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Essay topic: Why Social Media Forces Us to Wear a Mask

Technology is wonderful. This paper is not to bash on technology or anything but it is to show how it can be used in the wrong way. We rely on technology for a lot of things. It wakes us up in the morning, it tells us the weather and it even keeps us updated with the news.

It is important that we realize that technology has some good effects but also has some negative effects. If you go to Wal-Mart you may see a lot of kids that have been missing for quite a period of time. According to Linau Qing who is a psychologist on this matter, 95 % of these kids have been abducted due to predators that they have been talking to online. Kids innocently go on there and speak to people who think that are their “friend” but actually they are either pedophile or predators.

As the Dateline special "To Catch a Predator" made public to the world, cyber hot-spots like Myspace, Xanga, and Facebook attract kids who use the site to express themselves, talk to their friends, or make new ones. Unfortunately, those same social networking sites have become an online predator's dream come true. With millions of kids logging on every day, those who are naive, overconfident, or vulnerable make easy prey for those who manipulate and abuse children (Dickey, 57).

 Technology has taken control of our lives, but we should not jump to conclusion about it. I think that technology is a huge plus for our day-to-day lives but we are allowing it to control us. For example, look at texting and driving.

We need to learn how to step back from technology and use it less. The best way to do this is to unplug it for an hour each day and just not touch it. Social media has ruined our lives and it is setting up unrealistic standards to people. I know that for a fact when I go out with my friends sometimes we are all on our phone, and I have to snap out of it and I feel ashamed to realize that even when I’m at a restaurant I always have the urge to check my phone. It’s not even anything important but knowing I have my phone with me helps me. I believe that social media has also made it a way for people to hide behind their screen name or I’m or whatever they call it.

For example, if you are around a group of people and you feel awkward people will generally tend to go on their phone to avoid the awkwardness.

You also have people who use online dating as a source of meeting people because they are afraid of talking to people. Technology has allowed us to hide behind technology. People say things online to each other that they would never say if it was face to face.

For example, snapchat, which is an app that let users share images or videos that disappear after few seconds has had issues with people sending pictures of themselves naked to other users. Teenagers and even college students use this app to safely explore the sort of “silly unguarded and sometimes unwise ideas that have always occupied the teenage brain”. Sexting is very common on snapchat.

"Snapchat Sluts," a Tumblr blog full of nude and semi-nude images, was started up last month by a "party photographer" who says he put out an open call for salacious shots on Twitter and was overwhelmed by the response. Another Snapchat-themed blog on Tumblr is filled with complaints about male users sharing photos of their genitalia. Snapchat users may think their naughty images will never come back to haunt them. But people can still grab screenshots from their phones, even though both Snapchat and Facebook Poke notify the sender if the recipient of an image takes a shot of it” (Zarrell, 2).

There is also another app called Whisper that has been on the news due to the misusage of it. Whisper is an app that is free and it is very popular to the younger crowd. It encourages people to post pictures and share secrets “anonymously” as well as chat with other “whisperers”. It is supposed to be an app that is rated17+ but nowadays it is pretty easy to cheat your age.

According to Buzzfeed which is a social media newspaper, predators have been known to use whisper to contact their victims.

“Detectives in [Seattle said](http://q13fox.com/2013/10/10/man-charged-after-using-whisper-app-to-lure-teenage-girl/#axzz2nbfTFBCU) that a man admitted to using Whisper to arrange to meet a 12 year-old for sex. The Whisper user said she was 14 (sorry, dude, still not legal or okay) and the predator had her send sexual photos. He then drove to her house and told her by phone how to sneak out by removing a screen and they drove to a hotel where they had sex.” (Boyer, 4).

Whisper is also dangers as it reveals the user’s location if they are not careful. It increases the possibility that you’re not anonymous and makes it easier for other people to track you down. The police said that it is easier for predators to locate and connect with victims because the victims are not aware that they had the location service enabled.

What is also awful with these social media app is that it is also a form of cyber bullying. A student even suicide at North Carolina high School because he was bullied and being sent anonymous texts from former high school students (Clay, 1)

 Another app that has been very dangerous is the app tinder. According to Tinder’s description in the App Store: “Tinder finds out who likes you nearby and connects you with them if you’re also interested. It’s the new way to meet people around you. Tinder is how people meet. It’s like real life, but better.”

The app suggests people nearby and shows them a photo of the individual and then if the person likes the picture of the person then they like it, and then that person is notified. The reason why this app is dangerous is because it facilitates the “face to face meeting” by revealing a user’s location. It is very dangerous because there have been numerous cases where kids went disappearing by giving out their location. Tinder also promotes one nightstand, which is the action of sleeping with someone without any string attached. It speeds the courting and makes it all based on superficial judgment. These things do not happen in real life. It is also very appealing for predators.

“**Online predators** are an issue on any social media and this one will be no exception. With photos from Facebook on the site [combined with the location information] an online predator would have very little trouble determining the hang out spots of the teen they were after "(Reese, 2).

Not all of the people that use tinder are predators but some of them are very vulgar and rude. It is also an evidence of cyber bullying.

 Another app that has been really bad in cyber bullying is the app called Ask.fm. It is a social networking website in which someone asks a question and an answer is supposedly answered back if the user decides to answer, but the thing is that you can ask absolutely what you want and there are is no monitoring.

On the website itself it says “The ask.fm service allows for anonymous content which ask.fm does not monitor.” In other words you can write whatever you want and its okay. The user is free to decide whether or not they want to answer it or not but there is anonymity so you never know who ask these questions. Some of the people will say who ask the questions but the vast majority will be anonymous. The website is being used as a means to communicate abusive, bullying and sexualized content. According to the daily mail it has been linked to numerous suicides around the world. A user can block someone but they must give a reason to block the person. And even if they do block the person, a blocked person can still access the profile to view all other interactions.

“**Schools in Britain have** [advised students and parents to not use](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2261588/Ask-fm-Pupils-parents-warned-social-networking-website-linked-teen-abuse.html) **Ask.fm.** Following the suicide of a 14 year-old girl in Britain who had been bullied on Ask.fm, British [Prime Minister David](http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/aug/08/cyberbullying-websites-boycotted-david-cameron) Cameron said, "There's something all of us can do as parents and as users of the internet and that is not to use some of these vile sites. Boycott them, don't go there, don't join them – we need to do that as well. I'm very keen we look at all the action we can take to try and **stop future tragedies like this**." (Gross, 2).

These are the app that I thought were the most used nowadays and the most dangerous one. Technology has enabled us to hide behind the texts or email we may write. Social technologies have broken the barriers of space and time. It allows us to interact 24/7 with more people than we would normally do on a day to day basis. Few years ago there was a story in which a mother and a daughter were exchanging text messages because the daughter was in college. They ‘texted’ back and forth and the mother was asking how the daughter was doing and the daughter would answer with positive words and emoticons. Later that night the daughter committed suicide (Cohen, 6).

This is one of the examples that is very extreme but none the least it is happening all the time around in the United States. I think that technology has been a huge help for our generation. School requires the access of iPads or even your own smartphone. I think that technology is great. I know for a fact, like last year I was in China for a study abroad last year, I lost my credit card and I had no way of paying for anything so I was in a last place. If I hadn’t had my smartphone to call my mother who was in France I would have been stuck there for who knows when. As an international student it is very hard for me to talk to my parents because of the time difference.

My mom and I both have an iPhone and we have apps such as viber, what’s app or voxer and these apps help us so much to keep in touch even though the distance is hard.

Technology is not all bad but it’s just how people are using it. These days I think that parents should monitor what their children do online and make sure that there is some sort of accountability. It always amazes me when I see little kids with an iPad or even an iPhone per say and they are on these apps because there are predators out there and who knows what they are looking for.

As social networks gain more presence in the digital world, a new but real threat to kids online today is stranger danger," said Effendy. Citing the Norton Online Family Report 2011, he noted that 35 percent of children online have had a stranger befriending them on a social network. Aside from that, the type of information and content which children post to their social networks is also another cause for concern, he said. "Kids may innocently post personal information like their phone number, home address and full date of birth or photos of themselves that could attract the wrong kind of attention," the executive noted (Linau, 98).

Another social media that has been very popular lately is the use of online dating. There is this particular website called POF which stands for Plenty of Fish and basically someone just go on there and fish for the right person. The danger in this is that it gives away your personal information and everything is exposed (Fuchs, 8).

I have several friends who are on there because they are wanting to look for a relationship and they have had many guys from that website come over to their dorm. I do not feel comfortable with this because once you allow someone in your life it is normally really hard to get rid of it and I think that you need to be careful because how can we be sure that the people we talk to online are who they really are. We have better judgment when we see them and the fact that we dont is fishy. We need to be careful of the environnement that we are educating our kids with and make sure that they understand the danger of it.

Teens post a tremendous amount of information on their twitter, or even their Facebook. It leads to rape, and cyber bullying but the most dangerous act is identity theft. Some students even put their social security on there and then couples of months later are faced with identity fraud (Bassahin, 2).

The problem with social media is that it forces kids to try to gain the attention of their peers and gain the approval of their “online followers”.

Couple of years ago a student who lived in California decided to have a small party at his house while his parents were away, but he posted details of the house party on social networking sites and he found his “small’ party crashed by thousands of unknown people which ended horribly and had to involve the police (Winter, 23).

This is also known as Project X. Project X is a film that talks about 3 high school seniors who throw a birthday party make themselves known, but the party goes out of control and end up being crashed by people that they had no idea about. The problem with events like that is that they are portrayed in a positive way that say a message to kids that even if you do something bad if it is “tweeted, or snap chatted” to a large enough of population you will become “internet” famous (Ortega, 1).

 There was also this video of a little kid disrespecting his mother on YouTube and his mother filmed it. The mother was trying to talk to the kid and explain to him that what he did was wrong, and the little kid talks back by calling his mom by her first name “ Linda” and keeps on saying “ Linda listen, listen to me”. It is funny and adorable at first but at the end of the day what are we showing to our kids? Is this really the kind of environment that we want our kids to grow up? The fact is anything you do or post goes viral on the internet. As soon as you press send or even say something online it is out there and you cannot take it back (Clay, 3).

Celebrities have had a lot of issues with sex tape that were released or even their personal information out there, and were even prosecuted. It is also even used to bully other and make it okay. The fact is, internet has opened up a door and has made us being able to go anonymous and say whatever we want which is not acceptable (Usmar, 4).

 If we were to do this face to face we could even be arrested because it is defamation. Defamation is the act of spreading false rumors or damaging someone’s reputation.

The reason why I am so against some of these apps is that it is used to hurt other. An app called “yik yak” is actually very popular at our own campus of Texas A&M University Commerce. There is a lot of drama at our school and yik yak is where you can post something anonymously, well people use it to write about other fraternities, or sororities or other individuals and to embarrass them. It is extremely cruel and dangerous to do so.

Yik Yak allows people to post the most anonymous message online and it can be seen by other users within a set radius. So if you download the app yik yak and allow your phone to use your location you can see all the post that people of our school put on there. Some stuff that people put on there are even life threating and sometimes even involves the Department of State to take action or the FBI (Rajwani, 1).

Earlier in February, a student of San Clemente California was expelled after an anonymous bomb threat was posted on Yik yak (Richey, 3).

Social networking is extremely dangerous because of the privacy issues. We are already giving away so much information about ourselves and others, such as birthday, mother’s maiden name, kid’s name, address, phone number and all of this information makes us transparent and vulnerable.

Another aspect of why social networking is dangerous is that parents aren’t aware of the responsibility involved with being a able to talk to anyone with no safeguard. It lured child pornography, pedophilia and even a lot of kids that are being kidnapped through online dating (Skotzko, 15).

Today I have explained to you the danger of social networking/media and why we should be more careful. This was not to say that we should never go online or talk to people, i twas simply to shed some light so that people can be aware.

Crimes happens all the time, and though it does not happen to us, we certainly want to make sure that those whom we care about feel safe. The internet has revolutionized everything, making work more efficient and faster, and the fact that we can talk to people who live in different time zones is amazing but we still need to be cautious because though the internet is wonderful some people use it for their advantage and can hurt other.

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