

“Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?”



[The medium is the message.](#)

Overview

- Summary
- Analysis
- Discussion



Publication Information



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Paradox of Connectivity

- Marche identifies a paradox at the heart of the digital age.
- Marche describes the rapid growth of Facebook.
- Marche states that the rise of social media has produced anxieties about its effects.

“We are living in an isolation that would have been unimaginable to our ancestors and yet we have never been more accessible.”

True or false?

“Facebook is interfering with our real friendships, distancing us from each other, making us lonelier.”

Is Loneliness on the Rise?

- Loneliness is difficult to define or diagnose.
- Various studies show the rise of loneliness.
 - E.g., AARP survey
- Physicians and nurses speak of an epidemic of loneliness.

Isolation or loneliness?

Loneliness is not caused by external conditions; it is a psychological state.

The innovation of loneliness

35 percent of adults older than 45 were chronically lonely. (+20 percent 10 years ago)

Lack of Meaningful Social Interaction

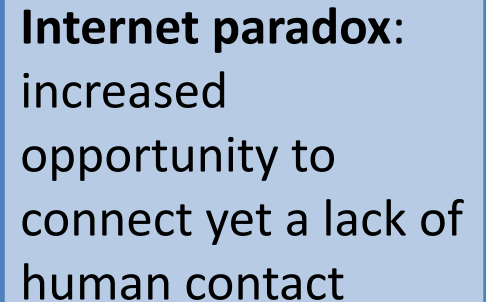
- Marche argues that we engage in less meaningful social interaction.
- He says we are less likely to have confidants.

1985	2004
10% of Americans said they had no one to discuss important matters with	25% of Americans had nobody to talk to, and 20 percent had only one confidant

A growing class of professional carers (psychologists, therapists, social worker, etc.) are taking the place of confidants.

Before Facebook


- Digital technology has enabled our tendency for isolation.
- Some studies suggest a link between Internet usage and increased loneliness.
- **Key question:** Does the Internet make people lonely, or are lonely people more attracted to the Internet?



Internet paradox:
increased
opportunity to
connect yet a lack of
human contact

“Who Uses Facebook?”

Facebook had slightly lower levels of “social loneliness” but “significantly higher levels of family loneliness.”



Facebook encourages more social interaction with users at the expense of family interaction.

or

Facebook attracts people with unhappy family relations.

Early Studies on Facebook

One study of 1,200 Facebook users found that **non-personalized use** of Facebook correlates with feelings of disconnectedness.



-scanning your friends' status updates
-updating your wall



“When I scroll through page after page of my friends’ descriptions of how accidentally eloquent their kids are, and how their husbands are endearingly bumbling, and how they’re all about to eat a home-cooked meal prepared with fresh local organic produce bought at the farmers’ market...**I do grow slightly more miserable.**”

Marche's Conclusion

- Early research does not support the assertion that Facebook creates loneliness.
- There may be a correlation, but correlation does not mean causation.
- Facebook is a tool – its effects will depend on the user.
- Facebook is not making us more lonely – we are!

Alone Together



- Technology makes it easier for us to avoid people and social interactions.
- Technology makes increasingly superficial connections.
- Facebook has fostered the projection of happiness (i.e., pretending to be happy).

Facebook and Narcissism

- “Who Uses Facebook?” identified a correlation between Facebook use and narcissism.
- Narcissism is currently on the rise.
- Narcissism and loneliness are linked in that they are marked with a retreat from “the messy reality of other people.”

→
“It could be argued that Facebook specifically gratifies the narcissistic individual’s need to engage in self-promoting and superficial behaviour.”



New Isolation

“The real danger with Facebook is not that it allows us to isolate ourselves, but that by mixing our appetite for isolation with our vanity, it threatens to alter the very nature of solitude. The new isolation is not of the kind that Americans once idealized, the lonesomeness of the proudly nonconformist, independent-minded, solitary stoic, or that of the astronaut who blasts into new worlds...Solitude used to be good for self-reflection and self-reinvention. But now we are left thinking about who we are all the time, without ever really thinking about who we are.”

[Connected but alone?](#)

Strengths

- The article presents early studies on Facebook.
- The article is focussed on a simple yet complex questions.
- Though the author admits to having a bias, his article provides an honest answer to the central question.
- The article identifies interesting correlations.

Strengths

- The article raises many questions that could lead to future inquiries:
 - Is Facebook linked to a narcissism epidemic?
 - What are the effects of constant self-presentation?
 - Is Facebook leading to a decrease in face-to-face interaction?
 - Is Facebook changing the American ideal of the isolation and individualism?

Weaknesses

- The effects of Facebook is a new field and the data is limited.
- The article convincingly shows that there is a rise in the use of Facebook and in rates of loneliness; however, though there are some correlations between the two, research has not identified a cause-and-effect relation.
- The last section of the essay suggests that the link between Facebook and narcissism is more substantive and relevant than the link between Facebook and loneliness.