

# The iLife Pursuit: Social Media and Adultescent Loneliness

Ethan Richardson

<<One of every 13 people on Earth are users that log on everyday. Among the “emerging adults” or “adultescents,” **nearly half** check Facebook minutes after waking up, and **28 percent** do so before even getting out of bed...>>

“The 20s are a black box, and there is a lot of churning in there. One-third of people in their 20s move to a new residence every year. Forty percent move back home with their parents at least once. They go through an average of seven jobs in their 20s, more job changes than in any other stretch. Two-thirds spend at least some time living with a romantic partner without being married. And marriage occurs later than ever. The median age at first marriage in the early 1970s, when the baby boomers were young, was 21 for women and 23 for men; by 2009 it had climbed to 26 for women and 28 for men, five years in a little more than a generation.”

—“What is it about 20-Somethings?” (*New York Times Magazine*, August 18, 2010)

“Our omnipresent new technologies lure us toward increasingly superficial connections at exactly the same moment that they make avoiding the mess of human interaction easy. The beauty of Facebook, the source of its power, is that it enables us to be social while sparing us the embarrassing reality of society—the accidental revelations we make at parties, the awkward pauses, the farting and the spilled drinks and the general gaucherie of face-to-face contact. Instead, we have the lovely smoothness of a seemingly social machine. Everything’s so simple: status updates, pictures, your wall.”

—“Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?” (*The Atlantic Monthly*, May 2012)

“‘This is it’ and ‘Now we are really living’ do not necessarily refer to the sovereign encounter of the person with the sight that enlivens the mind and gladdens the heart. It means that now at last we are having the acceptable experience. The present experience is always measure by a prototype, the “it” of their dreams. “Now I am really living” means that now I am filling the role of sightseer and the sight is living up to the prototype of sights....Hence their anxiety during the encounter. For at any minute something could go wrong.”

—Walker Percy, “The Loss of the Creature”

“There is no such thing as a person whose real self you like every particle of. This is why a world of liking is ultimately a lie. But there is such a thing as a person whose real self you love every particle of. And this is why love is such an existential threat to the techno-consumerist order: it exposes the lie.

This is not to say that love is only about fighting. Love is about bottomless empathy, born out of the heart’s revelation that another person is every bit as real as you are. And this is why love, as I understand it, is always specific. Trying to love all of humanity may be a worthy endeavor, but, in a funny way, it keeps the focus on the self, on the self’s own moral or spiritual well-being. Whereas, to love a specific person, and to identify with his or her struggles and joys as if they were your own, you have to surrender some of your self.”

—Jonathan Franzen, “Liking is for Losers. Go For What Hurts.”