CE&SJ NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2024 EDITION

The beginning of the Black Lives Matter protests was a breaking point resulting from decades of boiling tension. Following the murder of George Floyd, the subsequent protests showed the world that there were deeply ingrained issues of racism in America that continued to persist. Beginning in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area, an estimated 15 to 26 million people across the country and the world joined arms to protest. These protests showed that there were people deeply enraged by racism in America. It was this summer that a group of thirty students from Legal Outreach, a nonprofit organization based in New York City, came together and created the Civic Engagement and Social Justice Council. These thirty students, all people of color and all deeply moved by the Black Lives Matter protest, took a stand to enact change in their communities with the help of education. The creation of the CESJ council is just one of the many results of the Black Lives Matter protests. Similarly, these protests brought global attention to the eminent issue of racism in America, ushered lawmakers to create progressive laws, and changed the way law enforcement collected and recorded data. Despite the many positive changes that resulted from the protests of 2020, it is clear that changes still need to be made. It is with the CESJ council, birthed in that world-altering summer, that we promise to spearhead said change through education. In this section, duly labeled the "Police Use of Force" section, we will continue to shed light on current, pressing cases relating to police authority.

FROM BEHIND DESKS TO BEHIND BARS
BY ALEAH RAYMOND

Being a teenager in society today is hard enough, but being a minority on top of that is way harder. On top of focusing on grades, minority teens have to deal with negative stereotypes that are associated with being a minority. It is especially discouraging when you're trying to further develop yourself but you get exposed to unfair negative expectations that are set up by schools and society as a whole. That's why it's important to bring awareness to this issue that most minority teens don't even realize severely affects them- the school-to-prison pipeline.

The school-to-prison pipeline describes the dilemma that schools have policies such as suspensions that are more likely to negatively affect minority students, leading them on the path to imprisonment. You may be asking yourself: how does being suspended in school lead to imprisonment? When students are suspended, it is recorded in a database that records their progress from Pre-K to the 12th grade. When a student tries to apply for a college, job, internship, or scholarship, these suspensions "blacklist" them-essentially preventing them from being accepted from any quality opportunities. It's no secret that without attending a good college or working at an internship or job that offers invaluable connections, it's incredibly difficult to get a career with a stable income. As students are unable to have stable income, they begin taking loans. With an unstable income, they will be unable to pay off these loans and, as a result, build bad credit, further suffocating thees in debts. This often means they must look for other ways to support themselves-including illegal jobs. The astonishing thing is when you look deeper into these students' suspensions, they tend to be based for minor infractions such as not wearing a uniform or talking back to a teacher. These issues are minor compared to the disproportionate effect they have on a student's future.

Another factor that contributes to the prison to school pipeline is school safety officers. School safety officers (SSO) were instituted to keep students safe; however, they instead tend to put minority students in danger. Despite the rapid growth of SSO's, their training fails to evolve at the same rate. Most SSO's are only trained on how to arrest and apprehend students, rather than on how to deal with different situations through non-physical de-escalation tactics. This is extremely important when working with students who are still developing personally and socially.

Now how can we solve this? A possible solution to implement restorative justice initiatives. Restorative justice is the idea in which rather than punishing people, you find alternative ways to show a person their actions are wrong and teach them how to deal with those situations in betterways. This might look different depending on the situation. An example of this is for kids who get suspended for fighting: have a talk with both the kids who participated in the fight about talking out their issues. Seems like a small thing to do, but most of the time by just talking things out and seeing each other's perspectives it can make the situation a lot better.

While writing this article I interviewed two students about their knowledge of the Prison to School Pipeline. One was my best friend Tricia who lives in the Bronx and the other was my friend Victoria from Queens. The first question I asked was "do you know what the school to prison pipeline is?" They both said no. When I explained the concept to them, they were both in disbelief because this was a serious issue affecting teens our age and they never heard of it before. The second question is do they have any questions? Tricia said no and Victoria asked, is there a way to reverse the effects of this issue? The third question that I asked is how does knowing this information impact the way you act within schools? Both of them said that they haven't gotten in serious trouble such as suspension

before so it doesn't change the way they act, but they will inform their friends. They both expressed that they wanted to find a way to reverse these issues, but not knowing ways to do so. The final question I asked was did they know anyone who was affected by the prison to school pipeline? They both said that they didn't know anyone personally that had been affected.

In conclusion, this is a very important issue affecting minority teenagers all over the US that most people are unaware of. At the end of the day, systems must be reformed to mitigate high school altercations while preventing them from permanently damaging a growing student's career. We are still developing and growing, and we should be given the opportunities to evolve.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLARIZATION
BY COLIN SENAT

https://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/response/difference-or-diversity/

In the fast-paced realm of social media, where connectivity is at our fingertips, a concerning trend has emerged – the growing polarization that threatens to reshape the way we engage with the world.

Social media platforms, designed to connect people, have inadvertently become breeding grounds for polarization. The adverse effects are felt both online and offline. Echo chambers form, amplifying existing beliefs while alienating dissenting voices. This digital tribalism fosters an environment where constructive discourse takes a backseat to divisive rhetoric, eroding the foundations of open dialogue.

Several factors contribute to the polarization magnified by social media. The algorithmic nature of these platforms is designed to feed users content aligned with their existing preferences, creating a feedback loop that reinforces preconceived notions. This results in a distorted reality where opposing viewpoints are pushed to the periphery, leading to a heightened sense of polarization. The rapid dissemination of information, often unchecked for accuracy, further fuels the flames of polarization. Misinformation spreads like wildfire, entrenching individuals in ideological bunkers and deepening the divides that separate us. The allure of sensationalized narratives and clickbait headlines contributes to a climate where truth becomes subjective.

Social media platforms also fuel polarization through their

design which prioritizes engagement through likes, comments, and shares. This creates an environment where provocative and extreme viewpoints are rewarded with heightened visibility, while moderate and nuanced discussions often languish in obscurity. As a result, users are incentivized to amplify polarizing content, contributing to the erosion of civil discourse.

The implications of digital polarization extend beyond the confines of the online realm. Off-platform, individuals are increasingly identifying themselves within rigid ideological boundaries, leading to societal fractures and heightened conflicts. This has significant implications for social cohesion, political discourse, and the fabric of our communities. The erosion of empathy and understanding further deepens the fault lines that divide us, hindering our ability to come together and address common challenges.

So, what can we do to address this issue? First and foremost, it is essential for individuals to critically evaluate the content they consume and engage with. One promising framework is the "Institute for Awareness SIFT Technique," which offers a structured approach to evaluating information by teaching individuals to "Stop, Investigate the source, Find trusted coverage, and Trace claims back to the original context." Such campaigns not only empower individuals to discern fact from fiction but also foster a culture of accountability among citizens, governments, and AI developers. Developing media literacy skills can help differentiate between reliable information and misinformation. By being discerning consumers of digital content, we can mitigate the spread of falsehoods and contribute to a more informed and nuanced public discourse.

At the same time, social media platforms have a significant role to play in mitigating polarization. They must prioritize the amplification of diverse perspectives and foster environments that encourage genuine dialogue and understanding. This may involve reevaluating algorithms and content promotion strategies to ensure that users are exposed to a well-rounded range of viewpoints.

Additionally, individuals can actively seek out diverse perspectives and engage in conversations with those who hold differing beliefs. By bridging the gap between ideological divides, we can cultivate empathy and understanding, laying the groundwork for more constructive and inclusive discourse.

Moreover, digital media literacy should be integrated into educational curricula, equipping young people with the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate the complex landscape of online information. By empowering future generations with the ability to discern fact from fiction, we can cultivate a more informed and engaged citizenry.

In this fast-evolving digital age, the issue of polarization poses a significant challenge to the fabric of our society. By acknowledging the causes and implications of digital polarization, and actively working towards solutions, we can chart a course towards a more cohesive, empathetic, and

informed future. Collectively, we have the power to reshape the digital discourse, fostering spaces for meaningful dialogue, understanding, and connection. Only through vigilance, understanding, and proactive engagement, can we mitigate the forces that perpetuate polarization and forge a more unified future.

DESENSITIZATION TO VIOLENCE WITHIN ADOLESCENTS
BY ARHAM ISHRAQ

The evolving discourse on media violence's impact on adolescents and individuals in the United States has reached a pivotal juncture. A study conducted by the National Library of Medicine, explores desensitization to violence and its connections to apathy towards injustice, focusing particularly on incidents like police brutality. In the era of media exposure, the ramifications of desensitization are far-reaching, seeping into societal responses and activism. There seems to be a divide between the individual and the things happening around them. Drawing on the study's evidence and key findings, there are clear connections between desensitization, apathy towards injustice, and the evolving landscape of activism.

Krahe et al.'s (2015) study offers a comprehensive examination of the desensitization process among adolescents and individuals in the United States. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating physiological measures and assessments of situational aggression. The study found that habitual exposure to media violence correlated with reduced physiological reactivity during exposure to violent film clips. Participants with high media violence exposure reported heightened pleasant arousal and diminished anxious arousal during exposure to violent content compared to their low-exposure counterparts.

The implications of desensitization extend beyond altered physiological responses. Reduced emotional responsiveness to violence, as identified by Krahe et al.'s (2015) study, raises concerns about its impact on perceptions of injustice. In the realm of police brutality, desensitization may contribute to an apathetic stance among individuals. The blunted emotional reaction to instances of violence may hinder the development of a robust sense of outrage and empathy, essential components of effective responses to societal injustices. This curbs the effect of activism against such issues, which is why (along with issues regarding systemic racism) there is a high level of awareness when it comes to police brutality, but little is being done.
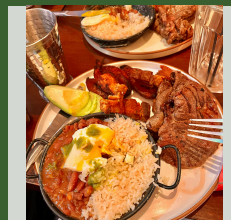
As desensitization takes root, activism faces new challenges. Krahe et al.'s (2015) findings suggest that habitual media violence exposure correlates with diminished physiological arousal and altered affective responses. This

presents a potential obstacle to engagement in activism, as the emotional vigor required for collective mobilization may be compromised. Historical protests serve as poignant examples of the transformative power of collective action, but the contemporary landscape, saturated with media violence, demands a reevaluation of activism's efficacy.

Historical protests, such as the Civil Rights Movement, derived power from their ability to pierce the collective consciousness without the presence of today's media. In an era where the media captures and shares instances of injustice, the impact of such visuals may be blunted by desensitization. Activism, often fueled by collective outrage and empathy, encounters a paradox where increased media visibility diminishes the emotional response, undermining the potential for effective mobilization.
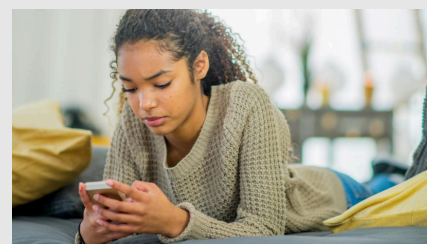
Overall, the study by Krahe et al. (2015) sheds light on the escalating desensitization to violence among adolescents and individuals in the United States. As desensitization intertwines with apathy towards injustice, the landscape of activism transforms. Historical protests, once characterized by their transformative power, now navigate the challenges posed by increased media exposure and its potential to dull emotional responses. As society grapples with these shifts, understanding the dynamics of desensitization becomes paramount for fostering a collective response that transcends the barriers erected by media saturation.

DULCE VIDA LATIN BISTRO

TECHNOLOGY'S IMPACT ON TEENS
BY SHEENA BAILEY

https://www.parentmap.com/article/9-tips-help-teen-girls-cope-social-comparison-social-media

As technology advances, so do the minds of those who use it. From TikTok to ChatGpt, the internet's advancement has impacted teens' productivity negatively and positively. Social media has many resources to learn, explore creativity, spread

awareness, and have many job opportunities. However, the downside is that too much of it has perpetuated the development of burnout, depression, and anxiety, worrying many of this being the cause for many teens' lack of productivity. Studies have shown that while a third of teens (32%) say social media has positively affected them by making them feel included, two-thirds (68%) acknowledge the negative effect. The dichotomy between the positive and negative effects on teens shows their complex relationship with the digital realm.

Social media's positive influence is evident in its capacity as a platform for creativity and learning. Convenient accessibility to information and resources encourages teens to educate themselves on present-day issues. Sometimes, teens need to be educated on important information or history. Social media platforms like TikTok allow teens to express themselves and explore their interests. They can connect with those with common interests through dances, music, fun facts, and educational content. Social media also gives a stage to spread information on important present-day issues and creates community.

On the other hand, the dark side of social media's influence on teens cannot be overlooked. Various studies and statistics have proven the role such platforms can take on teens' mental health. The rise in depression, burnout, procrastination, and anxiety from the addictions formed from overconsumption of these platforms. Social media is one of the root causes of cyberbullying. Teens have used the platforms as a tool to compare or put others down, which often results in suicidal rates increasing in teens. A 10-year longitudinal BYU study has proven that teenage girls who spend more than two to three hours daily on social media at age 13 were at a higher risk of suicide as young adults. The pressure to perform and live up to unrealistic standards or lifestyles can become overwhelming for many teens in the stage of self-discovery.

For instance, my 13-year-old sister has shared her positive and negative experiences with me on platforms like Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram. She says that communicating with her friends and following motivational accounts has inspired her to achieve personal goals in her future career path. The resource to speak to her friends has uplifted her. However, she says social media often leads to overconsumption, making her procrastinate on important things like her school work or free time, which results in poor academic performance. She also said that comparing herself to other teens on the platforms often leads to insecurity within herself. The social media algorithms might not be designed to fully benefit most younger teenagers' growth because they have yet to develop full skills like time management or identity awareness needed to use the apps rightfully.

The hardships teens face against social media are a recurring issue many have sought solutions for. Each platformhas placed guidelines and restrictions, but more is needed for some. Recently, lawmakers have taken action in states like Florida have taken action by banning teens under the age of 16 from using certain social media platforms because they recognized the rising rates. This law may spread to other states or even at the federal level, greatly impacting younger users.

This said, the positive and negative aspects of social media's impact on teens reveal the many changes that could make social media a better tool for younger users. It could improve, whether by changing guidelines or placing time limitations. Teens should have the space to express themselves and communicate with their peers, but it should be safe.

YONDR POUCHES: A HIT OR A MISS
BY WENDY LEI

Cellphones are devices that have been an issue in classrooms for decades. While students believe that cellphones are very useful in communicating with others as well as looking up information that they may need, many teachers and adults abhor the notion of a cell phone. In the past, many highschools have developed an honor code where they trust their students to not use their phones during class.

However, this year, there has been an implementation of Yondr pouches which are green and gray pouches that lock when their two circular magnets are pushed together. The only way to unlock a Yondr pouch is by using a special key. When students enter the building, they are expected to put their electronic devices– phones, airpods, and apple watches– into the pouch and then have it stored away in their backpacks.

Many schools have started implementing Yondr pouches to prevent their students from using their phones during class. However, many students have voiced complaints about Yondr pouches saying how it prevents them from communicating with their friends and families as well as making it less convenient

for them to buy food.

When surveying students from School of the Future High School and Aviation High School, all of the students said that Yondr Pouches were ineffective devices to prevent students from using their phones. Respondents from School of the Future High School and Aviation High School said that some students would come to school late so that they don't have to hand in their phones, destroy the pouches, bring a fake phone, or even bring in games like Uno that they could play with. Additionally, there has also been some concern about the safety of locking up phones in Yondr pouches. One respondent from School of the Future High School brought up a safety concern regarding Yondr pouches. In School of the Future High School, students could get lunch from outside the school, but because they don't have access to their phones, they won't be able to call for help if they encounter a dangerous situation.

Some parents have also voiced concerns about this issue. In Middletown High School parent Domingo Ramos voiced safety concerns. He said, "I understand that a phone can be a distraction, but there's other solutions other than them putting it in a pouch that they can't unlock…What happens if a school shooting happens? Who is going to unlock all those phones at once?" (Carnivale) School shootings are a very prevalent matter and it's not surprising that parents would be concerned about this issue.

There have also been petitions fighting against cell phone restrictions in US Schools. According to Change.org, there are 22 petitions made for this movement and around 70,942 supporters. Arguments against these cell phone restrictions include "harming students' autonomy and personal responsibility" as well as "limiting [their] access to resources that inspire their creative pursuits" (Mitchell).

This brings up the long term issues between school authority and student's rights. According to the ACLU, student's rights include free speech, the right to express yourself through your dress, immigrant rights, disability rights, LGBTQ rights, and pregnancy rights. While these rights are more apparent, rights to keep your personal property by your side are more niche. While schools are allowed to confiscate phones if students sign a "behavioral" contract , it seems wrong that they are locking student's phones away. However, because the phones are still in the possession of the person, it's not illegal for phones to be stored away in Yondr pouches.

The issue of Yondr pouches isn't just in highschools anymore, even some colleges are starting to implement it and it seems ridiculous that grown adults have to use Yondr pouches as well.

However, even with all of these arguments against Yondr pouches, they do serve some benefit. According to Warrensville Heights City School, Yondr pouches help

enhance focus, reduce disruptions, promote face-to-face interaction, and develop responsible technology habits.

As seen, the restriction of phones is a complex issue that involves various generations so there needs to be more conversations about how we deal with phones. Do we continue to let school administrators lock up our phones or do we let phone use become rampant?

Although Yondr pouches are implemented for a good reason, it is too restrictive for students and schools should consider alternatives. For example, in Millennium High School, students are told to put their phones in phone caddies so that they are not distracted during class. This is a better alternative than using Yondr pouches because students can still have access to it for learning and communicating with their loved ones, but it also prevents them from abusing their phone.

Even into the foreseeable future, phones will continue to be a problem in schools but with conversations between students and schools, there can be better and less restrictive means of controlling phone use, one that doesn't involve Yondr Pouches.

AREPAS CAFE

NAPPING THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL
BY ZANDER SARGEANT

In the rough journey of high school, where academic pressures and extracurricular commitments abound, the significance of a good night's sleep often becomes an overlooked factor for many high schoolers. For many students, staying up late to complete assignments or engage in social activities takes precedence over the essential need for quality sleep. However, understanding the importance of adequate rest shows a transformative power that extends beyond the mere fatigue relief that some feel.

Certainly, the impact of sleep on mental well-being is particularly pronounced in high schoolers, a demographic that often grapples with academic pressures, social challenges, and a rapidly changing environment. Adequate sleep is crucial during these young adult times because of the significant physical and psychological development that takes place.

Statistics consistently highlight the concerning trend of insufficient sleep among high school students. According to a report by the National Sleep Foundation, many teenagers do not get the recommended 8-10 hours of sleep per night. The

National Sleep Foundation's Sleep in America poll revealed that only 15% of high school students reported sleeping 8.5 hours on school nights. This shortage of sleep can have profound consequences on their mental health, physical health, and many factors that can affect their academic and personal experiences.

From a mood regulation perspective, sleep is intricately linked to emotional well-being. Sleep deprivation can lead to irritability, mood swings, and higher and more consistent anxiety. In a study published in the Journal of Adolescent Health, researchers found a direct correlation between insufficient sleep and symptoms of depression and anxiety among high school students. The study emphasized the importance of prioritizing sleep to mitigate the risk of mental health challenges. A study published in the Journal of Sleep Research also highlighted the role of sleep in improving emotional regulation and resilience, suggesting that sleep-deprived individuals may be more vulnerable to emotional disturbances.

After conducting a poll on high schoolers' sleep habits with over 100 responses, significant conclusions can be drawn that match pretty well with the current statistics. This poll revealed that only 13% of high school students within my high school are sleeping more than 7 hours on average during school nights. This poll also revealed that a surprising 70% of students feel themselves drifting off in class at least once a week, and 30% of students feel themselves drifting off every day of the school week. This consistency over the long term can have significant negative effects on one's academic and mental performance.

Additionally, it is important to point out the cultural attitude that many, particularly in the West, have about sleep. In some

western countries, including the US, there is often a mindset that prioritizes productivity and long working hours. This can help contribute to a culture of sleep deprivation, where individuals may sacrifice sleep to meet work or personal related demands. In contrast, some cultures, particularly in European countries, may place a higher value on a balance
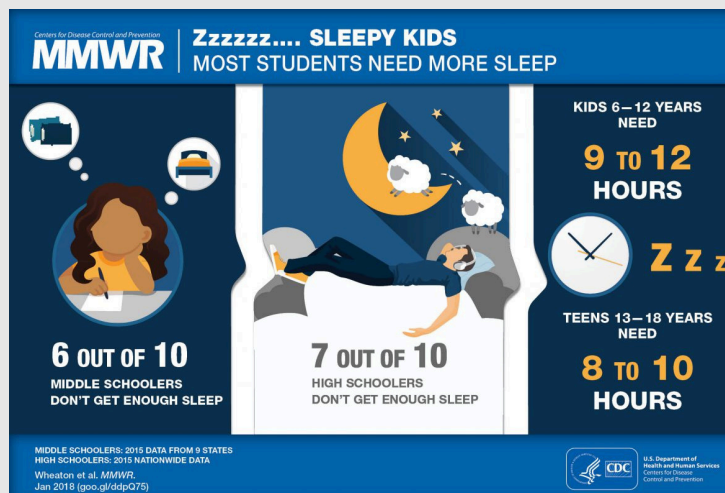
between work and rest.

To combat this problem, High schools should take the initiative to integrate sleep education into their curricula. Workshops and seminars could be organized to inform students, parents, and educators about the critical role of sleep in overall well-being. Additionally, there has been a lot of conversation surrounding later school start times. Research supports the alignment of school schedules with the natural sleep-wake cycle of teenagers. By pushing for later start times, schools acknowledge the physiological needs of their students and promote a healthier lifestyle.

In conclusion, the issue of insufficient sleep among high school students demands a multifaceted approach that will take a lot of structural changes to improve. This is a problem that has been ongoing for many, many decades and requires much advocacy to solve this.

COLLEGE DIVERSITY
BY NEHEMIAH DABIRE

In the middle of the 2024 application process, millions of students await their college results. In addition to the usual wrangling related to deadlines, FAFSA applications, and scholarships, students now have one more element to worry about: the demise of affirmative action.

After the United States Supreme Court ended affirmative action for college admissions in June 2022, many students felt worried about what would occur on college campuses in the years to come, as ending this practice will lead to less diversity on college campuses across the nation. Affirmative action is a policy started in the 1970s that sought to reduce historic inequities in education by giving special consideration to students of color, whether that be in college admissions, or in the workplace. It has been especially beneficial to Black and Hispanic students, who have historically been shut out of mainstream college applications; this policy, essentially, helped increase diversity of experience at the various colleges that used it. These students feel worried that there will be less commitment to diversity on campus, chiefly in PWIs (Predominantly White Institutions) that have not always reflected their experience. Many students of color across this country now wonder whether these universities are really for people like them. However, schools such as Harvard and Princeton affirmed their commitment to diversity in the wake of the SCOTUS decision, with Harvard saying "We write today to reaffirm the fundamental principle that deep and transformative teaching, learning, and research depend upon a community comprising people of many backgrounds, perspectives, and lived experiences. That principle is as true and important today as it was yesterday." The first high school class to apply without affirmative action is the class of 2024:

the guinea pigs of a new admissions policy. We ask members of the senior class about their thoughts on Early Action, Regular Decision, and how the end of affirmative action has affected their process.

For instance, many seniors at my school have felt anxiety with college applications and how they would ensue. As a volunteer in my school's college office, I would see multiple students worried about how this year would be different in terms of diversity objectives, but it was all swept under the rug. It was put to the wayside, with the administration focusing more on other traditional concerns such as financial aid, location of schools, and admissions deadlines. There is also a culture at the school that is heavy on academic achievement, which is why many students there have lauded the end of affirmative action as leveling out the playing field to increase merit. This idea of affirmative action harming merit has been popular among students these days, as a <u>Gallup Poll</u> found that ⅔ of Americans found that the Supreme Court's decision was a good thing, with even 52% of Black adults agreeing that the Supreme Court's decision was valid. This difference in perception is mostly due to a younger generation that doesn't have as much attachment to affirmative action, which was instituted in the 1970s to combat historical inequities. As Black and other minority students navigate a complex admissions scene, it is yet to be seen how colleges will address diversity in the future, and how students will navigate a world without affirmative action.

CREDITS

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