

# POV

## *A Day in the Life of a Conforming Teen Girl*

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*An investigation into the power of social media in influencing conformity of teen girls  
which leads to social exclusion within teen peer groups.*

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## **Introduction**

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The aim of my PIP is to assess the impact of social media on the identity, conformity and nonconformity, and social exclusion of teen girls among their peer groups.

The focus of my Personal Interest Project (PIP) is to explore the impact social media has on teen girls and if the introduction of social media has enhanced the influence on teen girls to conform, or whether they conform to the same extent as prior to social media. The central hypothesis of my topic is to investigate the power of social media in influencing conformity of teen girls which leads to social exclusion within teen peer groups.

My topic contributes to a better understanding of Society & Culture by delving into teen identity, conformity and nonconformity and social exclusion, all of which are important aspects to the understanding of Society & Culture. This topic is important to research as, with the rise of social media's dominance in everyday lives, there could be effects on the personal perception and development of young girls. This research could help address and make changes to the issue of social media's large role in identity, conformity, nonconformity and social exclusion among teen girls. Course concepts that are particularly applicable to this PIP are identity, technology, values, discrimination, society and continuity. The power of social media as a technology affects teen girls' identity as the values of social media ideals influence the conformity of teen girls and perpetuate social exclusion of nonconformist behaviours.

I integrated aspects of continuity and change into my PIP by assessing the potential of social media's presence to have a greater impact on conformity, identity and social exclusion in teen girls as opposed to prior to social media. To adhere to the cross-cultural components, I discussed with members of Gen X and Gen Z their opinion based on their own generations and whether they believe there was the same amount of pressure with the implementation of social media, or whether it has increased.

I incorporated the use of Primary & Secondary research methods which include research into scholarly articles, websites and news sites that discuss my topic and help with insight into the aspects of my topic. The use of secondary research allowed me to form the foundation of my PIP, while my primary research methods allowed me to gain more personalised data

regarding my topic. Questionnaires allowed the general public to anonymously share their opinions and experiences on my topic and allowed me to gain a broader perspective of the topic. Interviews with school counsellors allowed me to add credibility, validity and reliability to my research as these counsellors have been witness to and experienced situations where my topic applies. And finally, my personal reflection will allow for a more subjective and personalised aspect to my topic that will provide depth and strength to my topic area as I am a teen growing up with the influence of social media in my own personal life and have witnessed first-hand the impacts of exclusion.

## Log

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In the construction of my Personal Interest Project (PIP), I originally went through an extensive and varied list of potential ideas as I found myself interested in so much. However, I found myself deciding on the topic of social media's power to influence conformity and identity in teen girls, and how nonconformist behaviour often results in social exclusion.

I had an interest in this topic as it is a very relevant topic in modern society with the growing prevalence of social media. In the early days of my PIP, I wanted to delve into the mental health impacts of social media on teen girls in the modern day, however, I chose to exclude this subset as I felt it would be ethically challenging to approach in my primary research. Subsequently, being a teen girl who has personally experienced the influential power of social media in my conformity to norms and the moulding of aspects of my identity, I felt inclined to delve more into this topic.

This, in conjunction with my personal desire for awareness to be brought toward the influential power of social media on adolescent girls, ultimately drew me to mix these notions into one hypothesis: *"The power of social media in influencing conformity of teen girls which leads to social exclusion within teen peer groups"*.

Once I commenced the research on this area of study, I was confronted with information that surrounded aspects of social media's impact on teen girl's mental health. While this subject is an important part of my topic, I found there were issues regarding how I would approach this topic ethically in my primary research.

This ignited my decision to focus mainly on three areas of the topic for my chapters. Namely, the pressures of conformity that increase with the presence of social media, how social media's influential power can have an impact on identity formation, and lastly how nonconformist behaviours can result in social ostracisation.

Through my secondary research I developed an understanding of what methodologies I should focus on. I chose to conduct questionnaires, interviews and a personal reflection to gain the most information I could attain. My questionnaire allowed for the general public to

answer the questions pertaining to my topic anonymously and to provide answers from both Gen X and Gen Z to adhere to my cross-cultural component of my study. My interview was conducted with a School Counsellor where the Counsellor's direct involvement with adolescents in the age of social media would provide valuable and well acclaimed information.

Overall, my PIP was an extremely valuable experience where I found myself gaining a deeper understanding of the influential powers of social media in teen girls and how pressures to conform and influence on teen identity has been a continuous issue over generations. I believe the PIP was one of the most memorable and informative experiences in my highschool experience and undoubtedly boosted my social and cultural literacy.

## Chapter 1

### *The role of social media enhancing conformity in teen girls*

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With the growing presence of social media in the everyday life of teen girls in the present day, an enhancement in the pressure to conform to socially constructed norms can be observed. When comparing the views of Gen X and Gen Z, it can be understood that the manner in which conformity pressures are conveyed, and the level of pressure in which this need to conform was presented, there is a significant difference between the two generations. Social media in the present day is an active agent in perpetuating conformity in teenage girls.

Social media is undoubtedly a significant agent in shaping the behaviours and attitudes of teenage girls. Much of social media's influence on teen girls pushes ideals of body image, appearance and how they present themselves online. In an article written by the National Library of Medicine, parent's of teen girls were interviewed in order to provide insight into social media and it's links to adolescent girl's mental health. In the realm of conformity it was found that all participants believed that female influencers, specifically those that posted sexualised photos, created pressures for girls to conform to the actions and behaviours in such images in terms of the influencers' appearances and how they present themselves. One participant stated that "*[There's] pressure on teenage girls to be cool. I don't like it [how girls portray themselves on Instagram], particularly. They do seem to be under pressure to meet a certain look or conform to a certain standard.*"<sup>1</sup> In a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center it was found that "Teen girls are more likely than teen boys to report using TikTok (73% vs. 60%), Instagram (69% vs. 55%) and Snapchat (64% vs. 54%)."<sup>2</sup> These statistics illustrate the sheer prevalence that social media has in the everyday lives of teen girls. With this, teen girls become more susceptible to conformity regarding appearance, behaviours,

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<sup>1</sup> A. Papageorgiou & D. Cross & C. Fisher, 'International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health', *National Library of Medicine* (27 Dec. 2022), 3.2. 'Sexualized Images on Social Media and Adolescent Girls' Mental Health: Qualitative Insights from Parents, School Support Service Staff and Youth Mental Health Service Providers', <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9819033/#:~:text=3.2.-,Pressure%20to%20Conform,teenage%20girls%20to%20be%20cool>, accessed 17 Oct. 2023.

<sup>2</sup> E.A. Vogels & R. Gelles-Watnick, 'Teens and social media: Key findings from Pew Research surveys', *Pew Research Center* (24 Apr. 2023), 2. TikTok use is more common among Black teens and among teen girls, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/04/24/teens-and-social-media-key-findings-from-pew-research-center-surveys/#:~:text=Teen%20girls%20are%20more%20likely,20%25%20vs.%208%25>, accessed 17 Oct. 2023.

opinions and the pressures of idealistic values that are conveyed on social media, this is also supported by secondary research. The negative pressure created by social media is highlighted in reports from teen girls that social media has the greatest impact on how they view and feel about their bodies. Of the teen girl respondents, 88% stated that they compared themselves to images and ideals portrayed by social media and half claimed they felt negatively impacted by this. The secondary research articles expertly convey the idea that social media plays a major role in the pressures for teen girls to conform to societal ideals and expectations.<sup>3</sup> Overall, with the suggestions of the secondary research it is revealed that with social media's prevalence in the daily lives of teen girls comes an impact on the view that teen girls have of themselves. This in turn results in a greater shift towards conformity in attempts to become the ideals that social media portrays.

Through the use of the primary research method, questionnaires, varying results from both Gen X and Gen Z were gathered in response to questions regarding conformity in teen girls. Of the respondents, 73.8% were female and 85.7% strongly agreed that social media has a lot of influence over teen girls in the present day. With the intent to delve into whether social conformity pressures have differed over the generations, specifically with the introduction of social media. When asked, 45.2% of respondents strongly agreed and 40.5% agreed that there was pressure for teen girls to conform in their respective generations. In observing Gen X's responses, it was found that 50% respondents stated that teen girls experienced pressures to conform in their generation through magazines, and 33.3% cited peer groups as another contributing conformity pressure. In studying Gen Z's responses, it was observed that 76% of participants stated social media platforms to be the most experienced area of conformity pressures in their generation. The results are an excellent examination of the idea that social media's presence in the everyday lives of teen girls in Gen Z has created a prevalent form of conformity pressures and strengthens initial assumptions of social media's power over teen girl conformity. Of the respondents, 90.5% of respondents concluded that there was an increase in the pressure for teen girls to conform following the introduction of social media, 78.6% of which felt that the pressure conveyed through social media is primarily negative in

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<sup>3</sup> A. Papageorgiou & D. Cross & C. Fisher, 'International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health', *National Library of Medicine* (27 Dec. 2022), 3.2. 'Sexualized Images on Social Media and Adolescent Girls' Mental Health: Qualitative Insights from Parents, School Support Service Staff and Youth Mental Health Service Providers', <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9819033/#:~:text=3.2.,Pressure%20to%20Conform,teenage%20girls%20to%20be%20cool>, accessed 17 Oct. 2023.



nature. When respondents were asked “What’s your interpretation of the pressures that teen girls may feel as a result of exposure to social media?” One respondent claimed “From my point of view, the constant exposure without the ability to “opt out/leave the room.” We [Gen X] had the chance to walk away or move on, today it’s in their face via so many platforms, face to face, as well as behind the screen/cyberbullying. They are bombarded by notifications from the minute they pick up the phone to the minute they go to sleep.” This respondent engages in the idea that, while there were pressures to conform in all generations, with social media there is a considerably greater pressure on teen girls in the present day.<sup>4</sup>

In an interview conducted with a School Counsellor from a secondary school in Sydney, many of their answers supported the overarching concept of social media’s enhancement of conformity pressures amongst teen girls and their peer groups. One statement mentioned by them claimed that *“Yes, I would say to a large extent. For those in particular I guess having access to social media. And, I think maybe I can add to that, that if, and there are a few students that i’ve worked with, where they don’t have access to social media and I guess the absence of it also has an impact for them in terms of how they feel they do or don’t fit in then socially.”* When questioned on the comparison between conformity pressures pre-social media and during social media, the Counsellor stated that *“I think that human needs don’t change and some of the, the developmentally the natural aspects to perceived pressure to conform probably remain the same, so if you’d done this interview maybe with my [Gen X] generation, we would have said ‘Oh yes we feel such pressure to conform’, but there was no comparison having had social media or not. So I think, it’s the external pressures on young people that are greater because of the prevalence and availability of social media, which maybe we didn’t have.”*<sup>5</sup>

As a teenage girl growing up in the age of social media, I’m directly affected by the societal ideals and expectations that stem from social media. When reflecting on my own life, I have discerned that there is a significant and overwhelming rapport between social media and conformity to social ideals. In my own experience, I found there was a lot of pressure to conform to certain social ideals. Social media gives rise to a lot of, in my opinion, unrealistic expectations that segue into conformity and insecurity. To be specific, pressures pertaining to body image and self-presentation are largely influenced by social media’s portrayal of what is

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<sup>4</sup> Primary research – Questionnaire

<sup>5</sup> Primary research – Interview with School Counsellor

considered idealistic. This pressure was amplified with the pertinent nature of social media and, in my experience, negatively affected the way in which I viewed myself. The idea that girls are to dress, act and look a certain way because it's considered 'unattractive' if you don't, creates a restriction in individualism which negatively impacts the way in which girls grow up.<sup>6</sup>

To conclude, the growing presence of social media has increased enhanced the pressures that push teen girls to conform to socially-branded ideals, and this increase can be observed from the pressure-based shift which can be contrasted between the pressures experienced pre-social media age where magazines and TV conveyed pressure, Gen X, and during social media age, Gen Z.

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<sup>6</sup> Primary research – Personal reflection

## Chapter 2

### *The role of conformity to social media ideals impacts the personal identity of teen girls*

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As a result of the predominance of social media's influence and presence in the lives of today's adolescents, it is inevitable that with social media's consumption comes a degree of influence on the development of teen identity. While it cannot be said that social media acts as a primary influence in the development of teen girl identity, it is certainly a contributing factor. Primary research perspectives from both Gen Z and Gen X indicate that it is clear that social media is a predominant influence on identity formation.

Social networking services such as TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and Pinterest are all examples of prevalent media sites that play a predominant role in the lives of today's adolescents. More specifically, the effect these accessible and plentiful forms of social media has on the developing identity of teens girls. Research shows that image-based social media platforms can "trigger intense episodes of self-comparison in adolescent and teen girls." In addition to that, It was said that image-based social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok often "force users by default to compare themselves to the people they are seeing online. When it comes to teen girls, this can 'promote some really unrealistic appearance ideals,' Raffoul said."<sup>7</sup> But while there are negative effects that follow social media's influence on teen girl identity, positive effects can also occur. In a book titled *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* vol 32, in a chapter titled "*Identity, relationships, sexuality, and risky behaviours of adolescents in the context of social media*," It is stated that social networking services are among the most important venues for connection, communication and socialisation, and also plays a role in self-expression and self concept. It also stated that "Adolescence is the phase during which individuals construct a critical part in the process of constructing their sexual identity and gender. In the literature, it is suggested that [social networking services] have become venues for young people to construct and express themselves, and this can produce positive and negative effects."<sup>8</sup> Some examples of positive

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<sup>7</sup> J. Gerson, 'The complicated ties between teenage girls and social media – and what parents should know', *The 19th News* (13 Sep. 2023), <https://19thnews.org/2023/09/social-media-teenage-girls-mental-health-body-image/>, accessed 8 Nov. 2023.

<sup>8</sup>S. Eleuteri & V. Saladino & V. Verrastro, *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 32: *Special Issue on Sex and Technology* (Taylor & Francis, 2017), 354-365.

and negative effects of social media's influence on teen girl identity formation include positive aspects such as; greater access to socialisation and differing perspectives. Some negative aspects include; body image related issues, unrealistic views of what is ideal, and a broader means for people to be ridiculed or punished via a greater base of people.

Through the use of the primary research method, questionnaire, varying results from both Gen X and Gen Z were gathered in response to questions regarding social media's influence on the formation of teen girl identity. Of the respondents, 90.2% agreed that social media does in fact have an influential stance on identity-building of teen girls. Following on from that question, 67.5% of respondents said that this influence is one that is primarily negative. When respondents were asked to expand upon their answers to the previous question, some said *“I believe social media has accelerated identity formation through exposing teen girls to different viewpoints.”*, *“... before social media was around, whatever happened at school was where you left it. In the school yard. I feel the current teens can not escape whatever has happened to them over the day, because it is still in their face when they are at home or on the bus or the shops and on their social media. They feel they have to look like the top models or influencers they come across on a daily basis. The algorithm on social media also has an influence as it determines a greater proportion of what comes across their social media based on what they are scrolling and liking.”*, and, *“It has magnified it & the influence is far stronger reaching more & more people creating a stronger force than before.”* The mixed responses of both Gen X and Gen Z show an agreement on the influential power held by social media on the formation of teen girl identity. When respondents were asked what aspects they believed were influenced by social media, the answers concurred with research, for example *“I think teenage girls body image is the most influenced by social media.”*, *“It is superficial and surface level, there does not seem to be anything out there much deeper so girls begin to think there is nothing more to themselves that the image they project.”*, *“Fashion, general appearance, choices of friends, music, partners if you have one, weight and physical body image areas.”*, and *“Appearance, behaviour, respect for self and others, motivations.”* This concurrent understanding of what can be shaped by the influence of social media highlights social media's predominance in the lives of young people and represents the generational understandings that agreed on the influential stance of social media on the identity of modern day adolescents. With the pressurised threat of social exclusion,

conformity to certain identity traits and values and ideals become more appealing, therefore creating an impact on the identity of teen girls.<sup>9</sup>

In an interview with a School Counsellor from a secondary school in Sydney, many of the responses stated that while social media certainly does have an influence on the formation of teen girl identity, it is not the sole factor in identity-building. They stated that *“I think it has the potential to, I’m not sure that I would feel confident enough to say blankly it definitely is altering all teen girl’s identity. I think because identity formation is so multifaceted and it depends on so many other support structures in a young person’s life.”* They claimed that while the *“potential for it to have a very shaping influence on identity is very real,”* it is not the only factor that plays into the lives of adolescents that result in identity formation. The School Counsellor concluded that *“I would think that there was potential for it to have a shaping effect on identity but it doesn’t have to define a young person’s identity.”* This interview provided significant evidence for social media’s potential as an active agent in the formation of teen girl identity, but solidifies the understanding that it is only a contributing factor rather than a sole factor in identity formation as other factors including support structures, family and belief systems play a major role in identity formation.

George Mead’s (1863-1931) Interactionist theory of symbolic interactionism, a micro-level theory that focuses on relationships among individuals within a society, is a theory that can account for social media’s influence on teen girl identity over Gen Z and Gen X. The Interactionist theory “attempts to analyse the meaning of everyday life through (participant) observation, and from these observations to develop an understanding of the underlying forms of human interaction.”<sup>10</sup> Two of the four main themes of this theory can explain social media’s impact of adolescent identity. One being that humans are ‘symbol manipulating’ animals that are able to transmit culture and ideals through such symbols. This accounts for how social media creates this ‘symbol’ of ideals that are highly valued by online communities and Gen Z as a whole, and shows how these ideals can spread and become a dominant factor in the influence of teen girl identity. This can also apply to Gen X as it highlights influential platforms, for example, magazines, TV and music, can act as social media does for Gen Z and provides this ‘symbol’ that transmits ideals and values to the broader population. The

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<sup>9</sup> Primary research – Questionnaire

<sup>10</sup> K, Bruseker et al., *Cambridge Society and Culture Stage 6* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), 240.

second theme of the theory explores how humans are not solitary beings, but rather are always connected to others. This identifies the reason for a need for conformity of self concept and conformity to stereotypes as humans are connected creatures and do not wish to feel solitary. This social change theory provides a valuable examination of the human condition and internalised needs to conform, acting as an agent in teen girl identity formation in the age of social media.

As a teenage girl who is growing up in the age of social media prevalence, I'm directly affected by the ideals and expectations that are conveyed through social media. I have found that many aspects of how I view life and how I view myself have been shaped from ideas and values that are popular on social media platforms. How I present myself, my sense of humour, my beliefs on what is true and my values are all influenced by what I have consumed on social media.

In conclusion, the predominance of social media and its potential to influence teen girl identity is a very real factor of modern day life for adolescents. While social media isn't the sole contributor to identity formation as other factors such as family, support structures and belief systems play a major role in the formation of adolescent identity, it plays a significant role in modern day teen female identity formation as its grand consumption is persuasive and influential on the identity of adolescents.

### Chapter 3

#### *How nonconformity can lead to social exclusion amongst teen girls*

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By extension of social media's influence over teen girls in the modern day, there is a large shift towards conformity among teen girl peer groups. As a result of this, it is evident that those teen girls who choose not to conform to pressures can face social exclusion and discrimination. When comparing results between Gen X and Gen Z, it can be understood that there has always been the issue of social exclusion as a result of non-conformity, however, the pressure has increased with the presence of social media in teen girls' everyday lives.

Social media's push towards conformity creates an environment where social exclusion and ostracisation can occur as a result of non-conformity to social norms. Non-conformity enhances the potential for psychological distance from others and studies suggest that people who tend to deviate from social conformity often face ridicule, punishment or even rejection from other members of social groups.<sup>11</sup> A book titled *Psychological Studies* in the chapter titled "*Effects of Non-conformity on Perceived Status and Competence: Examining the Moderating Role of Physical Attractiveness*" stated that results of a study showed that "non-conforming behaviour leads to a negative inference about status" which highlights the pressures surrounding conformity in a social context.<sup>12</sup> Alongside the boosted prevalence of social media in the lives of developing teen girls and their social groupings, it can create a method of isolation which can pervade across multiple aspects of a teen girl's social experience if they choose not to conform. When comparing Gen X and Gen Z, it is seen that there is a relatively similar result in the way nonconformist behaviour results in social exclusion on the basis of nonconformity and social ostracisation. While there has been a difference in what was considered the 'norm' that adolescents had to live up to, the concept of social exclusion resulting from non-conformist behaviour remains the same.

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<sup>11</sup> K. Millet & S. Dewitte, 'Non-conformity may be hidden driver behind relation', *National Library of Medicine* (17 Feb. 2007), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1800992/#:~:text=Non%2Dconformist%20behaviour%20may%20threaten,rejected%20by%20other%20group%20members.,> accessed 23 May 2024.

<sup>12</sup> B. Parida & V. Gupta, *Psychological Studies*, 62: *Effects of Non-conformity on Perceived Status and Competence: Examining the Moderating Role of Physical Attractiveness* (Springer Link, 2017), 305-313.

Through the use of the primary research method, questionnaires, varying results from both Gen X and Gen Z were gathered in response to questions regarding nonconformity and social exclusion in teen girl social groupings. Of the respondents, 64.3% agreed that teen girls who choose not to conform to ideals of their peer groups face negative repercussions, with some respondents claiming that *“I see that teenage girls who don't conform to societal ideals face ostracisation,”* and *“As teenagers no one wants to be different or the odd one out. If we are the same we feel like people will like us and we will become accepted.”* Such answers represent a largely agreed upon perception of social conformity and ostracisation, all of which concur that nonconformity does in fact often result in exclusion socially. Of the respondents, 33.3% strongly agreed and 42.9% agreed with the statement that consequences of not conforming social expectations/norms *“can lead to social ostracization or other forms of punishment.”* When participants were asked *“Why/why not?”* Some answers included; *“Because I’ve seen it personally.”*, *“Not conforming to societal expectations, such as not presenting yourself in a certain way, can lead to social ostracisation.”*, *“People who do not fit in with everyone tend to be left out. People like people who are just like them,”* and *“Social media is defining what young girls ‘need to look and act like’,”* This highlights the pressure around nonconformity and its consequences and identifies the commonality of social media’s dictation on teen girl’s social experience. In the context of their generation, both Gen X and Gen Y were asked if nonconformity in their generation lead to ostracisation. For the respondents of Gen X, 75% stated that yes, they did believe this applied during their generation. For Gen Z, 68% of respondents stated that they also agreed that this applied to their generation. This highlights the broad impact of nonconformity and the resulting social exclusion, such as ostracization and bullying, as it applied and remained prevalent both prior to and during the age of social media. The results of the questionnaire support the thesis of social exclusion resulting from non-conformity and delves into how it has been a longstanding result generationally from Gen X to Gen Z.<sup>13</sup>

In an interview with a School Counsellor from a secondary school in Sydney, many of the responses concurred that nonconformity leads to social exclusion amongst teen girl social groupings. When asked *“do you think that teen girls who choose not to conform to big ideals...especially pressured by peer groups that are informed by social media, um, do you think they face any negative repercussions, ie, isolation?”* The School Counsellor agreed that

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<sup>13</sup> Primary research – Questionnaire



yes, nonconformity to big social ideals can result in social exclusion and isolation and stated that *“I’ve met with many young women who struggle either because they choose not to be on social media to the same degree, or they tend to just have a different way of thinking... and as a result of that, perceive that they are treated differently and that they don’t ‘fit in’ in the same way that everybody does...”*<sup>14</sup> When asked about the potential for a difference in nonconformity and social exclusion between Gen X and Gen Z, the Counsellor stated that *“now, it’s so much easier to make a curt comment or a snide comment or to freeze people out without having to have any interpersonal ramifications of that, it can just be done through tech.”* But in comparison to Gen X, *“you would have had to do face-to-face, which was harder to do,”* Overall, the results presented by the responses of the counsellor provide an exceptional insight into how social exclusion as a result of noncompliance to social ideals is something that has been observed generationally and is confirmed. They examine the idea of how social media has acted as an enhancing agent in the perpetuation of social ostracisation coming from nonconformist behaviour, but is an issue that has remained present over both Gen Z and Gen X.<sup>15</sup>

As a teenage girl growing up in the age of social media’s grand prevalence, I’m directly affected by the societal ideals and expectations that stem from social media. In my personal experience with social exclusion, I have found that it more often than not is a direct result or a compounding result of nonconformity to popular social ideals that were conveyed to my age group via social media. Acts such as wearing makeup, wearing certain clothes and behaving in a certain manner to seem appealing became a huge part of my social experience as a teenage girl, which predominantly branched from social media’s spread of such concepts. As a result of this, I found that if either I myself or other teen girls chose not to conform to these ideals, there often followed forms of isolation, ostracisation and social exclusion as though it was punishable if you did not conform to these norms.<sup>16</sup>

In conclusion, with the influence of social media over teen girls conformity in the modern day, it can be observed that there is a consequence that is presented to those who chose not to conform. Such ramifications can be seen through social exclusion, ostracisation, ridicule and discrimination. In comparing the difference of ramifications as a result of nonconformist

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<sup>14</sup> Primary research – Interview with School Counsellor

<sup>15</sup> Primary research – Interview with School Counsellor

<sup>16</sup> Primary research – Personal reflection

behaviour, it can be understood that Gen X and Gen Z both have faced similar issues relating to nonconformity, but the pressure has ramped up significantly with the introduction of social media.

## **Conclusion**

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The aim of my PIP is to assess the impact of social media on the identity, conformity and nonconformity, and social exclusion of teen girls among their peer groups.

This PIP, more than anything, has proven that social media has a grand influential power on the conformity, identity and social exclusion of adolescent teen girls in modern day society. Primarily, my validating my hypothesis that social media is an influential agent in the conformity, identity and subsequent social exclusion due to nonconformity of teen girls, my PIP allowed me to realise that with the rise of social media's prevalence in the everyday lives of teen girls, there has been a significant increase in the pressures to conform to social media constructed ideals as opposed to the conformity pressures prior to social media, in the age of Gen X.

In particular, chapter 1 disclosed that social media creates an immense pressure on teen girls to conform to socially-constructed ideals. And whilst conformity pressures were an issue prior to social media in Gen X, it can be understood that social media has increased the level in which the pressure is consumed. In addition, chapter 2 supports that social media's influence power over the Gen Z teen girl has acted as a factor in the formation of teen girl identity. Finally, chapter 3 ultimately highlights how nonconformist behaviours, especially when it comes to socially-constructed ideals, results in social exclusion from teen peer groups and perpetuates bullying and social isolation. Chapter 3 solidifies that the issue of nonconformist behaviour resulting in social exclusion has been a continuous issue present in both Gen X and Gen z, however, with social media's pertinent presence in the every-movement of teen girls today, Gen Z face a more increased version of social exclusion as a result of social media's influence.

This topic was highly relevant to pursue on a social and cultural basis, as it is undeniable that social media has a large impact on conformity, identity, beliefs, values and norms in modern society. Therefore, it is paramount that there be awareness brought towards the influential nature of social media in the lives of teen girls today.

The research was highly effective in demonstrating the power of social media in enhancing conformity pressures, becoming an active agent in the formation of teen girl identity, and increasing social exclusion as a result of nonconformist behaviours. Therefore, it is obvious that social media has a grand impact on the youth of today, and that social exclusion, conformity and influenced-identity will only become a more pertinent issue as the age of social media continues.

## Resource List

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### **Primary research annotations**

#### **Primary research method: Interview with School Counsellor**

- This primary research method allowed for me to get accredited and acclaimed information from a professional who has had first-hand engagement with teen girls in both Gen X and Gen Z that faced issues surrounding conformity, identity and social exclusion and has observed the increase with the prevalence of social media.

#### **Primary research method: Personal reflection**

- This primary research method was valid and credible as I am a teen girl who is facing first-hand the issues that social media presents to conformity pressures, identity formation and social exclusion. The main limitation of this research methodology is that it could potentially be biased as I can only provide a reflection based on my understanding as a member of Gen Z, and cannot speak on behalf of those in Gen X.

#### **Primary research method: Questionnaire**

- This primary research method allowed for me to gain differing perspectives on my topic from the general public and provided arguments both for and against my questions which helped to propel my PIP into a valid study. This method was valid and unbiased as I made sure all questions were not leading and the amount of responses made it so I got a large sample size so that the results were more valid. The credibility can come to question considering that the responses garnered were personal opinions rather than indisputable fact.

### **Secondary research annotations**

**Bruseker, K. et al., (2021). '5.5 Key features of social theories', in *Cambridge Society and Culture Stage 6*. Sydney, New South Wales: Cambridge University Press, pp. 240.**

- This book explores the Stage 6 Society & Culture Course and provided me with important information in understanding the Interactionist theory which supported me in my research surrounding the impact of social media on the identity of teen girls. This source is credible, valid and unbiased as it is a Cambridge book written for educational purposes and reviewed by an external educational review board.

**Eleuteri, S. et al., (2019). *Sexual and Relationship Therapy: Special Issue on Sex and Technology*, 32(3-4), 354-365. Taylor & Francis Online.**

**<https://doi.org/10.1037/0000168-000>**

- This book examines how technology has a profound effect on sexual identity and gender which are important aspects of teen identity. This book was written by experts at the College of Sexual and Relationship Therapists in 2016 and provided valuable information in understanding the impact of social media and technology on the identity of adolescents. This article is valid, credible and unbiased as it was written by college experts and was peer reviewed and board reviewed.

**Gerson, J. (2023, September 13). *The complicated ties between teenage girls and social media – and what parents should know*. The 19th News. (accessed 8 November 2023).**

**<https://19thnews.org/2023/09/social-media-teenage-girls-mental-health-body-image/>**

- This news article examines the relationship between teen girls and social media in the modern day and the impact this relationship has on teen mental health. This article was important to my research topic as it details how social media can present conformity pressures upon teen girls and can impact views on body image and self-esteem. This article could potentially be biased as it is a news article that focuses on the bad of teen girl's relationship with social media. However, it provides some credibility in that the article quotes experts surrounding this topic area.

**Millet, K., & Dewitte, S. (2007). *Non-conformity may be hidden driver behind relation*. National Library of Medicine. (accessed 7 June 2024).**

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1800992/#:~:text=Non%2Dconformist%20behaviour%20may%20threaten,rejected%20by%20other%20group%20members>

- This article explores how nonconformist behaviours can threaten the extent to which an individual can belong in a social setting. This article was valuable to my research topic as it explores the impact of social exclusion that results from nonconforming behaviours in social groupings. This source is valid, credible and unbiased as it was published by the National Library of Medicine and was written and reviewed by professors and experts in this area.

**Papageorgiou, A. (2022, December 27). *Sexualized Images on Social Media and Adolescent Girls' Mental Health: Qualitative Insights from Parents, School Support Service Staff and Youth Mental Health Service Providers*. National Library of Medicine. (accessed 17 October 2023).**

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9819033/#:~:text=3.2.-,Pressure%20to%20Conform,teenage%20girls%20to%20be%20cool>

- This article explores how adults' believe that sexualised images on social media might have an impact on adolescent girl's mental health, and delves into what support may be needed should they experience this. This article contains data from a study conducted by the National Library of Medicine and is a valid and reliable source for the research in my topic as it explores how pressures to conform are present with the influence of social media. The main limitation could be that this study is biased as it focuses on parents whose teen children have had issues regarding social media and mental health.

**Parida, B., & Gupta, V. (2017). *Psychological Studies, 62: Effects of Non-conformity on Perceived Status and Competence: Examining the Moderating Role of Physical Attractiveness*, 305-313. Springer Link.**

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12646-017-0410-1>

- This article examines how non-conformity affects perceived status and competence in social situations. This source supported me in the construction of my study as it explores how nonconformity can affect how people view those who choose not to conform. This source is

valid, credible and unbiased as it was written by professors that have an expertise in the area of psychology.

**Vogels, E.A., & Gelles-Watnick, R. (2023, April 24). *Teens and social media: Key findings from Pew Research surveys*. Pew Research Center. (accessed 17 October 2023).**

**<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/04/24/teens-and-social-media-key-findings-from-pew-research-center-surveys/#:~:text=Teen%20girls%20are%20more%20likely,20%25%20vs.%208%25>**

- This article details a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center where American teens and parents were asked about their views towards and experiences with social media. This article was valuable to my research as it delved into the high usage that teen girls in particular have of social media platforms. This was valuable to my research as it highlighted just how much potential social media has to influence teen girls in the modern context. This source is unbiased, credible and valid as the survey detailed in the article was conducted by the Pew Research Center which is a credible research centre in America, and was reviewed by an external institutional review board.