
EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The origins of the term “social media” have been a point of contention. Although the *idea* of social media has been around since the mid-1990s, when internet users were first given the ability to make their own websites through servers such as GeoCities, multiple people have taken credit for naming the new phenomenon. Among them have been Darrell Berry, a writer who included the phrase “social media spaces” in a 1995 paper about the internet’s evolution; Tina Sharkey, an executive at early Digital Age companies like America Online (AOL) and iVillage, who owns the domain socialmedia.com but did not register it until 1999; and serial entrepreneur Ted Leonsis, who was working at AOL in 1997 when he was quoted in an interview about the need for “social media, places where they can be entertained, communicate, and participate in a social environment.”

Whoever is responsible for coining the phrase, it’s likely that they had little inkling of how popular social media would soon become and the impact it would have on the world. As of May 2024, when this volume was in the final stages of preparation, statisticians from the Pew Research Center and other organizations reported that more than 5 billion people around the world were users of social media, with most people spending an average of two hours and twenty minutes on various platforms each day.

Other statistics are equally staggering: eight years after launching in 2004, Facebook became the first social media platform to reach a billion users, and in 2023, the last full year for which accurate figures are available, the site had 3.049 billion monthly active users. The video-sharing site YouTube came in second only to Facebook, with 2.7 billion active users (and a billion hours of video content watched *per day*). X (the platform formerly known as Twitter) boasted more than 335 million users around the world as of May 2024, including more than 50 million in the United States, while Instagram had more than 2 billion active users each month, with 500 million visiting every day. And despite ongoing controversy over its

ownership, TikTok has become one of the fastest-growing social media platforms in history, downloaded 4.7 billion times between 2018 and early 2024.

It is probable that by the time this volume reaches you, those figures will have grown ever more.

As difficult as it is to keep up with the number of social media users and the cumulative amount of time spent on the platforms, it can seem equally impossible to keep up with the developments, threats, and news surrounding the topic. In the space of just one month, the aforementioned controversy about TikTok, for example, has been covered exhaustively by not just tech publications but major, mainstream media outlets.

The controversy stemmed from worldwide concern that the Chinese government could gain access to user data, including location information, via TikTok, which is owned by the Chinese company ByteDance. The concern was far from baseless; the Chinese government has been known to demand data from companies based in that country for intelligence operations, some with goals like cracking down on dissidents. Another concern is that the government could leverage the platform to spread inflammatory political disinformation. In response to those concerns, India banned TikTok in 2020, and several other countries—including England, Australia, Canada, France, and New Zealand—have forbidden government workers and officials from downloading the app on their work devices. As of early 2024, American President Joe Biden had signed legislation requiring ByteDance to divest from TikTok and sell the platform to a U.S.-approved buyer. (The company has appealed that legislation and pundits predict that the case may end up in front of the U.S. Supreme Court.)

News had also flown fast and furious in 2022, when now widely reviled entrepreneur Elon Musk purchased the popular platform Twitter, renamed it X, and made it a safe haven for far-right voices that had been banned from other outlets. While that frenzy died down for the most part, it flares whenever Musk does or says anything objectionable,

such as when he disseminates homophobic or racist messages.

Musk, unfortunately, is not the only voice that can be considered controversial or toxic on social media, and television anchors and print journalists regularly highlight disturbing stories about new dangers that have arisen. In the early months of 2024, for example, the *New York Times* published an essay that bemoaned the fact that “today’s technology has created innumerable new ways to enact adolescent torture” and later published a piece about “financial sextortion,” a devastating practice whereby adolescent boys are tricked into sending nude pictures to malefactors pretending to be female and then blackmailed into paying to keep the embarrassing photos from being sent to family, friends, school administrators, or employers. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) told the *Times* journalist that between January 2021 and July 2023, before the topic had become a subject of headlines, at least twenty teenage boys had killed themselves as a result of that scheme.

Other stories that emerged in the early months of 2024, as this volume neared completion, concerned the exploitation that is rife on the platform OnlyFans, which allows subscribers to access user-created sexual content. Many of the more popular creators—generally slim, conventionally pretty, young women—can amass millions of subscribers, making it impossible for them to keep up with demands for one-on-one conversations or other personalized content. In response, agencies have sprung up that employ legions of poorly paid “actors” who pretend to be the actual content creator, defrauding subscribers and convincing them to pay increasingly extortionary rates for prerecorded video or the (unlikely) chance of meeting the creator in person.

Such stories, while they undoubtedly sell newspapers and attract viewers to network news shows, tell only a portion of the story. While social media is not all good, neither is it all bad. As with many phenomena, it helps to have a balanced view and to avoid being either a technophobe (someone who fears and mistrusts all new technology and harbors anxiety about what the Digital Age means for society) or a utopian technophile who embraces all

forms of technology unreservedly, believing it will solve all social ills and lead to unmitigated happiness and satisfaction. (Another attitude, technological determinism, has been much discussed in academic circles; as the name implies, adherents believe that technology itself is an autonomous entity, able to *determine* the course of society, independent of people who want to harness it as a tool for attaining their own goals.)

The essays in this book are aimed at helping readers make informed choices about whether or not to use social media and other technological platforms—and if so, how. Recognizing that social media has the potential to do both enormous good and enormous harm, we have included information that will be useful in keeping your online world informative, safe, and enriching.

We begin with a series of pieces on the concepts and terms every internet user, whatever their age, should be familiar with, from the fundamental differences between digital natives (those born after the advent of the Digital Age) and digital immigrants (those old enough to have seen the birth of each technological advancement and required to adjust to it) to the metaverse (the convergence of physical and virtual space accessed through computers and enabled by immersive technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality and mixed reality) and what it might mean as it more fully develops. We examine the social media heavy hitters (platforms with millions or billions of users); examine the physical, mental, and emotional toll excessive social media use can have on a person; and delve into how it can help and hurt our real-life relationships.

Here you will also find extensive sections on addictions of various sorts and technology’s role in exacerbating them, as well as a look at some other dangers you might face online, including cybercrime and doxing (the act of publicly identifying someone or publishing their private information for punishment, revenge, or other malicious intent). Sections are included on topics of special interest to parents and their offspring, as well as to seniors, who face a host of challenges very specific to them when using the internet.

We’ve also included information about online privacy and staying safe, as well as pieces about online

ethics and how teachers and law enforcement agents are leveraging the internet in their work.

Readers will notice that some articles in the volume offer a wide-ranging view of the social media landscape, while others take a more granular look at a specific topic. Similarly, some pieces are more academic in tone, for those who seek scholarly, data-driven insight, while others are more layperson-friendly. Some topics will be covered in multiple articles that each take a different approach, to give readers the benefit of broad perspective. We believe that everyone will find something that will interest and inform them.

It is possible to search online and find prescriptive lists of social media “pros” and “cons,” with

positives like relationship-building and entertainment on one side of the ledger and negatives like cyberbullying and identity theft on the other. But while it's tempting to view social media through that simplistic lens, the reality is much more nuanced, and everyone will have individually determined factors to weigh before deciding how to navigate the online world.

It's important to remember that if you are being negatively impacted by technology, whether that is because of cell-phone addiction, cyberbullying, or any number of other issues, help is just an online search away.

—Mari Rich

Useful Resources

Addiction issues: internetaddictsanonymous.org/contact

Help for eating disorders: (888) 375-7767 or (866) 662-1235 or visit www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/get-help

LGBTQ+ youth support: www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help

National Elder Fraud Hotline: (833) FRAUD-11

Report a cybercrime: www.ic3.gov or www.justice.gov/criminal/criminal-ccips/reporting-computer-internet-related-or-intellectual-property-crime

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Referral Hotline: (800) 662-HELP (4357)

Suicide prevention: Dial 988 or visit 988lifeline.org

BASIC TERMS AND CONCEPTS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

APPS/APPLICATIONS

Introduction

Apps, or applications, are collections of code or software designed to run on a particular device. Mobile apps are specifically formulated to be downloaded and run on mobile devices such as cell phones or tablets or to be used exclusively for a particular type or brand of mobile device. Apps are also being developed for wearable devices, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and biometric devices. Software platforms for app development use similar tools, called application programming interfaces (APIs), within the platform to design and run the apps.

One of the unique features of apps versus computer software, in general, is that apps are focused on the individual user, a specific function, or both. There are apps that offer simple services or provide the user with a stream of unanalyzed information (e.g., streams regarding sports statistics, current weather, stock market ups and downs, directions, and traffic updates).

At the other end of the complexity spectrum, some apps, such as gaming or social media apps, offer a complete experience within the app itself. Between these two types, a variety of apps, such as calendaring and communication functions, offer services that accept some input from the user but maintain the essence of their programmed structure. Most users access these apps from a mobile device, whether the apps come preloaded when the user purchases the device or are individually selected and downloaded from an app store.

Generally, the term “app” is used for applications that run on mobile devices, whereas the term “application” is used for desktop computer applications. Here the term “app” is used without distinction.

Background

Apps have provided a broader platform than conventional computer software for nontechnical designers to approach the market and develop innovations. Several app-creation languages offer simpler functionality than traditional software languages, allowing an individual to translate a business idea into an app design. Usually, apps are brought to market much more rapidly than are new computer programs. An app store, or the marketplace for apps on any given device, is broken down into two primary platforms: one for Apple devices and one for devices that run on the Android platform. Other app markets include

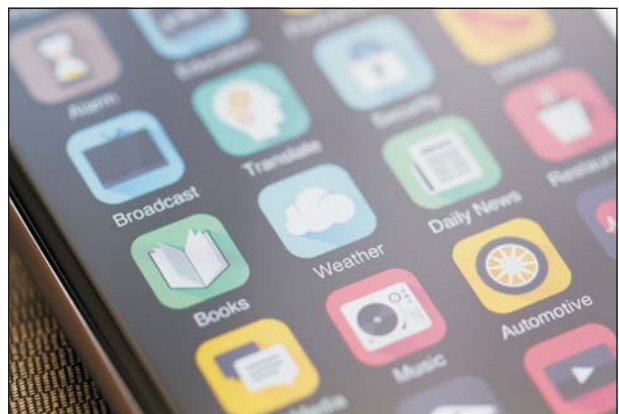


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those operated by Amazon, Facebook, Google, Hewlett-Packard, and Microsoft. The introduction of the Apple iPhone in 2007 marked a transition from app provision by carriers to app provision by device manufacturers. When the Apple app store opened in 2008, just a few hundred apps were available, with a significant percentage of free apps offered. In more recent years, Apple and Android app stores have each offered well over a million apps. Apple strictly controls access to its market, and it is considered more difficult to enter than the Android market.

What Makes for a Useful App

The user experience in operating apps is considered one of the main factors that drives the success or failure of any given app. Mobile app designers pay particular attention to the appearance—or graphical user interface (GUI)—of the app as well as the app's actual function. Components of the user experience include ease of download, cost, sensitivity of data input, look and feel of the screens shown to the user, number of screens or clicks required to complete transactions, accuracy of information provided, and number of push or automated notifications. The next front in the development of new apps is to move from high-touch, separate functionalities, such as entering an event into a calendar, to lower-impact background functionalities such as passive check-ins for location and display of card format information.

Apps and Privacy

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) generally issues privacy regulations governing app design and information collection. Apps that utilize healthcare data are also regulated under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), 110 Stat. 1936 (1996). The payment card industry (PCI) governs apps that involve financial transactions using credit cards. Generally, the app's promises to protect privacy appear in the app's privacy policy statement, but they may appear elsewhere in the marketing materials or security assurances. The FTC and other regulatory advice encourage privacy by design. Under this principle, privacy may be considered during the

design phase, or at the onset of app programming, rather than after the new app is released to and used by consumers.

Because the U.S. government is concerned about the amount and type of data collected from children under the age of thirteen, Congress enacted the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) in 1998, 112 Stat. 2681 (1998). COPPA's restriction on data about children applies to apps given that a large number of children interact with mobile devices and tablets in the highly accessible app format. Once an app is downloaded, often the only barrier to children's access is that they must touch or click on it to open it, and it is not necessary for them to log in to start the app. Thus, children can access apps easily, and many apps are designed and marketed with children as the primary target, such as educational and gaming apps.

Apps are also different from other methods of electronic collection of personal data because they frequently continue running and collecting data even when the user is not actively engaged with the app. Also, apps may gather data that does not directly relate to the primary function of the app, such as apps that note the user's physical location, peruse photos, or mine personal contacts on the mobile device even if these activities are not strictly necessary for the app's operation. In one example, an app that converted the light-emitting diode (LED) flash from a phone's camera operation into a consistent flashlight function also happened to collect location data when the app was running. Following the collection of the user's personal data, apps can process it, sell it, or upload it to the internet.

The collection and sale of personal data from apps has become a significant market. One of the best ways to ascertain whether an app is collecting personal data for use beyond the functioning of the app is to look at the price for downloading the app. If the app is free to the user, there's a good chance that the app will capture user data for sale to third-party advertisers. Otherwise, the app could not turn a profit. Even if the app has a fee associated with a download, there's a possibility that the app could capture data from users that is not required for the app to function as promised.



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Everyone who performs any function online, from banking to telehealth visits to simply reading the news, can be affected. Research shows that many people do not trust modern institutions to protect their personal data—even as they frequently neglect cybersecurity best practices in their own lives. As a result, a majority of Americans have directly experienced some form of data theft or fraud, including fraudulent charges on their credit cards, unauthorized release of sensitive information, compromised Social Security numbers, and hacked email accounts.

Lack of adherence to best practices begins with the ways that Americans keep track of the passwords to their online accounts. Cybersecurity experts generally recommend password management software as the safest and most secure way to track and maintain online passwords, but many

people rely instead on memorization or pen and paper as their main (or only) approach to password management.

A substantial share of Americans take steps that experts recommend against:

- Sharing the password to one of their online accounts with a friend or family member
- Using the same (or very similar) passwords for many of their online accounts
- Using overly simple and easy-to-guess passwords

Additionally, people are not always vigilant in the context of mobile security. Many smartphone owners report that they do not use a screen lock or other security features in order to access their phone, while some report that they never install updates to their smartphone's apps or operating system. Others admit that they utilize potentially

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SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE PSYCHOSOCIAL

Introduction

Adolescence is a time when young people are learning how to manage their emotions, building relationships, and developing life skills. This period involves the development of self-identity and the formation of peer relationships. Many adolescents experience an interconnectedness between the need for personal identity and a simultaneous need and desire for powerful group affiliations. They push for independence while still requiring social connections. Social media offers both challenges and opportunities for adolescents engaging in its use. Adolescents are more limited in their ability to self-regulate and more vulnerable to peer pressure than adults.

Today’s adolescent clients have never lived in a time without the Internet, and technology tends to amplify emotions, both positive and negative. Social media sites wax and wane in popularity over time, with new sites constantly coming into use as the market and demands change. Social workers need to stay current on the social media sites that are popular with adolescents.

A significant number of adolescents access all of their social media via their phones, which means a much higher rate of unsupervised access. The Pew Research Center conducted a study in 2023 to study trends among teens with social media and technology. The researchers found that 97 percent of adolescents between the ages of 13 to 17 went online daily, with 46 percent of adolescents stating that they were online “almost constantly.” These numbers have grown since the 2014-15 survey, which reported 94 percent and 24 percent respectively.

Background

There are varying hypotheses and theories on social media use in adolescence and how use of social media affects adolescents’ identity development and ability to connect to others.

The stimulation hypothesis theorizes that adolescents may have an easier time with online self-disclosure than with in-person communication. Since self-disclosure leads to closer relationships, adolescents may be able to form close, high-quality friendships through social media communication.

The rich-get-richer hypothesis theorizes that it is only the more social adolescents who will benefit from online communication, whereas those adolescents with poorer social skills will not be able to develop high-quality connections and are therefore at an increased risk for depression.

In contrast, the social compensation hypothesis theorizes that those adolescents who are uncomfortable with in-person peer relationships can develop relationships and meet their social needs online.

The media practice model posits that adolescents choose and will interact with media based on not only who they are but also who they want to be. When adolescents choose to explore certain behaviors or experiences, they may receive reinforcement that will then push them toward further engagement in that behavior choice (e.g., an adolescent who is thinking about experimenting with alcohol use may be influenced by viewing social media that shows peer endorsement of that behavior).

Use of social media in adolescence can have positive effects by helping the adolescent with identity

development, self-disclosure, and forming affiliations, and many adolescents use social media to extend relationships that are found in other parts of their lives. Use of social media can allow adolescents to both provide and receive virtual empathy (e.g., taking part in an online fundraiser, receiving supportive comments and messages after posting about an ill loved one). This support may include support for adolescents who are otherwise marginalized by sexual orientation, illness, disability, or shyness. Social media also allows adolescents to reach out for health information on topics that might otherwise be hard to talk about (e.g., substance use, sexual health).

Caveats

Some challenges and concerns do arise with adolescent use of social media.

Social comparison is common on most social media sites. This can provide some positive feedback with responses to a posting but can also end

up making adolescents feel inadequate, whereupon their self-esteem may suffer. Adolescents may also post misleading or inaccurate information to present an idealized version of themselves.

Many social media sites have measuring tools such as “likes” or “friends” that are collected, and adolescents may let these measures influence their sense of self-worth. An adolescent may also feel that if a picture or comment is not getting enough feedback from the adolescent’s circle of friends, then it should be shared with a wider audience.

Adolescents are vulnerable to the online disinhibition effect in which people tend to share personal details and more private information in a social media format than in face-to-face interactions because of feeling more anonymous and disassociated online than in the real world.

This phenomenon is also referred to as “public intimacy,” where the adolescent’s perception is that the content is private because of his or her own privacy settings when in reality the



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INSTAGRAM

Introduction

Instagram is a photograph-sharing and social media application (app) for smartphones and tablets that launched in October 2010. The app takes photos in a square shape, rather than the 4:3 aspect ratio typically found on smartphone cameras. Users can then apply filters to their photographs to achieve a desired look. Instagram also supports videos, which can last up to fifteen seconds. Users can then share their photographs or videos on other social media services such as Facebook and Twitter.

Instagram rapidly grew in popularity, seeing 1 million users within two months of its launch. Within four years, that number reached approximately 200 million active monthly users and 20 billion photos shared. By early 2021, the app had 1 billion monthly active users (MAUs), making it even more popular than X (formerly Twitter), and had been used to share more than 40 billion photos. (To put the MAUs into perspective, that number is greater than the populations of North America and Europe combined.) As of 2024, that number had ballooned to 2 billion.

Background

Software engineer Kevin Systrom developed the basis of Instagram while attending Stanford University in California. After working a day job, Systrom learned how to code and built a hypertext markup language (HTML) prototype app called

Burbn. This app allowed users to check in at locations, make plans, and earn points for hanging out with other users and posting pictures.

Systrom met backers from venture capital investment firms Baseline Ventures and Andreessen Horowitz. Two weeks after meeting with these investors, he had raised \$500,000. Engineer Mike Krieger was brought on as a partner, and a team of other engineers was assembled. Systrom and Krieger decided that if they wished to establish themselves as a legitimate company among the many other app developers, they would have to focus on performing a single task very well. They chose to focus on the mobile photograph aspect of Burbn and spent eight weeks developing a new photography app, which they called Instagram, a combination of the words "instant" and "telegram."

After beta testing and fixing some malfunctions of the app, Instagram was launched on October 6, 2010. Within hours, over ten thousand users had downloaded the app and by the end of the first week, it had over 100,000 downloads. By the end of 2010, over a million users were using the app, which was valued at \$20 million the following year.

Investors continued to finance Instagram, and in April 2012 Facebook acquired the company for \$1 billion in cash and stock. In 2023, Instagram's



Instagram logo. Image via Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain.]

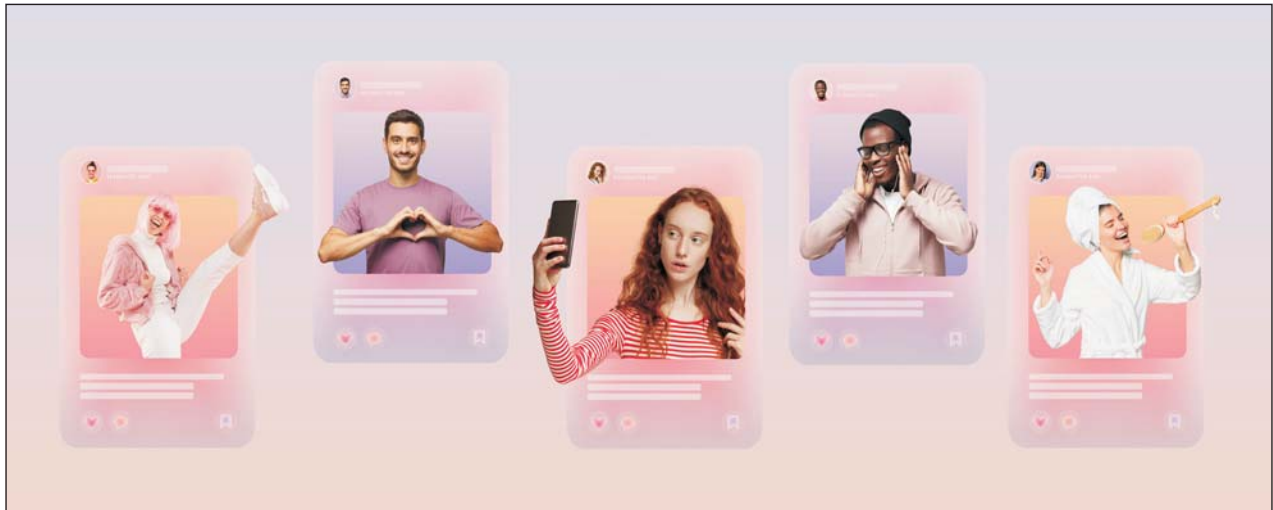


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revenue exceeded \$30 billion, with that figure only expected to increase.

Developing the App

For several years, Instagram went through only slight changes in its features. Users can take a photograph, add a filter to it to give it a desired effect, share it, and “like” and comment on other users’ photographs. In June 2014, the app added new features so that users could modify their photographs even further.

These additional features allow users to adjust the contrast, brightness, and saturation of their photographs. In addition, they can also use a slide bar to adjust the intensity of the preset filters. For these additional features, Instagram engineers examined film cameras to study how light is affected by different lenses. In August 2014, Instagram introduced the Hyperlapse app, which allows users to post time-lapse videos.

In August 2015, through the company blog, Instagram announced its biggest change up until that point: support for the posting of images in a format other than those in a square shape. Despite the app’s beginnings as a program dedicated to preserving the nostalgia of the historical square photograph format, the company acknowledged that a large number of photos are rectangular, causing frustrated users to turn to outside apps to format for posting. With this change, users can

share both photos and videos in portrait and landscape orientation. Just as Facebook had changed its “feed” method in 2009, Instagram also followed suit in March 2016 and began testing an algorithm that arranges items in a user’s feed according to photos users would most want to see based upon who they follow rather than in reverse chronological order.

In further recognition of such transformations, the app instituted another large and controversial alteration only weeks later when it presented a new logo. The company replaced its iconic retro camera logo with a more modern pink, purple, and orange logo, which a spokesperson explained is meant to capture the “diverse storytelling” for which the app has come to serve as a platform. These changes were met with mixed reviews from users and commentators.

After its launch, Instagram users quickly adapted the use of hashtags to enhance their photograph commenting. The hashtag is a word or words grouped together without spaces and prefixed with the hash (#) symbol. Users can then search for the hashtag on various social media networks and find posts concerning the topic.

One of the most popular hashtags used on Instagram is #selfie, a term for when people use their smartphone’s camera to photograph themselves. By December 2014 more than 200 million photos on Instagram were tagged “#selfie.” *The*



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Behavioral Addictions and Relationships

Behavioral addiction causes a person to lose control of the impulses that lead to negative actions. The most common behavioral addictions include gambling addiction and sex addiction. Less common but prevalent impulse control disorders include kleptomania and pyromania and addictions to food, computer and Internet use, shopping, and exercise.

Behavioral addictions are far less common than substance addictions. There remains a significant debate among mental health professionals as to whether such impulse control disorders should even be technically classified as addictions because they do not involve the consumption or use of a chemically addictive external stimulant.

According to the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, in 2015, approximately twelve million American adults had some form of sex addiction. It also is believed that as many as two million Americans were pathological gamblers,

meaning that they lie about the frequency of their gambling and place bets with little or no financial backing to cover the costs, according to the National Council on Problem Gambling.

While all instances of addiction can have negative consequences on interpersonal, family, and professional relationships, few impulse control disorders are as corrosive to marriages, partnerships, and families as gambling addiction and sex addiction. Each of these disorders can have extreme effects on the foundations of trust and security. Like substance misusers, many behavioral addicts fail to see the negative ramifications of their actions on those closest to them until after severe damage has been done.

Neurological Similarities to Substance Misuse

The neurological causes of behavioral addictions remain unknown to medical professionals and sociologists alike. A widely held theory states that behavioral addicts become hooked on the

OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO SENIORS

COMMUNICATION AND AGING

Introduction

The human need to communicate and maintain relations does not decrease with age, but it is altered because of social stereotypes and the communicative changes such labels and prejudices produce.

Aging influences communication, and communication influences aging. These processes are intimately connected to each other. A person's ability to adapt to the aging process depends, in large part, on the person's interaction with others, and aging itself influences various aspects of communication. These changes in communication can be positive and negative. Changes in communication influence both how older people view themselves and how others view them. Reactions to change can influence a person's self-esteem or sense of self-worth in empowering, affirming ways, or such reactions can cause a person to feel diminished, unseen, and worthless. As many researchers and writers have noted, communication processes define, form, and maintain or dissolve all social relationships.

In recent years, the internet and social media have become important outlets for seniors to maintain personal relationships and make new ones.

Change and Identity

A theme evident in many articles and books about communication and aging is that of the heterogeneity, or mixed make-up, of the group of people who are variously referred to as "elderly," "aged," "older," or "over sixty-five." This diversity applies

to their communication skills as well. While there are hundreds of articles that focus on what happens to communication when a disorder (of speech, language, or hearing) is present in older individuals, there are as many works devoted to challenging the ideas of normal aging.

At the bottom of such challenges are recognitions that throughout life, individuals communicate to themselves about themselves and that this internal message—called body image—is affected by physiological, psychological, sociological, and cultural pressures. Age, illness, or disability can alter or threaten this image of the self. When body image adjustment is considered too great, a person may retreat rather than adjust. When overwhelming change occurs, some people choose to disengage or separate themselves from others. Some people choose isolation or death, whereas many others can adapt to their new images and then assist others in adapting to them. Change is a constant in life, and one of the greatest communicative challenges is human interaction and support as people of all ages survive change, restructure their body images, and collaboratively work to look to the future with hope rather than despair. The advent of the Digital Age has been one major change that those at almost all stages of life must contend with.

Stereotypes and Communication

Stereotypes occur when perceptions of age and aging solidify as images, labels, or categories. Sometimes such images are useful to understanding experience, but there is always the danger of inflexibility, which restricts abilities to see beyond the labels, or images. Many researchers have

GLOSSARY

Addictive personality disorder: A collection of characteristics, environmental factors and health conditions that make a person more prone to developing an addiction

Algorithm: A set of specific instructions or procedures that are followed to solve a problem or complete a specific task; a step-by-step process that can be executed by a computer or a person to achieve a desired outcome

Anonymity: The state of being anonymous or unidentified, without having one's personal information or identity revealed; in the context of social media, anonymity refers to the ability to participate in online activities and interact with others without disclosing one's real identity

Applications, or apps: Software programs designed to perform a specific task or function, usually on a mobile device or computer; some popular social media apps include Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and Facebook

Artificial intelligence (AI): A branch of computer science that aims to create intelligent machines that can think, learn, and solve problems in a similar way to human intelligence, through algorithms, techniques, and technologies; AI has diverse applications in various fields, including robotics, game development, data analysis, and automation

Augmented reality (AR): An enhanced version of reality created by the use of technology to overlay digital information on something being viewed through a device (such as a smartphone camera allowing a user to "see" a fictional character superimposed on the road in front of them)

Avatar: An electronic image (as in a video game) that represents and may be manipulated by a computer user

Body dysmorphia: A mental health condition where a person is fixated on flaws in their appearance to an extreme that begin to effect aspects of their daily life

Catfishing: Pretending to be someone you are not on social media in order to deceive victims

Clickbait: Usually a text or thumbnail link displayed on a website or app, that entices users to click through to the content by displaying sensationalized, misleading, or otherwise provocative words or images

Computer piracy: The act of downloading copyrighted materials without the permission of the copyright holder

Crowdfunding: The act of raising money for a project or cause by soliciting usually small amounts from a large number of people, often with a desired total monetary amount in mind

Crowdsourcing: The act of soliciting ideas or content from a group of people, typically in an online setting

Cryptocurrency: Any form of currency that only exists digitally, that usually has no central issuing or regulating authority, but instead uses a decentralized system to record transactions and manage the issuance of new units, and that relies on cryptography to prevent counterfeiting and fraudulent transactions

Cyberbullying: The electronic posting of mean-spirited messages about a person (such as a peer) often done anonymously

Cyberstalking: Using internet channels and social media in order to harass, monitor, and otherwise stalk a victim electronically

Dark web: A segment of the internet that is accessible only with the aid of special software (most notably the Tor Browser), allowing website creators and users to remain anonymous and conduct often illegal activities

Digital detox: A period of time during which a person abstains from using digital devices such as smartphones, computers, and social media platforms, in order to reduce stress and improve mental and physical well-being; this may include