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<div align="center">Social Media: Perception vs. Reality</div>

In just 15 years, social media has become a dominant channel for human interaction, with an estimated 2.5 billion active users currently. This ever-increasing statistic is reflective of a global society driven by technology and mass communication. With social media, there is general discourse and news dissemination that even the most forward-thinking minds from a century ago probably would not have been able to predict. With all its popularity and usage, it is necessary to ponder the effects that social media has on the individual, and therefore on the rest of society as a whole. Though there are a myriad of these effects to observe, one of the most recognizable is that social media often breeds complex facades that seek to compromise true character for outward appearance.

Humans have always been social creatures, and with very good reason. Social groups give people their sense of purpose, while the cooperation aspects help them maintain conditions necessary to live. For this reason, it is almost natural that people gravitate to social media; the posts, comments, and likes make many people feel validated by other people in the world. This sensation of validation, however, can become quite addictive to the average person, resulting in many social media users actively seeking it out. In fact, according to a study by California State University, receiving a like on Facebook is comparable to the neural sensation one feels after intaking a small amount of cocaine, as it triggers the amygdala, which processes the importance of events and impending rewards. Consequently, it is rather common for users to feel the need to

tally a large amount of likes. Just as cocaine addicts tend to do outrageous things to obtain the

drug, social media users oftentimes go to measures far outside of their regular personality in

order to get likes and attention, from pulling dangerous stunts to intentionally sparking

controversy and anything in between. Actions like these can be dangerous and harmful, but an

even deeper subproblem is that this leads to people living much of their lives in a facade realm in

which they can develop dishonest traits and attributes of pretense. These changes, no matter how

nuanced, could affect the way one is viewed by others, and could even affect self-perception.

Many people use social media to post pictures of themselves or to show off their

whereabouts. Not surprisingly, this has led to a generational uptick in narcissism levels. In a

cross temporal study by San Diego State University, psychologists found a noticeable increase in

mean narcissism levels that coincides with the 21st century rise of social media apps like

Facebook and Twitter. Nearly two-thirds of the modern day college students who completed the

inventory placed above the average narcissism score of students from 1979-1985. This suggests

that social media has indeed affected the way people self-perceive, as there is now a large and

accessible outlet to self-promote and aggrandize. In the same way users seek to be validated,

people also seek admiration and praise for their live. This rather typical eagerness for

compliments can manifest itself in a number of different ways, from posting an excessive

amount of selfies to creating fabricated good tidings to announce. Either way, it is evident that

the internet elevates people's consciousness of how they are perceived, which often impels

people to make themselves seem like more than what they are.

As is the case with many milestones of innovation, the net pros must be weighed with the

net cons in order to arbitrate its actual utility. While social media can be considered a wildly

important mainspring of both the social and economic sphere, at its core its main use is for the individual. Therefore, it is just as flawed as humans, as it works almost as a mirror to the insecurities, deep desires, and vanity issues of people in the real-world. It is essential to acknowledge the shortcomings of social media globally so that people are not caught up in a simulacrum universe, but rather focus on the true social world and all its functioning systems, which unlike social media, cannot simply be logged off.

I have been challenged in the past with the task of balancing the clarity of my argument's points with my sometimes long-winded and wordy style of writing. Ms. Pahomov has brought this to my attention on multiple 2fers, and gradually I have tried to use the revision process as an opportunity to cut words or phrases that add nothing to the direction of my points. This is possibly my best 2fer because it accomplishes that to the fullest extent thus far, as it is probably my shortest 2fer as far as word count but still it has a lot to offer with the points and is directed to a thesis that I still think is thoughtful.

Works Cited

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