

## Project #1 (Draft 1)

The Black Mirror episode “Nosedive” written by Michael Shur and Rashida Jones streaming on Netflix follows a young woman named ‘Lacie’ who lives in an alternate universe where their social media ‘score’ decides the quality of life they live. Living in constant fear of getting a bad rating, this episode follows her experience of being obsessed with how she is portrayed on social media and why it pushes her to her breaking point. The deeper meaning behind this Black Mirror episode is the implication it makes towards societies addiction to phones and to social media. It shows the reality of how much social media affects the way people think about themselves and others. The question, ‘Were the creators of the Black Mirror episode “Nosedive” able to prove that social media directly relates to our confidence and the way we feel about ourselves and others?’ will be thoroughly discussed in this essay.

The Black Mirror episode showcases that self-worth is found in one’s social standing and the amount of likes they receive. From the source written by Trevor Sutton “Inclined to Boast: Social Media and Self-Justification,” he states, “Collecting ‘likes’ and ‘favorites’ is one emerging; perhaps even predominant way people confirm their righteousness.” Self-justification is a way people confirm their beliefs or actions. In the article Trevor talks about humanity being fixated on justification and the inner longing within all people to feel righteous, and why that is a central part of the human experience.

It is important someone feels confident in their actions and the way they feel about themselves. Unfortunately, through social media someone can feel good about themselves for the wrong reasons. This data discusses that by getting ‘likes’ someone can

feel better about themselves and the reason behind that - people long for confirmation. In the Black Mirror episode every time Lacie gets a '5 star' rating she automatically gets in a good mood and feels better about herself.

The satisfaction and feeling an individual can get from receiving a certain amount of likes on an Instagram post is almost scary. It can make someone feel more confident about themselves but, likes are superficial, and don't convey real emotions or feelings someone has. Lacie relays all of her feelings into her social media and takes every time someone 'rates' her as a personal attest to her character. This evidence shows us the reason behind why people have a need to be liked and feel justified. The action of 'liking' someone's post or rating them only further justifies their feelings about themselves and boosts their confidence. As shown in the Black Mirror episode Lacie becomes more confident in herself as her score goes up.

Having any social media account is a way to show to the world who someone is. It is comprised of photos, captions, thoughts, beliefs, what someone does and who they do it with, a quick view into their world. The person behind the page wants to portray themselves in the best way possible in order to obtain more likes and followers.

According to Vitelar Alexandra, from her article "Like Me: Generation Z and the Use of Social Media for Personal Branding," she states "Generation Z is able to build their own personal 'brand' on social media, personal branding includes one's reputation, style, look, attitude and it all has to be displayed on your social media page to show off – you." In a world where someone is more likely to meet and judge someone based off their social media it is important that one's account showcases the best parts of someone's life.

Like Lacie in the episode she is very particular about what pictures to upload, for example, she perfectly bites into a pastry to get the shot for her social media. That type of thought process rings true to so many people in Generation Z as well, taking over 100 photos only to upload the perfect shot edited just right.

Vitellar states, “In a digital world where information travels instantaneously and continuously, branding becomes essential for surviving in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” Because people put forth so much effort into creating a personal brand for their social media, they are also majorly concerned about the feedback they receive from what they are posting. People’s confidence, especially young people, is directly related to the amount of positive feedback they get on Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter. After spending hours editing and picking out the right picture to post on Instagram, the excitement you can get from receiving likes or a single ‘heart eyes’ emoji is what makes someone feel good about themselves.

In the Black Mirror episode, you can clearly see that Lacie’s emotions directly contribute to her rating. She works so hard to raise her 4.2, by posting perfect pictures and being around others with high scores all to reach a goal of being able to live in a better area, and ultimately somehow become a ‘better person’ by having a higher rating. She is so invested in this idea that having more likes makes her a superior person, that her feelings and confidence also get involved. The creators of Black Mirror were trying to show how big of an impact social media has on our lives and well-being. The concept that you gain confidence from how many likes you have on social media, isn’t a crazy idea when you take into consideration the effect it had on Lacie in the episode and the effect it has on people all over the world.

Relying on social media to validate one's self is bad for mental health and can actually make someone feel worse. This Black Mirror episode shows the damaging effects social media can have on one's confidence and that being so invested in it can drive them crazy. From Ariel Shensa's "Social Media Use and Depression and Anxiety Symptoms: A Cluster Analysis," they conducted a study where they "Identified certain patterns of social media use and associated them with symptoms of depression and anxiety." This is important because when social media directly relates to how one views themselves it can often be that it tears down their confidence and makes them feel worse about themselves. Shensa states how 'It's not just the time spent on social media, but the emotional attachment felt to it that led to these symptoms.'

The more invested Lacie gets in raising her 'score' the more she almost drives herself over the edge. She is consumed in getting more likes and becoming more popular by that the end of the episode she is anxiety ridden and on the verge of a mental breakdown. People don't always give Lacie a 5-star rating, which hurts her score and her ego. Just like if someone doesn't follow someone back on Instagram or doesn't like their picture, people take this as a personal attack on them. Their feelings are hurt, and they end up losing confidence.

When someone's confidence is directly affiliated with their social media rating, they may find themselves upset, depressed and anxious. This episode of Black Mirror perfectly captures this idea because Lacie's obsession with her rating has detrimental effects on her. She feels on top of the world when she gets 5 stars and her rating begins to go up from her previous 4.2, but when things start to go bad and she receives a couple

low ratings she finds herself spiraling out of control. Lacie is so invested in her score that it affects her mental and physical health when her rating goes down. This shows that social media likes have a way bigger impact than just double clicking a photo. So many young people post their whole life on social media sites and it's important to them to have others like what they're posting. It makes them feel good about themselves, but if they get a negative response, they can find themselves feeling insecure, upset and even depressed.

Some may say that having problems with confidence and body image on social media can easily be avoided if surrounded by a positive school environment and with strong parental guidance. In the article titled, "I don't need people to tell me I'm pretty on social media," written by Burnette, Blair, Kwitowski, Melissa and Mazzeo, Susan, a study was conducted surveying girls from an all-girl school in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade about their social media use and how it affects their body image and confidence in themselves. The study showed that many of the girl's social media use was either monitored or restricted by their parents, they believe this is one of the reasons girls were less likely to give in to comparisons or negativity on social media.

The girls in the survey were described from Blair, Kwitowski and Mazzeo as "Having high media literacy, and appreciation of diversity, and confidence." 76% of the girls in the study recorded that their status on social media didn't affect how they felt about themselves. The authors Blair, Kwitowski, and Mazzeo state that "The supportive culture of the school, evident in the attitudes and messages that teachers and administrators promote, evoke confidence and body positivity in their students." This evidence shows that parents who are involved in their kids' life and put their kids in a positive

environment are able to influence their thoughts and feelings about themselves. If young girls are educated about the consequences of comparing themselves to others and are given ways to feel confident in themselves, they can avoid the heartbreak and mental issues that come with finding self-esteem through social media.

This is important because many people believe there is no way out of the trap social media puts people in where they are constantly checking who likes their photos and how many followers they have. If young people are equipped with the right tools that allow them to know their worth apart from social media, there will be no problems. The evidence this source gives us shows that social media likes don't have to directly relate to the confidence someone feels in themselves. This study showed that young girls in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade are able to use Instagram, snapchat and twitter without it affecting their confidence. One girl in the study was quoted to say, "I don't need people to tell me I'm pretty on social media."

On the other hand, going to a school with boys and girls that have hundreds of kids, it can be hard to help and understand what every student is going through. Not everyone has parents or teachers who instill these ideas of confidence, diversity and body positivity to them. If they are not in the best environment, they may find themselves looking to Instagram or snapchat for validation. According to Wang, Xianhui from his article "Exploring the Influence of Parental Involvement and Socioeconomic Status on Teen Digital Citizenship," he states that "Parents are the child's first and most influential teachers of civic values and attitudes." This is further elaborating on the importance of having an influential figure to help young people understand social media and its effects. Wang goes on to say that, "Unfortunately, 72% of parents of online teens are unaware of

what their child posts on social media and how they interact with others.” This is why it is difficult for young people to not take social media very seriously. Unlike the girls in the previous survey who felt confident in themselves without the justification from social media, most students aren’t being observed and monitored by their parents.

Without advice or strong support from parents, teachers or counselors most teens rely on social media to connect and validate themselves. This is why it is wrong to assume that a strong school environment and parental influence can lead teens to not feel reliant on social media. Not every person is in this type of strong environment and that is why they gain self-justification and confidence from their social media likes and followers.

There are many consequences that come with the concepts of social media and confidence. Magazines, advertisements, tv shows, movies and more set impossible standards of beauty, body types and success for people to look at. These standards aren’t just set by celebrities and movie stars. Teens everywhere can depict that they have a ‘perfect life’ on social media. With editing apps, the ability to only post the picture you want and hiding the everyday ordinary struggles of life, anyone can seem perfect on social media.

People are so invested in their social media and how it looks because it is a representation of them and who they are. Everyone wants to feel confident and good about who they are. If social media reflects who someone is then the likes they get mean people like who they are. They think their cool, interesting, and pretty. That is why people find their confidence within their social media pages.

The ‘Nosedive’ episode of Black Mirror presents a crazy reality where their life is literally dependent on their status on social media. Who they can be friends with, where

they can go and where they can live all depends on their rating out of five stars. After a small conversation with someone they automatically score them, even if they don't really know them. This alternate reality isn't too far off from the world we live in now.

Although, the popularity someone receives from their social media doesn't depict what they're allowed to do, it is very essential to some people. Living in a generation obsessed with technology and social media it can be hard to not get invested. 'Likes' are essential to social media it gives the person confirmation about what they posted. The more likes the better one feels about themselves.

The creators of Black Mirror were trying to show us that we live in a 'like economy' where everything is dependent on the amount of likes and followers one has. Like Lacie, many people become consumed in how many likes they get because it makes them feel good about themselves. Confidence is about believing in one's self, confidence is attractive, it brings success and helps someone to better interact with others. Living in a world that revolves around social media and status, one's profile is essential to portraying themselves to others. Social media directly relates to someone's confidence and the way they feel about themselves; the creators of this Black Mirror episode were able to prove that through Lacie's actions and the way she conducted herself. Social media is more than just an app, it is a worldwide network that influences the way you feel about yourself and others.



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