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Social Media & Teenage Boys

Being a teenager nowadays is much different than before. In the film “The Mask You Live In” we are able to see what teenage boys behaviors are like, specifically towards masculinity. Since then, we have seen much advancement which had an effect on teenagers in society, whether it is negative or positive advancements. Technology, specifically social media, has taken a big piece of the advancements we have seen. It has helped us so much, whether that is in medical fields, space exploration, or in general enhancing our own knowledge. However, the technological advancements have also had a negative impact on teenagers. It took a big part in reshaping teenage boys behaviors and what their parents think their behaviors should be. Social media influences toxic behaviors in American teenage boys by presenting them with bad role models, negative actions, and false expectations of life.

Moving on, each social media platform has its own way of influencing children. For example, Instagram is mostly posting pictures. On the other hand, Youtube is more of an action or face to face based platform as each person is able to create an account and post his or her actions and story in a video. This is a big issue because there are many creators misbehaving on their videos, and then later on, they upload the video and reach millions of people who are mostly kids. While these kids see the creators as role models or heros, they will pick up on their

actions and words and do the same. In similarity, the older generation was influenced by marvel characters like Superman, Spiderman, Batman, etc.

Technology changed and so did we. Since social media takes a big part of teenage boys day to day routine, it takes a big responsibility for their behaviors also. You always hear parents talking about how their days were much more of exploring and going outside, compared to now, teenage boys sit inside on phones, laptops, gaming consoles, etc. Young teenage boys tend to pick up on things quickly from social media. This animates toxic behaviors in American teenage boys. According to UvA communication scientist Karin Fikkers “Teens only become more aggressive as a result of exposure to violent games and television programmes when they are also exposed to aggression in their social environment, such as conflict in their family or aggressive behaviour among friends. This means that most parents need not directly worry about negative effects of media violence on their children’s behaviour.” For example, In “The Mask You Live In” we were able to see how boys grew up on terms like “man up” or “fight back” which misinterpreted the definition of masculinity and planted toxic behaviors into them at a young age. In some cases, without social media it was better. Now, teenage boys are learning the same things that lead to violence and toxic behaviors if not more because of social media. Before, parents would give their boys the wrong interpretation of masculinity to a certain extent with their control, but nowadays, parents can’t even control what their kids are learning from social media.

On social media, and in specific, a variety of platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Youtube, etc. There are plenty of role models. For example, Dan Bilzerian, an Armenian-American Internet personality and gambler who is mostly known for his lavish lifestyle. Dan's posts about guns, drugs, and women can affect teenage boys negatively by trying to resemble his behaviors. Dan is not the only one, there are many more portray a bad image to the younger generation who begin to act the same way as they do or even worse. "According to a Pew survey conducted during 2014 and 2015, ninety four percent of teens who go online using a mobile device do so daily. Teens use multiple social platforms. Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat are the most popular , and seventy one percent of teens say they use more than one social media site." These statistics give us an image of the potential damage this issue is causing on a day to day basis. Many parents do not watch their kids closely when they use their phone. Giving a teenage boy an unknown dangerous online world, letting them play with it, with no supervision is definitely not a good idea. No American parent can control what is posted on social media. However, they can control what they watch, read, or even learn from social media.

Being a controversial topic like this one, some might argue that social media does not animate toxic behaviors in boys. In fact, it enhances their knowledge, provides them with many different essential views on the world, and allows them to see certain behaviors and their consequences. However, social media's negatives outweigh its positives. Teenage boys have yet to fully develop. Which means decision making is not at its peak. This is why parents need to control and limit what their kids watch due to their inexperience in life. Depending on a child to

know from what is toxic and nontoxic behaviors especially with social media nowadays and its persuasion to young teenagers is very hard.

Next, we have the false interpretation of life through social media. Most social media users post up their highlights of their life and never their downside. This gives the wrong interpretation to children or even adults in that matter, that life is perfect. This view will start to make children compare themselves to other people on social media and think of why and how this person is living a better life than them. This could lead to depression, anxiety, or retaliation with toxic behaviors. According to Anxiety and Depression Association of America “It is more than just the pressure of sharing things with others, it is also about how you may be comparing your life with others you see on Facebook. Many people see that someone on Facebook who has a great job, excellent husband, and beautiful home and they feel happy for them. But, others can feel jealous, depressed, or may even feel suicidal about their own life if it is not as “perfect” as those they see on Facebook.”

In conclusion, social media does influence toxic behaviors in our teenage boys by connecting them with toxic examples through social media. However, eliminating teenage boys from consuming toxic information off social media is not impossible, although it does require change from the parents. American teenage parents need to change the way of raising their teenage boys and adapt to new ways of raising them in this new world, the social media world.