend time with her brother without him actually being there; in her situation this promotes gaming as a way to communicate with family.

When asked specifically about female gamer stereotypes I got a variety of answers.

Brook said:

*"When most people think of female gamers, they think they are fat, ugly, never had a boyfriend, never had intercourse, anti-social, and some may think that they sound like little boys if they speak on an in-game voice chat system. People also tend to think that they belong in the kitchen, and they are not good at games, and the only thing they can be on an MMO is a healer [someone who is a support role and tends to help other teammates]."*

Brook's idea of the stereotypical female gamers showed some similarities with the male gamer stereotype, the notion of being anti-social, ugly, etc. (Vitak 11). He also pointed out what people tend to think of as the classic gender role for women, which is to be 'in the kitchen.' Michael and Zoey both said that people thought that female gamers were not very good at video games. Sally said that she believed most people did not even think females played.

When asked how many female gamers do people think play video games, they all said around half. When asked how many female gamers they knew, three out of the four people said that they knew about five female gamers. The other person said they knew 15 female gamers. Just from looking at how many female gamers each person knew, it shows that people do meet female gamers and they are out there, some may just be hiding from the world. When asked how they thought female gamers would play games (would they be worse or better than men) they all agreed that females have the capacity to do just as well as men and vary across the board in terms of skill; some women may be bad, neutral, or good in terms of skill. Sally said:

*"I think female gamers can play a game just as good as any male, maybe even better because females have a tendency to think more strategic than how males just go with things."*

By saying this, it really surprised me on how some people may think that female gamers can be better than men, despite the ideas of female gamers being bad at games. Some people think that females can be better than men at video games because they think more strategically.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, some of the results I got from my interviews surprised me. From the four people I interviewed, they all seemed to have an unbiased view of female gamers, they seemed to accept the idea of a female gamer and that they can be just as good as male gamers. Even being an experienced gamer or not, they all agreed on how females were depicted and their own personal views on female gamers, it did not matter if they were male or

female. This research could be expanded by having a bigger sample size and by having more specific questions about the topic. From this research it has opened up new questions such as looking at all the stereotypes of both male and female gamers and how they compare and contrast to each other. Or a researcher could look at how females and males who play video games look at both sexes in terms of stereotypes.

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## Casual Gamers

*By Kishonna Horton*

Amongst today's population, almost everyone is a part of the gaming community. Whether it's endless hours in front of a television set or small spurts throughout the day on a hand-held device, many people engage in games on a regular basis. Despite those similarities, however, many "gamers" would still like to be classified differently and that would be those who consider themselves to be casual gamers. Through my research and interviews, I plan to define a casual gamer and their qualities, as well as, view their opinions and stereotypes on hardcore/heavy gamers.

Throughout my research, I was able to find a few articles and blogs about casual gamers. The information I found, however, was pretty repetitive and limited in context. Since this group is relatively "new" to the gaming society there is not much research that has been conducted thus far, which makes me very happy to say that my work will contribute to this undiscovered world of the gaming universe.

As my method of collecting data, I interviewed three people. I asked them some general questions about how much gaming they do and a few questions towards their opinion on hardcore/heavy gamers. I also observed all participants playing games and followed it up with a few more questions.

At the start of the interviews (all done separately), I asked the participants if they could define a causal gamer. Kayla, participant one, said "Hmm.. I would say someone who play games randomly or not really that much. But still play on a regular basis, if that makes sense."

Jack, participant two, said "A person that plays a 20 minute game here and there." And participant three, Jenny said,

*"A casual gamer is someone who plays casually! Somebody like me for example, I play games on my phone probably every day. But it's not like hours at a time or anything. Just random games throughout my day on campus, especially during the downtime I have while I'm working in the Gameroom."*

Based off of my readings, I explain to the participants what a casual gamer was. According to an article from Online-Games.com, "They are the gamers who log into the game to play for fun, talk to friends online, and they are there to relax. They are players who enjoy: PC games, video games, and Mmorpg's, and flash games. They play them to have fun. The game is there for them to enjoy. It's not to say they don't have a specific goal they would like to get done for that day, but if something else like doing a mission with buddies, or a raid pops up they will go do that. They want to do whatever is the most fun. This gamer is the core of mmorpg's. They may not be the hard core players, but do not underestimate them they are very good players. They may not always have the best gear, or the best builds, for them that don't matter as long as they are having fun." (Onlinegames)

Next, I asked if they would consider themselves casual players, in which they all did. I asked several questions about when and where they played the most.

*"I play a lot when I'm bored at work and want to kill some time! The place where I work has a lot of down time and there is only so much cleaning you can do. So, Ill eventually end up grabbing my phone and start playing temple run or something." –Ann*

*"This is bad, but, I play mostly in class! I get distracted very easily and if the class starts getting boring then I start playing games on my ipod." –Jack*

*"Going back to what I said earlier, I definitely play the most when I'm on campus working in the Gameroom. Soon as I get bored, I start playing some kind of game in my phone to pass time." –Jenny*

I wanted to discover patterns and preference in game style among the interviewees.

*"I like playing games like hidden objects, puzzle games, action games, adventure games... whatever, really! As long as I can download it for free, I'll give it a try. I enjoy girly games, of course, but I'm pretty open to anything. I just don't like games that I have to sit and focus in on or read a big story line to follow and enjoy. It's just too much work and I don't have time for all that! I just want to play!" –Ann*

*"I mostly play temple run when I'm somewhere bored, but, if I'm at home or at a friend's I'll play a little basketball or Fifa." –Jack*

*"Temple Run, Words with Friends, Racing, Hidden objects, Scrabble, Ninja Fruit, \*sigh\* I could go on and on honestly. I just love fun and easy to learn games, anything besides some long story line plot type game." – Jenny*

Regarding patterns, I found that casual gamers enjoy games that require less time overall. Games with shorter story lines and quicker advances are most appealing. These are often downloadable games and/or "mini" series type games. These findings are very significant to my topic because it helps to better classify casual gamers and gives us a better sense for what they look for in games. By studying the patterns of these gamers we can take a closer look at the differences between the desires of casual players to heavy players.

When asked their opinions toward heavy gamers the participants responded,

*"Personally, I feel people spend too much time playing console games like Call of Duty, Grand Theft, etc. I know a few people who play their games all day, everyday and I think its so unhealthy. It makes you extra lazy and isolates yourself." –Ann*

*"I don't really have too much to say besides it makes you seem lazy and unproductive! I have plenty of friends who play games regularly and I hear their parents or girlfriend or roommate complain about how they don't do anything but play the game. Pretty much, it all comes down to the fact that too much gaming simply makes you look lazy and unproductive." –Jack*

*"Well, let's see, I have a lot of good friends who are heavy gamers. And I feel like, if you*

*want to see in front of a TV screen and play games all day then go for it, as long as it doesn't affect the other parts of your life negatively, then hey, do what makes you happy! Everybody have their hobbies." –Jenny*

After researching, I realized that many of those who identify themselves as casual gamers look at heavy gamers as if they're boarder line obsessive and lazy; the stereotype pretty much focus on the amount of time spent playing games, only. This is a stereotype many people have on hardcore gamers.

While observing the participants play games, I realized most of the games played were relatively short in plot line. In most of the games you were given X amount of lives before the game ended. These were the most common games I seen while observing.

In conclusion, a casual gamer is someone who plays games for the pure fun of it. They seek after quick fulfillment and advances. They often play on hand-held devices or PCs versus consoles. While casual gamers are similar to your average heavy gamers, they are much different in their desires and purposes in which they play. Where hardcore gamers tend to play for the skill behind the game, casual gamers tend to play for the entertainment of it!

## Leveling Up

*By Jonathan Brown*

What do different people look for in video games? Some look for action and adventure. Others look for a long journey where they level up and make new friends along the way. In this essay, I interviewed some gamers that I knew from back home who I knew played video games on a daily basis and would give me honest answers. Each of the interviewees enjoy different genres and different ways to play their games. I will discuss the differences between console gaming and PC gaming.

The first interviewee is a 23 year old PC gamer named Tim who plays MMORPGs such as: World of Warcraft, Diablo, League of Legends and The Elder Scrolls Series. He is a 23 year old male who's major is video game design at Fullsail University. He explained that his first experience playing video games was from his older brother. He said,

*"Yeah, I got into video games pretty young. My brother would play them after he got home from school. Final Fantasy games were always a favorite of mine growing up." I then asked what games he moved on to next and where that led him in his gaming career. "Well, after Final Fantasy games, I played an online game called "Runescape" kind of like a version of World of Warcraft except it required a lot more time to be invested in it because you had to level up each skill from 1-99. Unlike World of Warcraft where you just level up one thing and you're done. I played World of Warcraft during the Burning Crusade expansion, I made lots of friends that I still talk to on a daily basis through that game even though our avatars no longer interact with each other."*

It was shocking to me at how many people that I have spoken to who say that they've made more friends via PC gaming rather than console gaming. Maybe this is because everyone in PC gaming has the ability to communicate with one another seeing as everyone who plays has a keyboard, whereas not everyone who plays console games have the specific microphone required to communicate via console games. We started discussing about whether he had competed in any sort of competition with the games he plays, and he said,

*"I've competed in the World of Warcraft arena teams (2v2,3v3 or 5v5 player versus player combat), but we didn't place as well as we would have liked. I've also been to a lot of LAN (local area network) parties with some friends nearby. We would gather at someone's house and link all of our computers and play video games all night. The tension is much more intense when your opponent is in the next room over or even in the same room as you. We would always get angry whenever we got fragged (killed in-game), but we always got them back, it was all in good fun."*

I asked him if he thought that video games played any roles in the way people act in there every day lives.

*"Well yes it effects everyone in one way or another, I can remember as a kid playing fighting games with my friend at his house and going into his backyard to trying to mimic*

*the fighting moves that we saw. Not only can video games effect the way we act as far as mimicking the acts seen, but video games can change our moods very dramatically. When I play a game all day and I can't get passed the final boss, I'm pretty upset the rest of the day, but if I play a game and have no problems beating it, that puts me in a better mood."*

When I asked him how he felt about the ESRB, he laughed and shrugged his shoulders,

*"It really doesn't matter to me anymore because I'm above the age to where i can buy any game, but as far as younger kids, yes, it's a great systems that keeps mature content out of the hands of children who are not mature enough to handle it. If my son was about about eight years old, I sure wouldn't want him learning about sex from a video game."*

When asked about what types of stereotypes he had encountered as a gamer, he gave me a very interesting answer that I had never really thought of before, "Well it depends on what type of gamer you are, if you're a PC gamer, then you're automatically labeled as a nerd because you're on a computer and computers are a nerds best friend, whereas console gamers are actually somewhat popular because anyone can go buy a cheap console system and play the newest games out, but a PC needs to be upgraded and costs a lot more to maintain." We then started talking about console games and why he preferred PC games over console games.

*"Well, I like console games, don't get me wrong. But they just don't have the depth level that a PC game has. With World of Warcraft for example, I have 30+ abilities, my Xbox controller only has 8 buttons. There's no way you could play an in-depth game like World of Warcraft on a console."*

While he made a very valid point, I wanted to hear why the console gamers preferred their consoles over PCs.

The second interviewee was a 24 year old console gamer named Daniel who enjoys playing Role playing games and first person shooters on his console. Some of his favorite games are: Halo, Boarderlands, Skyrim and Call of Duty. Daniel is a graduate from the University of Arizona. He told me that one of his first experiences with gaming was with the original Nintendo entertainment system. He said,

*"I got a Nintendo for Christmas one year with a game called 'Super Mario Bros'. A week later, I had beaten the game and I was hooked from then on. Playing RPGs like Zelda as a child was one of my favorite pastimes."*

When I asked what games he moved onto next, he listed a plethora of video games and consoles, some including: Sega Dreamcast, Playstation series, Xbox series, and the Nintendo series. We began talking about our favorite aspects about RPG games, Daniel stated,

*"One thing that always attracts me to RPG games is being able to fully customize your character and level it up how you want to, whereas games like halo, you play as the same character with the same weapons the entire game, nothing changes. It feels like its YOUR character in an RPG rather than something the game creators intended you to be. I love*

*how in games like Skyrim, I can chose how I want to fight in the game, whether I want to be a warrior who fights up close and personal or a mage who casts spells from a distance."*

I brought up the subject about how some people stereotype gamers and asked for his opinions on the matter,

*"Some people label us as nerds or geeks because sometimes we just want to stay inside and play some video games, which is okay to an extent. But I don't consider myself a nerd or geek by any means just because I play video games."*

When I asked him if he thought that video games effected people's moods, he said the same thing that the previous interviewee said. I asked Daniel if he thought that console games weren't as in-depth as PC games and he said,

*"The fact that it is on console or PC doesn't determine the depth of the game, because I can have a game like Final Fantasy on console that takes hundreds of hours to fully beat as compared to a PC game that may not take nearly that long to beat. But the PC does offer a lot more button options and the mouse some people think it feels more natural to move that around rather than a joystick for games like first person shooters."*

I asked why he preferred console over PC, he replied "I prefer console games over PC because how many people may think that a mouse feels more natural in their hands, the controller fits like a glove in my hands." People are just accustomed to what they've known growing up when it comes to how they play the game. For me personally, I started on console and made the transition to PC. I was curious about whether or not the console gamer stays at home and just plays online or if he participates in the LAN parties too.

*"We would gather every weekend at our friends house and hook all of our Xboxs up and play Halo, Call of Duty and Gears of War for hours on end! I remember actually getting in a fight at a LAN party because of all of the trash talking going on. After the games were over, everyone apologized and we put in a new game."*

After these interviews I have concluded that most gamers whether it be PC or console probably got their start young and just have been playing video games ever since and probably got started from a friend or family member. Although console gamers enjoy their controllers and game discs and PC gamers enjoy their natural glide of the mouse and keyboard to stay connected on a more personal level, as gamers we all have to agree that we play the video games for the love of the game, not the system we play it on.

**SECTION III**  
**Facing up to Facebook: Exploring Social Media**

## Social Media and the Growing Society

*By Kaylyn Jennings*

The Internet has allowed people to find information, buy and sell products, watch television shows, form relationships, find forms of entertainment, and participate in online discussions. "We use it to connect with others – three-quarters of American adults have been online, with even more teens (93%) reporting they do so, and almost all Internet users say one of their primary purposes for going online is for communication," (Correa, Hinsley, & Zuniga 17). People used to talk to other people via letters, the phone, or in person. In today's society there are a growing number of people using social media to communicate with their family and friends. One of the big questions is what is going to happen to social interactions over time. "Given the tremendous exposure of social media in the popular press today, it would seem that we are in the midst of an altogether new communication landscape," (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre 17). The fear is that face-to-face interactions will be a thing of the past and how will that affect relationships. Social media allows for people to socialize with people they know and expand their social circle (Correa, Hinsley, & Zuniga 14). All types of people use social media from the young to the old and from men to women.

Social media in the beginning was populated by the younger audience. "Two-thirds of online adults (66%) use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, or LinkedIn. These internet users say that connections with family members and friends (both new and old) are a primary consideration in their adoption of social media tools," (Smith 1). As time has gone by social media has become popular in the older crowd because it allows them a way to communicate with people they have not seen in many years. "The number of those using social networking sites has nearly doubled since 2008 and the population of SNS users has gotten older," (Hampton, Goulet, Rainie & Purcell 28). As technology becomes more integrated into people's everyday lives they become aware of social networking sites which not only allows them to communicate with people they have not talked to in years, but it allows them a way to expand their social circle. "Among Internet users, social media sites are found to penetrate the population regardless of education or race/ethnicity," (Chou, Hunt, Beckjord, Moser & Hesse 9). It does not matter what a person's race/ethnicity, gender, or age, more people all over the world are beginning to use social media.

There are seven building blocks for social media: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 9). People who use social networking sites often exhibit these online behaviors which allow them to create an "online profile". "Two of the primary tools that enable these connections are social networking sites and instant messages...more than half of America's teens and young adults send instant messages and use social networking sites, and more than one-third of all Internet users engage in these activities," (Correa, Hinsley & Zuniga 6). Some social network sites implement an instant messaging system so that people can further communicate in a private setting. Social networking sites and instant messengers allow for people to keep in contact with people without having to be face-to-

face. Looking at the different reasons why people use social media will help to see how digital culture will be expanded in the future.

### **Methods**

In this research, I interviewed 3 people, (2 females and 1 male). I asked each of these people a set of questions regarding who they were, if they used social media, what was the best social media site, did they use the most and why, what they did on these social media sites, and when did they begin using these sites and why. The interview ended up lasting about 30-45 minutes.

### **Results & Discussion**

After doing the interviews, I looked at their data. Everyone I talked to was between the ages of 19 and 22. There were 2 females and 1 male. All of them currently live in Southern West Virginia.

When asked about what kind of activities they do on a daily basis, Zoey said:

*"I like hanging out with friends, shopping, surfing the Internet, playing video games with friends, and listening to music."*

Michael said things similar to Zoey, showing that they both like to surf the Internet and play video games with friends, both of them promoting digital culture. People who use the Internet or play video games contribute to digital culture, helping it expand and become a part of everyday life. Sally said that she liked spending time with her husband and friends; she did not mention anything about the Internet or video games.

When asked about the types of websites they used online they all said that they used Facebook, email, and would often shop online. When Michael was asked why he visits those sites he said:

*"I mainly access Facebook, because I always have notifications from people talking to me, so I constantly have to check."*

He seems to get on Facebook a lot because he has people who are talking to him constantly so he feels as though he 'has' to check Facebook all the time. When I asked them about the activities they did on social media sites their answers varied a bit. Two of them said they kept in touch with old friends. Sally said:

*"I have made new friends, but my old friends are always there for me, no need to change that."*

Sally seemed to be focused on social media just to keep in touch with old friends because they were always there for her. Maybe with her new friends since she does not see them on a daily basis or have a face-to-face conversation with them she does not feel as close to them. For Michael, he was the complete opposite:

*"My old friends suck. I have found better friends that share more interests. I keep in touch with family because I do not get to see them too often, so we keep in touch on*

*Facebook."*

Michael seemed to think that his friends that he had face-to-face interactions with were horrible friends compared to his friends that he met online who shared common interests with him. He also keeps in touch with family since he does not get to see them very often. For the same question, Zoey said:

*"I use Facebook to keep in touch with the friends I have made personally and share with them what is going on with me, and I use Tumblr to make new friends and talk about mutual interests we have."*

Zoey used one social media site as a means to keep in touch with her friends and used Tumblr as a way to make new friends and talk about common interests. For her, she has two different means to talk to people and uses them accordingly.

When asked about how old they were when they started using social media, two of them started using MySpace when they were around 13 years old in high school. The other one was in the 6th grade when they began to use social media. They all found out about MySpace through their friends and got it because they thought it was 'cool'. Social media seemed to integrate its way into people's lives no matter what age they were. They all agreed that they tended to post statuses about things they were thinking about or doing and would sometimes post pictures. When asked about how much time they spend a week on social media, all of them said they were on it every day for some length of time. I was surprised that no one talked about how they would use social media as a way to expand their social circle for future jobs.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, some of the results I got from my interviews surprised me. From the three people I interviewed, they all started to use social media at the same time. The reasons they used it varied a bit, some thought it was useful for both making new friends and keeping old friends where others thought it was a way to reach out to other people with the same interests more than communicating with old friends. This research could be expanded by having a bigger sample size and by having more specific questions about the topic. From this research it has opened up new questions such as looking at how different age groups began to use social networking sites and how they use these sites. Or a researcher could look at how children use social media and how that influences their behaviors online.

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## Social Media and User Interaction

*By Adam Belcher*

The field of social media, with websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and the like has had very little research done. Admittedly, it is a fairly new field, but it has such a large impact on social life and social interactions today that more research in order to gain understanding as to how exactly social media has changed the world since its inception is necessary. It has changed the way social interactions work, from simple friendships to relationships. It has influenced the way businesses advertise and promote their product, the way politicians show their platforms and communicate to their voter base, and the way musicians show their works. What is most interesting, however, is how people view it and how they interact with the social media itself, whether it is Facebook or Twitter. Examples of this interaction are how they view the social media, how they decide what to post on it, or who they "friend" or "follow," along with many other different interactions that social media gives them.

As stated before, some researchers have started studies into social media and the changing demographic of the users of these services, which I feel is important in understanding the mindset of social media users and the culture that they are coming from. For example, the article "Social Media & Mobile Internet Use Among Teens and Young Adults" by Amanda Lenhart, Kristen Purcell, Aaron Smith, and Kathryn Zickuhr gives insight into the demographic change from blogging to social media. For example, the article says that in 2010, "73% of wired American teens now use social networking websites," which is an increase from years before (2). Young adults, they note follow the exact same trend. In a second article "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life" by Danah Boyd offers more of an insight into the development of social media, starting with origins in Friendster and moving up to Facebook and Twitter. But what is interesting of note is the reasoning behind people joining these social media sites; Boyd mentions that "the popularity of MySpace is deeply rooted in how the site supports sociality amongst preexisting friend groups. Teens join MySpace to maintain connections with their friends" (9-10). From Boyd's findings that seems to be the driving force behind people joining social media, not for the social connections, not to reconnect, but to stay in contact with the friends they currently have.

I conducted interviews to gather information about people habits and opinions on social media. I attempted to have them elaborate if they could on more interesting subjects, but mostly I would gain knowledge on how they used and perceived their social media experience. Most of the focus I got was on Twitter and Facebook, since those are the primary social media outlets that are used. I conducted three interviews, with two male interviews and one female interview and results that were immensely interesting. Even within the small group of interviews I did for this research, the answers were drastically different for each person and shows that perhaps the analysis used by Boyd may not be completely accurate when it comes to people and their use of social media.

The first interviewee I had was Abigail, a 19 year old student. Her answers were majorly

focused on her Twitter usage compared to her Facebook or E-mail usage. She used Twitter to "connect with friends." Her Facebook usage is mostly to keep in touch with family, because of its convenience. She sees twitter as "very fast, and more personal." I focused on the advantages and the disadvantages of social media with her replying with the advantages of social media are that it is quick and easy, but a disadvantage is that everything is out for the public to see. She is immensely more comfortable with social media and uses it to communicate her point of view, not fearing any sort of repercussions, basically saying that she "post what she feels." This seems to be the common viewpoint when it comes to social media, and serves as a good middle point or a customary view of social media in society.

The second series of answers is from a Zack, a social work major. His major use of Facebook was for communication, but interestingly, he has a personal rule that states that his friend list is at "no point allowed to be over 300." His use of Facebook seems to be mostly political in nature or as he put it, "social necessity," he keeps people he wants to keep in contact with later in case he needs them in the future for some favor. The main advantage he sees in Facebook is ease of communication, but at the same time, he sees a massive disadvantage being that it is "so hard to disconnect." His interview gives an interesting take on how Facebook is used, while to most people it is social connection, in this case, it is used out of necessity and for personal gain down the road.

The third and final interview I gave, Jerry, a 22 year old student. His main use of Facebook is a news source, both within his friend circle and national news. The difference in Jerry's response compared to Zack and Abigail's, I feel this view are worth referencing further. He believes that "people post their cares and news" on Facebook. He gets a wide variety of news this way compared to focusing on main news outlets. The main advantage he finds in Facebook is how it allows him to keep up with people, but a main disadvantage for him is how it "blurs the line between private and personal life." Jerry is referring to the fact that less and less of what people actually do is truly private; it is all posted on Facebook for the entire world to see. Like Abigail, Jerry is immensely comfortable with social media, he sees it as it being the "equivalent of having a phone number" in the past. As stated earlier, most business has a Facebook page, so his point has some measure of merit to it.

These three interviews gave wildly different opinions concerning social media and how people interact with it. Abigail gives what most would think be the customary view of Facebook, one of mostly social interaction and keeping up with friends. But both Zack and Jerry give more cynical views of the social media apparatus. Zack uses it for social connection, but for the sake of having connections to people, not for keeping track with friends. Jerry uses it as a way to keep track of peoples' lives, and the news that is relevant to them, which at first glance, appears to be contrary to the purpose of Facebook, but with everything, it is possible to have multiple purposes and varying methods of utilization. The media has evolved that allows for such varying degrees of use. As Zack described it, it is used to acquire some sort of social capital. Jerry, on the other hand, used it to gather news in his friends' lives as well as world news that was pertinent to his friends and by extension, to him.

Social media has evolved in a very interesting way; it has changed from just social

interaction between friends and family members, and into a way for large groups of people to stay connected, for people of similar interests to organize, and even for businesses to promote their products on a medium in which the consumer will pay attention to. And as the media have evolved, so has people opinions of it. Some use it just for connection between friends, some use it as the only connection between their friends, while others use it for social capital, and yet others use it as an information or news gathering device. Good or bad, social media is here to stay, and it has greatly impacted our society, perhaps just as much, if not more than the internet itself. It has brought a world which was becoming smaller and made it even smaller.

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## Why Facebook?

*By Dustin Donohoe*

I recently conducted a survey among my Facebook friends via Facebook status. I asked a series of questions such as: "Why do people have Facebooks?" "What sort of things do they expect to appear in their news feed?" and "What it is that they actually get out of Facebook?" I received some very interesting responses from the participants and some gave the regular "to stay connected with close friends and relatives" answer but with their own personal twist.

The main question that I asked my Facebook friends was "Why do you have a Facebook?" and the response was pretty cliché. Paul responded by saying,

*"I would say most people will say it is a great way to stay in touch with old friends, which it is, especially for foreign kids. Since phone calls and regular texting is too expensive, when out-of-country. Now, on top of being a great source of information if you follow the right people/pages. It serves as a great source of entertainment as well."*

Paul had a pretty common answer to such a broad question but explained why social media is important for those of us who are trying to stay connected with those that we care about over wide range of distance. There is a considerable amount of international students that attend every major university in the United States, even the smaller campuses such as Concord for example. I've witnessed a number of international students talking to their loved ones thousands of miles away using not only Facebook, but also social applications such as: Skype, a video chat application; Viber, an iPhone application that allows for free mobile to mobile communication internationally; and Voxer, a walkie-talkie application that saves the voices messages sent to be opened at any time. However, international college students aren't the only ones to utilize social media to stay connected with the ones they love over distance. The military also uses Facebook and other social applications to keep up with their friends, family, and news from back home in the United States. One of my Facebook friends that commented on my status is an airman in the United States Air force. She and the international college students have a lot in common. Dayla commented,

*"I have Facebook because it helps me out when I am deployed. It saves tons of money on phone cards when I can just shoot everyone an email. Also since I do not live near any of my friends anymore it helps me keep in touch with them. As for my news feed I do not look for anything in particular. Maybe just keep up with people without actually having to talk to them because people post their whole life story on here lol."*

The infamous Facebook status is used to tell your friends "what's on your mind". Dayla made an excellent point about the amount of information people share via Facebook statuses. I for one have seen many instances where a Facebook friend would have these long, drawn out, very detailed Facebook statuses revealing things that I personally would not ever want to know.

Like Dayla commented earlier, she uses her news feed to catch up with people without actually engaging in a conversation with them. I suppose it is a way of being social without socially interacting which is very interesting to me. It seems as if the Facebook status functions as sort of a social message board. We upload our statuses to let people know where we are and what we are doing in hopes that they read the status and show up to the place where we are and want to engage in the same activity that we are engaging in. I, for one, am guilty of reading "the social message board" to get an idea of what my plans for the evening will consist of. One of my friends' comment really brought this theory home; Caleb commented,

*"People use Facebook because when they get "likes" or "comments" it gives them reassurance in their own decisions and opinions. People use it so they can believe that there are people that feel the same as them. People greatly enjoy the attention they get from it."*

He also added a funny little anecdote saying that "It's a great way to hit on girls without getting off the couch". His comment also elaborated on one of the many uses for the drawn out, over detailed Facebook status and the pressure that some might feel. This could be a possible answer to why people thirst for social acceptance.

I know for some, social peer pressure is one reason why Facebook is such a commodity in digital culture pertaining to social behavior. Paul had a very interesting comment on my impromptu Facebook interview question of "Why people seem so addicted to Facebook?" Paul's comment said,

*"We live in a world where everything changes so quickly, and you are socially punished when you not part of the people on top of the info. How many times have you heard "What?! Dude you didn't know about the?! That happened like a day ago," peer pressuring you to stay on top of all events. Though if you pay close attention, the stronger a person feels about not being able to check Facebook every five seconds, the more that person probably LOVES nosing in other people's businesses... Those are usually the people who will mass text everybody when he/she sees 2 people breaking up on Facebook or so. It has a lot to do with personalities."*

I think Paul's comment along with Caleb's provide a great amount of insight as to why people seem so addicted to checking there Facebook accounts every five seconds; especially after someone has posted the infamous status of "what is on your mind". I can personally agree with both of these gentlemen. There have been many times when I have been the victim of not knowing what is going on in the world of Facebook at Concord University. It could be something as simple as missing a funny yet controversial video someone posted yesterday and you walk outside to find your friends talking about it. You feel left out and essentially not a part of the group because you missed this video and you have no opinions or anecdotes to add to the conversation. It also seems that the next time something funny and controversial pops up on Facebook and you happened to catch it this time, that people already assume you are not on top of the "current events" and don't even ask you about it the next day. This could make you feel like an outcast, even if it is over something as minuscule as a weird video someone posted two days ago. I can definitely see how this could put a lot pressure on you to keep checking your Facebook so

you would not miss "the next big thing"; nobody likes to feel left out of the circle. Susan added to the conversation by saying that,

*"I think Facebook helps multiply your power of reach regarding your opinions and feelings, and I mean, let's be honest...who doesn't like to be heard/cared for?"*

I think this is very true. We all just want to be heard and want people to care about us, and sometimes being up on all the new social trends is how we as people try to achieve this feeling of care and acceptance. I want to share one more quote from Paul that has a theory on the "feeling of being socially accepted" in society,

*"I have this theory that people are addicted to social media outlets because we live in a generation where if you are not "popular" you are not "important" and Facebook offers a very cost efficient way to achieve "popular" status among friends."*

Somewhere in this series of comments provided by my Facebook friends lies the answer to the age old question of; "Why do we have such a thirst for social acceptance?" Facebook may be the first place to look. Although Facebook may have the unpredictable answer to all of your social circle woes, it can also be used as an efficient way do get your sociology paper on social media done in one night.

## Digital Footprint: A "Concerned and Careful" Approach

By Jonathan A. Lloyd

It is no secret that technology is a major factor in how modern society functions. With educators ever more reliant on PowerPoint presentations, administration on information and record-keeping software, students on academic databases, and all three of them on the Internet as a whole, the impact of this reliance of technology can be seen clearly in the educational environment alone. In regards to students, however, trends in the realm of social media may prove to be the most portent towards their academic and professional future. In the journal article "Online Professionalism and the Mirror of Social Media", the topic of social media reflecting professionalism is discussed, with emphasis on the dangers of engaging in unprofessional conduct online. Though in the journal, attention is given to medical practitioners' shaky relationship with social media, a case could be made that online identity management is just as important for students.

As the article on online professionalism stated, "recent research has shown that posting of unprofessional content is common among medical students, residents, and other health care providers." (Greysen 2012) If this is true, then as a student, it behooves me to observe and research how well other students manage their online identity or "digital footprint". Though work has been done in this area previously, such as in the case of Mary Madden, who in her 2007 publishing claimed that that people are generally aware of the existence of a digital footprint, saying that "nearly half of all internet users (47%) have searched for information about themselves online," but also that "...the majority of online adults (61%) do not feel compelled to limit the amount of information that can be found about them online. Just 38% say they have taken steps to limit the amount of online information that is available about them." (Madden) If this is true, what will the consequences be for those who fail to manage their online presence properly and what are the benefits for those who are diligent and cautious? Though many answers have been proposed in numerous studies, such as those by Madden and Greysen, in order to provide a different perspective, I chose to interview a student who makes frequent use of social media with an attitude Mary Madden defines as "concerned and careful." (Madden 2007) In order to protect the student's identity, she will be known by the name "Melissa".

One potential reward that can be seen for diligence is the preservation of reputation. Melissa, a nineteen year old university student in West Virginia, has a Facebook account to help keep track of her friends feels that management of her online footprint is important in order to keep her reputation intact. As she put it,

*"It's very important because I wouldn't want any, uh, reputation damaging knowledge to be on the Internet...I don't really have any reputation damaging things that I do...but if it should ever occur, I wouldn't want it to be on the Internet. I wouldn't say I use it [Facebook] to project an image...but I don't disclose certain things over the Internet... [such as] religious beliefs and certain political beliefs," Melissa added.*

When asked what steps she takes to manage her digital footprint, Melissa responded:

*"On my Facebook, almost everything is set to only friends can see it. I don't allow...um, I don't accept friendship requests unless the person is close to me-so I know I can trust them."*

Melissa also noted that on her Facebook account she enabled an option whereby if her name is to be "Googled", her Facebook account will not show up.

If her testimony is to be accepted, then according to Madden's study, Melissa would fall into a category of online adults known as the "Concerned and Careful", who "fret about the personal information available about them online and take steps to proactively limit their own online data." (Madden) In the case of Melissa, this is done to avoid the consequence of reputation damage. However, one potential consequence of belonging to this category may be a vulnerability conflict over the Internet.

Such was the case of Melissa, who claims though she doesn't disclose "certain political beliefs" still has had to deal with some conflict over Facebook over political matters. Melissa explains,

*"A family member got into a political argument with me over the Internet or at least tried to get into one with me. I put that I was happy that Obama won the reelection, and two of my uncles told me I was being stupid and that my political views are a result of me being uneducated and they were generally insulting."*

Melissa, who is close with her uncles, felt that they would never make such comments in her physical presence, and opted not to respond to her family due to her views on political debate.

*"Getting in a political argument over the Internet is juvenile. I think if you are going to argue politically it should be face-to-face...When you're reading something over the text...it's easier to ignore certain parts of a person's argument, it's easier to misconstrue things or interpret your own way. If you're going to do something that is that fundamental to your core values, then you should use body language [and the like]," said Melissa.*

Melissa, in the conclusion of our interview, went on to quote Albert Einstein and offer her final analysis on the management of the digital footprint in relation to daily life:

*"Albert Einstein said 'I fear the day that technology becomes more important than face-to-face interaction.' I feel his fear is coming true. It's not more important but it's becoming more vital...like, um, hmm, oh here's an interesting example. If I would get into an argument with my boyfriend...I would prefer to do that over text. I would prefer not to hear his voice or see his face...he prefers to do arguments face to face. I think that's because, in general I'm angry...and I don't want to see him...I prefer the least interaction possible. He frequently prefers to make an apology, or something of the sort, face-to-face so he can, I guess, better get across his message. He feels that he cannot argue his point of view effectively over text."*

Furthermore, she felt that another consequence of digital footprint management is tied with romantic pursuit. To explain,

*"The Internet...has made it easier to have intimate relationships with people long distances away. People can, you know, start 'trial dating' someone over the Internet before they go on a real face-to-face date. I think that allows people to be more 'choosy' about who they go with. Someone like me finds that extremely weird...I feel that no one's perfect and you have to live with certain things."*

In conclusion, as revealed by past research as well as discussion with Melissa, who exists as a "Concerned and Careful" Internet user, rewards for careful management of a digital footprint can include a preserved professionalism (Greysen 2011), the ability to engage in "online content creation" with reduced fear, (Madden 2007), or as Melissa put it, the lack of damage to one's reputation. By the same token, however, a "concerned and careful" approach can also result in a "relatively high likelihood to have had a bad experience with embarrassing or inaccurate personal information posted online." (Madden 2007) Such was the case with Melissa as a result of her two uncles' inaccurate reporting on her educational level. Also such could be the case, as Melissa suggested, with the "trial dating" nature of dating websites, where misinterpreted or outright falsified information can lead to a negative experience. It is my hope that this study has successfully provided some perspective on the nature of and will contribute to the body of knowledge on social media and the digital footprint.

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## [The Social Media Environment](#)

*By Jarod Tupper*

Social media websites are an entirely different world of their own. They are a place where it seems people feel as if they can say or do anything without any repercussions. Most of these websites have the same type of people posting and doing the same things. While most of the time it is all fun and games these websites hold dangers that you might not have even realized.

It would seem that on social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter that everyone is twelve feet tall and indestructible from all the trash talk that goes on. According to [bullyingstatistics.org](http://bullyingstatistics.org), over half of adolescents have experienced cyber bullying and almost the same number has participated in it. With numbers like that the "victims" are just as likely to have been culprits at some point in their life. As social media websites grow in popularity this problem is only going to get worse and worse. What makes bullying so much more wide spread online than in real life? I honestly believe that it is because there are no immediate repercussions. Some one can't send their fist through a screen and punch you in the face after all. It is because of this that adolescents in particular (because they have not reached a maturity level yet where they realize just because you won't get in trouble now does not mean you won't later.) are more prone to commit cyber bullying. Another website [endcyberbullying.org](http://endcyberbullying.org) states that 85% of teenagers have been cyber bullied at least once and that 25% are repeatedly bullied online. After reading this information I reviewed my newsfeed and encountered several instances of what could be classified as cyber bullying.

I have observed that social media websites can be broken down into several categories of people. The first group is the shirtless picture guy. It seems that this person is incapable of going one day without posting a shirtless picture of him and mentioning what time he is going to the gym that day. The next category is the abused puppy/child/woman photo sharer. For some reason this person feels like it is their duty to share these pictures with the world stopping abuse one like at a time. Another category that's out there but is a little less noticeable is the person who likes every single picture posted ever. It seems that no matter what picture you click on they are in the top three that liked it. The people that never sleep are another one. No matter what time you log on to Facebook it seems you always see a post from a few minutes ago. For real when do these people sleep? The mundane poster: This person posts random things about their everyday life. Things like "Well made eggs this morning going to clean then shopping later" That's an actual quote from my newsfeed. There are many more categories I could go into and we all fall into one of these whether you realize it or not.

When you think about the information most people put up on social media websites you realize people are putting their identity at risk without even realizing it. Think about the questions most people put as their security questions in case they happen to forget their password. They are normally things like what is your pet's name, where were you born and your mother's maiden name. All of these questions can be answered just by viewing

your profile. Once they have access to your email it would not be too hard to get banking information and numerous other sensitive materials.

According to [identitytheft.info](http://identitytheft.info) "Approximately 15 million United States residents have their identities used fraudulently each year with financial losses totaling upwards of 50 billion dollars." One has to wonder how many of those people became victims due to the information they decided to put up on social media websites. This was brought to my attention by an email I received from the United States Army. In the email they stated that people using fake profiles of beautiful women were targeting a number of soldiers. At first I thought that would never happen to me, that is until I started receiving friend requests and messages from "beautiful" women who stated they saw I was in the military and wanted to know if I was interested in viewing one of their private "shows".

That all they would need is some basic info to they could get me into their next showing. Now, I am not sure how anyone could fall for this ruse it seemed on par with the Nigerian Prince email scams that are now such a big joke, but upon inspecting the fake profile I saw that they had thousands of friends all of them in one branch of the military or another some of them I even knew. After having experienced this I realized how much you actually put at risk by putting up basic information on these websites. These people found me because I had put that I was in the military and knew I had some sort of income. They targeted me by offering a "free show" because it was obvious I am a young male and there by more susceptible to such an offer. No matter your age or gender though these people will find a story to contact you about, which is why I know take precautions by not making basic info readily available and by not adding people I do not know on a personal level.

Social media websites are not all bad without them I would not have much of a way to stay in contact with my friends who are all over the country or overseas. I do however feel as if they cause unneeded drama from things such as cyber bullying. That they do run the risk of putting your identity and financial security up for grabs by people with low morals. That everyday day has almost identical material as the day before and does not really promise anything new for tomorrow. However, social media websites do have a certain appeal to them and probably will not be going away anytime soon.

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**SECTION IV**  
**Our Time: Voices from the Digital Natives**

## [Evolving in a Digital Culture](#)

*By Adam Belcher*

One of the earliest memories I have as a child is playing Sonic 2 on Sega Genesis, ever since then video games and computer technology have been a very important part of my life. I am firmly entrenched in digital culture, but I would not call myself completely up-to-date on the latest trends and happenings in the digital world, so to speak. I can remember as a child the answering machine we had to use to take messages, and how my parents would have to buy tapes occasionally to refill the machine. Later on, my parents would get a cell phone installed in their cars. The cell phone was actually mounted inside of the car, with a microphone over the driver's side and the antenna cord being fed outside to the antenna that made the phone work. Nowadays, we have Bluetooth headsets that we can use while the cell phone stays snug in our pockets as we drive. When I sit here and think about it, it is quite amazing how far we have moved in just about ten years. The digital culture that we live in is not a completely separate culture, it is just as much a part of our culture as going to social gatherings have been in the past.

To be a member of the digital culture means that you use at least some technology that provides you one of the many mediums that are synonymous with digital culture, for example of this being a video game system, a smartphone, or a computer. While the devices are tools and are essential to someone's entrenchment in digital culture, to be able to be a part of the digital culture you have to have some kind of presence on a service such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Livejournal, or any kind of similar service. It is very difficult to find someone without at least one of those mediums nowadays and even harder to find someone who does not have some kind of presence online, and the search is only getting harder and harder as the older generations start to be more frequent users of computers and smartphones. As an added requirement of being a member of the digital culture, you need to have some contact with people that would normally be outside of your potential circle through using this digital medium. This does not mean that you need to have a contact from outside of the country however, this means that simply you keep in contact with someone you normally would not be able to keep in contact with through a digital medium, or perhaps you met someone in the same town or city as you, that you would not have met normally. Once you start to have a presence online, then you start to become a member of the digital culture. Note however, that this definition does not require a vast online presence, even if someone rarely checked their twitter, or Facebook, they are still a member of the digital culture. As long as there is some kind of presence on some sort of online community, you are a member of the digital culture.

In my life, I have shifted into a digital culture. Being more withdrawn of a person in my childhood, digital mediums such as chat rooms for either roleplaying or forums, or even the era of messengers such as Yahoo!, MSN, or AIM Messenger Services which let me connect with people as close as down the street all the way to people in Britain and Australia. I found the people I met through these mediums to be more entertaining and fun to be around compared to the people I knew in real life or RL for short. I plunged

myself into these mediums, and through these mediums I gained the social knowledge and ability I have now, and it also let me develop my personality and learn a lot about myself in the process. There are always those who say that what I did stunted my social growth, but without those connections and those friends, I would be immensely introverted and not as well-spoken as I am today. It helped me develop my literary talents as well as helped me develop my ability to read people. It is immensely hard to read a person online, since there is only text to work off of, through constant contact with people online I gained more of empathy for people's emotions and the ability to read people through what they said than I would have gathered if I have been thrown into social gathering after social gathering. This entrenchment in digital media allowed me to develop my social skills at my own pace, because I always had the way out. All I had to do was turn off the computer and I was free of it. There was no way these people could contact me if I did not want them to. It was safer, in a way, because I had complete control over what people knew about me or how they perceived me, nowadays, with Facebook that is immensely hard to do. Facebook makes things very public if one does not go through and set privacy settings to settings that prevent a footprint from taking place. It is much harder to hide yourself on Facebook than it is to hide yourself on any other medium.

Through this class I have gained more of an understanding that the digital culture is exactly, and it has allowed me to see the differing viewpoints concerning these mediums and see the pros and cons of both. Although I am of the generation in which these technologies became common place, I stand in the middle because I have memories of times before I had a computer, or cell phone, or when Facebook only allowed college or university emails on their site. I would not say that it has changed that much per se, but rather that it has evolved and became more refined as I notice what an impact digital culture makes on our society nowadays. It is much more than a simple Facebook page, or owning a video game. It is a large community of people who have connected from around the world to either play games, talk, or even organize social movements such as Occupy Wall Street or how important the internet was during the Arab Spring. During Occupy Wall Street, the internet was used to garner support for the protestors, most notably Facebook, where events would be organized and relayed to members of the Occupy Wall Street group, during the Arab Spring, I can remember groups who would set up proxies, which allow the user to make their IP Address, so that they could not be discovered during the times when people who were relaying what was happening in those counties to the outside world were being captured by their respective governments. People always think that the internet is just a simple connection between people and random websites, but it is much more than that. It is how humanity stays connected now; it has replaced telephones, letters, and telegraphs, as one of the most primary means of communication between people and as the technologies evolve, the impact that the digital culture has will become stronger and stronger.

As newer and newer technologies further integrate the real world with technologies, I see myself slowly adapting to these technologies. I am one of those people who wait and see how important these technologies are and then I move into them and quickly adapt. I am not one who jumps on the bandwagon as soon as something is announced; I wait to see what it will be before acquiring the technology. I can see a future where everything is fed

through a headset similar to the Google Goggles, where your phone, maps, Facebook, or whatever applications you need will be directly fed into your field of vision as you travel. As technology has become smaller and smaller and we're able to do more and more things on these increasingly smaller devices, there will come a time where everything that we can do on our computer and smartphones can be done either with a very small device, or become implanted in something we already wear, such as glasses, or a headset. There is already technology that projects a keyboard for use; it could be relatively easy to move these technologies to the glasses so that the keyboard is anywhere you are without having to carry around any other device. I tend to move with the changes, understand them and perhaps adopt them if I do not find them too cumbersome to work with. I have to be comfortable with the technology and the idea of the technology in order to use it.

The future holds untold possibilities for technology, and as advanced as we are right now, I am sure that what we have today will seem to be antiquated in ten or twenty years, just as the mounted cell phone my parents had appears to be an antique next to the cell phone I carry with me, or how that phone made rotary phones look obsolete in comparison. Technology and the digital culture that surrounds are constantly evolving. It is completely necessary in the world that exists today to be inside of this digital culture, it has become and more central to our society. While society still hangs onto physical social gatherings as the preferred and somewhat dominant form of communication and social activity, digital means are gaining popularity and will continue to gain popularity until they rival the coffee house or the club as methods of social interaction.

## Is Technology Good or Bad?

*By Kishonna Horton*

In today's society, technology has progressively enhanced and has mostly become a part of everyone's daily lives. Many individuals rely on technology for information, connection with others, and even as a form of entertainment. As it continues to progress, however, people have begun questioning and debating its harmful effects compared to its usefulness. Technology quickly surpassed the "impressive" phase and is now seen as disturbing for a vast majority. With technology growing as rapidly as it has been, issues surrounding the upbringing of children and the social aspects of one's life continue to rise as well. In this paper, I plan to address the good, the bad, and the expected of technology on the future.

For those who favor technology, they feel it's helpful in the aspects of machinery, communication, and obtaining information. With technology one is able to connect with any person regardless of their location through devices such as cell phones, in which the average person of today's time owns and uses daily. The issue on cell phones, for instance, and the heavy reliance people put on these devices has become very controversial and has quickly become a main concern. Electronic devices such as cell phones, iPads, iPods, and such enables us to connect with anyone through calls, text messages, emails, and numerous social sites all in the palm of our hands. We can browse the web and "Google" anything at ANY TIME; so those in favor ask, "What exactly is the harm?"

Well, according to Nick Mueller's article on whether technology is good or bad; the harm lies within the "non-physical" attribution technology has gotten us equipped to. He opens with "Today's computer technology gives us the ability to network with many people. E-mail gives us the capability to write messages to one another without making direct contact. Popular messaging programs like Facebook, AOL Instant Messaging, and Skype give us the ability to keep in touch with friends and family without direct contact. Internet sites like Google give us the ability to research certain topics without analyzing them. The question then becomes is technology actually hurting our society? Many experts have agreed that by constantly relying on technology to communicate our ideas, without actually talking to a physical person will lead to diminishing intrapersonal skills. In simple terms, by using e-mail, Facebook, and text messaging as our main source of relaying information, we will progressively become worse at physically talking to other people."

Personally, I feel years down the road we're going to be able to look back and see the effects electronics has had on our society and the different generations. The article mentions how researchers argue that having the luxury to sites like "Google" and "Yahoo", make today's kids less apt to find information on their own. He says "The whole idea of finding information within the pages of a textbook or encyclopedia has been lost. In today's digital age, critical reading skills are being lost. Instead people go online and read an article of someone who has done the criticizing for them." After

reading that passage it made me realize how bad into technology we truly are. This is what we have become, and slowly but surely we will be able to see the change if something is not done.

All in all, I do not feel technology is completely bad. We as humans just need to find a balance between the time we spend online and the time we spend actually socializing with others. Those who argue technology's worth would say technology within computers are most certainly helping society. By finding and utilizing the correct balance, it equally develops our skills. The same article later states from the view of those who favor technology, "Computers can be used to do many effective things, and social networking programs like Facebook give us the ability to socialize with others that we may not otherwise. Overall, the pros of technology outweigh the negative." Many individuals feel that technology has improved society with the limitless ability technology provides for us. We are able to accomplish more as individuals through technology and even though there are those who overuse its capabilities and have lost their sense of "reality," many of us simply do not live online. Although we may talk to some people only online, we talk with others in person daily. Public Opinions state "Social networking sites have given us the ability to keep in touch with many of our friends that otherwise we may never talk too. One could argue that we should pick up a phone and call them. By using online sources we save ourselves time and money. If we were to call each one of our friends each night, we would waste so much time on the phone. By using social networking means, we leave them a brief message, and they leave us a brief message back. By doing so we don't consume so much time."

Another big positive to technology is the life span of the average person living today, an article I came across on the good and bad effects of modern technology states "In the 20th century alone, the average lifespan of a human has increased dramatically, particularly in wealthier, more industrialized nations. This is due primarily to technology. With new agricultural methods and equipment, the world is able to produce more food with less work at a cheaper price. With better medicines and more effective treatments, people can survive diseases that would have once easily killed them." When it comes to medicine and people's health technology has done us all a huge favor. We are able to cure many illnesses in which would probably be non-existent had we not had technology today.

One researcher explains it like this, "Computer technology, just like any other material on earth has been created with a common good in mind. Just like a knife, it has been made to cut and slice food to speed up cooking time for people but it can also be used to kill people, and you cannot ban the use of knives in order to stop killing. And so you can't blame computers for the problems it may have caused for it is the people who use them who caused the problem. It has disadvantages and advantages that must be taken into consideration." This is very true and well spoken, as I always say too much of a good thing, is always a bad thing, and that applies to everything.

So my answer to the question of if technology is bad or good is simply this, technology itself is a wonderful and powerful thing. It has contributed to a lot of great things in society in which has opened a whole new world of possibilities. It is now much easier to obtain information on different topics, you can even find and apply for jobs and most

importantly it is easier to connect with one another. Therefore, I feel the problem does not lie with technology being bad but the individual whom uses technology. If you use technology properly you could gain so much through its capabilities, but when it's overly used one can desperately suffer its consequences such as dependence, isolation, and/or physical deprivation.

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## New Age

*By Jarod Tupper*

Today's technology can be a real "Trojan Horse" It can have many bonuses and aid in our day-to-day lives in many ways, but there also seem to be many underlying consequences that people ignore or don't realize exist. In this modern world where new technology seems to be invented daily and is just as quickly made obsolete one has trouble keeping up with new trends and learning all the details of every new piece of equipment. This can make a person feel flustered on almost a daily basis. The good however, surpasses the bad more often than not.

Technology and I have had a real love/hate relationship since I can remember. I loved it when the teacher brought it into the classroom to break up the mundane day-to-day activities. Also, when the next big video game would come out and I could spend a couple hours blowing off steam time permitting. However, as I became older I noticed many negative side effects occurring in my life and that of my friends. I started thinking about the late night sessions and how I would feel the next morning when it was time to get up for school. How instead of taking the proper time to do homework I had been doing it in-between classes or staying up even later to accomplish it. This also got me thinking about the unhealthy life-style it was leading me to physically. Instead of leading the highly active life I had, I was now much more sedentary and it was showing. Now, I won't say it was all bad this really only affected me physically. Mentally, I feel as if I had an easy way to relax and slow down for a bit. During this time frame of a couple years I was just as happy and mentally stable as I now am. Using technology for recreational purposes is not always bad, as a matter of fact, it does have its merits, such as relaxation and social interaction, but just like most things in life it should be taken in moderation and only when less important matters are not a factor.

Social media websites and apps allow us to be connected with anyone and everyone regardless of their geographical location. There are very few people that I know of who have accounts on such websites and only check them once a day. Some even take it a step further and multiple accounts on many different social media websites and post multiple updates a day pretty much outlining their entire day. They use these sites as a sort of live journal, posting current locations and activities. As I have stated in previous essays this runs the risk of putting yourself in danger both physically and identity wise. A person at any given time has a current photograph of you, your location and several key facts about your life all at their finger tips. One bonus, I have noticed to social websites however is how after a loved one passes away they become a kind of digital memorial to them for everyone to see. Prior to social media websites a person had to be pretty important, or had to have done an amazing feat to have a memorial, but now most people have already built their own before they are even dead. This is honestly a good thing. I have seen accounts of deceased friends being kept active by family and it appeared to really help with their grieving process. It is comforting to know that whenever you're thinking about them and feeling down that you have multiple pictures of them all at your finger tips that allow you to think about the good times you spent with that person.

Technology affects us in ways you would never think and a lot of things you take for granted are actually relatively new. To put this into perspective, according to [www.blackinventions101.com](http://www.blackinventions101.com), your common doorknob is not as old as you would expect, it is actually only about one hundred and thirty years old. My great grandfather probably spent a good portion of his life never having seen a doorknob. It would probably blow his mind to see all the modern advantages we have and how we take them all for granted. The fact that we have the ability to type a few words and research any conceivable topic I want is probably the single biggest advantage we have over any previous generation. Combine that with modern technology in the medical field and we have no excuse to not be the healthiest most educated generation yet.

Technology, you can use it to enrich your life, but if not used correctly it can be extremely detrimental. The best we can hope for is to use it with caution and watch how we use it, and how much we use it. As long as you do this you have many a great asset's that previous generation never did, but if you are not careful you will also encounter many dangers our ancestors did not think possible.

## [My Life with Technology](#)

*By Dustin Donohoe*

Our world is obsessed with technology, especially the newest and "coolest" devices and applications that the world has to offer. Everyday more and more people are getting the newest computer phone or buying the newest handheld computer, such as an iPad. People complain about having to pay over five hundred dollars for the newest and best iPhone, but this does not stop them. As bad as I hate to admit it, I am one of these people. I have to play the newest and "coolest" games on my iPod touch and I want an iPad just to play the games that I already play on my iPod; just because the iPad makes it look better. And I have an iPhone; though it may not be the newest one I still own one. I know that I do not need these materialistic items to survive, but to me these devices are my way of survival; without them I would not be feel whole. I would not be complete.

If you are not a member of the "digital culture" club, then are not in the know how. This is how our world is starting to think, especially my generation. I grew up in a generation where technology has always been needed to some extent. We played computer games in 1st grade. We had to have typed papers in 5th grade. And not to mention if you did not have a cell phone of your own by the 7th grade then you could just kiss popularity good bye. Being a junior in college is not any different. I walk around campus and notice that about eighty percent of the campus population has some type of computer phone, whether it is an iPhone or an Android; people want to be accepted and these are the "acceptable" phones. The children growing up now are even more technologically trained than I was. In elementary schools the students are given iPads to do their class work on; these same students walk out of the school at the end of the day and turn on their iPhones. Without a "digital culture," our world and especially the youth, including myself, would not know how to survive. Technology is our oxygen!

When I was younger MSN messenger and MySpace were a big deal. I would hang out with my friends while in school and then as soon as school was over I would rush home to chat with them on one of these social networks. I would spend hours on the computer chatting with my friends about pointless things; I would even post statuses about pointless things, but I "had" to do these things and download these social networks in order to feel like I was somebody. Since I have been in college I have had the experience of meeting all kinds of different people, such as my friends from Turkey. While they were here, at Concord, I did not have to worry much about keeping in contact with them; a simple text message was a button away. Now though, since they have graduated and moved back home, communication has become more difficult. We communicate with text messages through an application called WhatsApp and we are able to talk on the phone with an application called Viber. I have realized that my main focus now for social networks is not just to chat for hours with my friends, whom I have spent all day with, but to maintain a friendship that is thousands of miles away from me. If the world did not have technology and if I did not have a computer phone then I would not able to communicate with my friends. No one would know anything about the other parts of the world. I would not have the chance to see just how beautiful Turkey is if it was not for

my friends showing me while we FaceTime each other, which is another perk of having an iPhone. By saying all of this, my role of the "digital culture" club has changed. Instead of only using technology to be cool and to feel like somebody, I now use technology to better my education and to maintain friendships that at one time would have been impossible to keep if it was not for technology.

I have been oblivious to the importance of technology on our society until I signed up for this digital culture and social behavior class. I have learned so much about technology and the behaviors that are associated with technology that it is nearly impossible to put into one paper. This class has really opened my eyes to the heart of soul of why people cannot live without their cell phones, Xboxes, laptops, Facebook accounts, etc. We all have a need/want to be connected to one another, for whatever reason that may be and technology facilitates that action. It allows us to stay connected in a variety of different ways such as: e-mail, text message, video chat, or even on a headset while playing a video game online. Not to mention all of the communication applications that all can be accessed right on your smart phone. Being an outsider of our SOC 350 you do not really think about how or why people stay connected to one another, it just happens and people do not give it a second thought. They do not realize they are globally networking when they are playing a massive-multiplayer online game with another person in another country; or actually understand that they are addicted to being socially connected when they forget their cell phone at home.

Technology is evolving so rapidly that one day we won't even need to leave the house; everything will be done for us just by logging in or flipping a switch. It's going to be more than just being entertained or being socially connected. I really do feel like technology is going to take jobs from people, and eventually take people over in general. For example, look at the movies such as: IRobot, the Matrix, the Terminator, or even Smart House; if these movies could even be the slightest indication on how our future might be, then I personally would not want to have any part of it. I am completely content with my Xbox and various games and applications that my cell phone has to offer. Technology has become a way of life. It seems as if social statuses are held accountable by the amount of technology one has access too. The digital evolution is moving rapidly and society is moving right along with it.

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## About the Editor

Dr. Alecea Standlee is currently an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Concord University located in Athens, WV. In 2012, she received a PhD from Syracuse University in Sociology. Her research focuses on the role that contemporary communication technologies play in the lives of college students. Her current project specifically focuses on how college students use social media, texting and related media as means to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships with peers. This research utilizes qualitative and online ethnographic methods for data collection. More information about this method is available in Alecea's journal article "Ethnographic Approaches to the Internet and Computer-Mediated Communication" published by the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. This interest in the impact of communication technologies in the lives of college students led to the development of the upper division seminar course that was offered in the fall of 2012. The course focuses on providing college students with a way to articulate their own social and cultural identities within techno-social culture.

Connect with Alecea Online:

[facebook.com/alecea.standlee](https://www.facebook.com/alecea.standlee) • [astandlee@concord.edu](mailto:astandlee@concord.edu)