&

You don't have to make sense.

State of Mind

Preface

For this trend research assignment for the Trends & Identity Class of 2025, we were tasked with investigating the paradox of speed. This theme inspired us, Julia Ranzi and Sally Ndiaye, to explore how Gen Z navigates fast-paced digital life and shifting social behaviors.

From the Start, Julias interests have been focussed on understanding the trends around FOMO, JOMO, MOMO, and related phenomena, which show how young people navigate the pressures and pleasures of participation in a hyper connected world. Sallys curiosity focuses on a cultural shift: "Why is Gen Z less drawn to dancing at clubs?", Which let us uncover deeper questions about social expiriences, digital life, and changing values.

This collaboration merges those complementary interests to map a larger picture of how Gen Z experiences time, connection, and social engagement. Together we try to shed light on the tensions, choices, and emerging behaviors that characterize this generation's approach to belonging and presence. This research is a reflection of our commitment to listen, observe, and interpret these very fast evolving cultural trends with empathy and critical insight. It is both a personal and intellectual journey into understanding a generations search for balance in the midst of rapid change.

B2

Table of contents

Introduction

The following pages will focus primarily on shaping Gen Z's relationship with social contact, nightlife, and digital life.

This zine was born from two main ideas put forward by two members of Gen Z: "Why do young people seem less likely to dance in nightclubs, and how do phenomena like FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), JOMO (Joy of Missing Out), MOMO (Mystery of Missing Out), and their related concepts contribute to this shift?

Rather than offering critique or psychological diagnoses, the study focuses on mapping and describing visible trends that play out both online and offline within this generation.
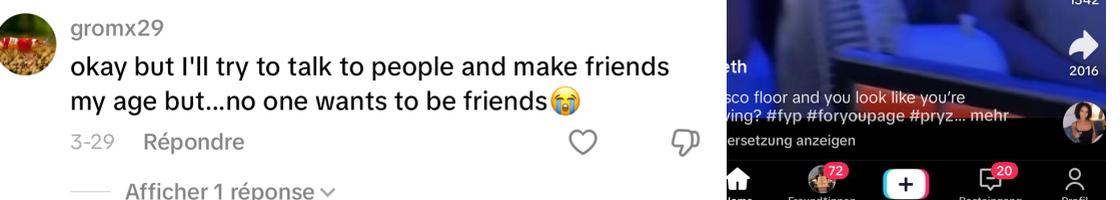
Digital socialization and curated reels often intensify social anxiety. Individuals feel pressured to participate or conform, with nearly 37% of Gen Z reporting that phones interfere with daily interactions. Viral trends on platforms like TikTok and Instagram show the spectrum from social freedom and control to anxious avoidance, making visible the tension between isolation and desire. Meanwhile, the rise of autonomy and wellness culture has popularized notions like JOMO and ROMO, where opting out is experienced as either joy or relief, and led to the so called "generation stay-at-home," who observe parties and events through screens rather than in person.

Yet, this withdrawal is paradoxically linked with extreme loneliness, raising questions about the long-term effects of digital living and emotional detachment.

Our research highlights ambivalence toward traditional forms of gentle physical touch and partying. Touch, in this analysis, is seen as both, a site of vulnerability and a source of deep need.
By unravelling concepts like anxious compliance and autonomous acceptance, the study reveals how decisions to engage, whether out of enthusiasm, anxiety, or self-care, shape social experience today.

In essence, this introduction frames the research as an exploration of paradoxes: connection versus avoidance, digital living versus embodied presence, and the evolving meanings of opting in or out in the lives of young people.

Zum Vorspulen Ecke halten ▶▶

I get FOBI
(fear of being involved

Toon

FOMO? You mean FOBI? #fomo #fobi
#fearofmissingout

Übersetzung anzeigen

10:59

NETFLIX

Fear
Of
Being
Included

59.184
255
5483
9063

Netflix Malaysia ✓

#Wednesday is so relatable, I also feel
the FOBI sometimes 😣 #Wedne... mehr

Übersetzung anzeigen

pov: mon ami cancelle
nos plans

15.802
110
271
406

charlottecardin ✓

la version acoustique de TPPE
accompagnera parfaitement votr... mehr

Übersetzung anzeigen

New   Tant pis pour elle (Version Acoustiq...

Home   Freund*innen   +   Posteingang 20   Profil

11:02

we don't really have the
FOMO

147.665
560
12.558
31.454

Pennsylvania
Dieser Ort wurde in 174 aktuellen Beiträgen...

Jessica, The Indoorswoman 🌿

#stitch with ▶Royal Television ...
#introvert #introverts #claudiaj... mehr

Übersetzung anzeigen

10:56

LEAVE ME OUT OF IT.

266.407
284
23.016
48.689

Can someone teach
Gen Z's how to dance in
clubs?

110.144
1213
1342
2016

It's the Pryzm disco room
not a rave

eth

sco floor and you look like you're
ving? #fyp #foryoupage #pryz... mehr

Übersetzung anzeigen

gromx29

okay but I'll try to talk to people and make friends
my age but...no one wants to be friends😭

3-29   Répondre

Afficher 1 réponse ⌄

FO
#li
Ü

Entdecken   Gefolgt   Für d

I don't need to be involved.

Bl 😔 ❤️ #relatable #fyp #viral
festyle #trend

me realizing the way i grew
up actually did affect me

gen z at the club 🏃🚶🚋

52

3

5

11

kt❤️

retention rates 📈📈📈
aysurfers #beyonc... mehr
nzeigen

nd*innen   +   Posteingang   Profil

Entdecken   Gefolgt• Für dich

⚏ Untertitel anzeigen

460 commentaires

aa
i think gen z also has a huge problem with wanting
to feel validated in their problematic behaviors due
to their anxiety
3-6   Répondre   ♡ 1011 👎

    Afficher 10 réponses ⌄

Camel
Gen Z has such issues forming romantic
attachments too
3-8   Répondre   ♡ 107 👎

    Afficher 2 réponses ⌄

Use the internet to
better our world
and fix issues

Use the intern:t
to laugh at
potentially life/
world threatening
issues

Gen Z

Social Anxiety

Do cameras destroy the club experience? Social anxiety shapes a unique topography for Gen Z, influencing how they interact in public and digital spaces. The archetypes from the earlier quadrants Anxious Compliance (Fomo, Fobo, and Momo) now manifest visibly: events where phones are present often amplify the domino effect of anxiety, fear, and comparison, as people witness others curated highlight reels or feel pressured to behave a certain way. The new Study of the Harmony Healtcare IT (a health data management firm) shows, that nearly 37% of Gen Z feel that their phone interferes with daily activities, work, and relationships.
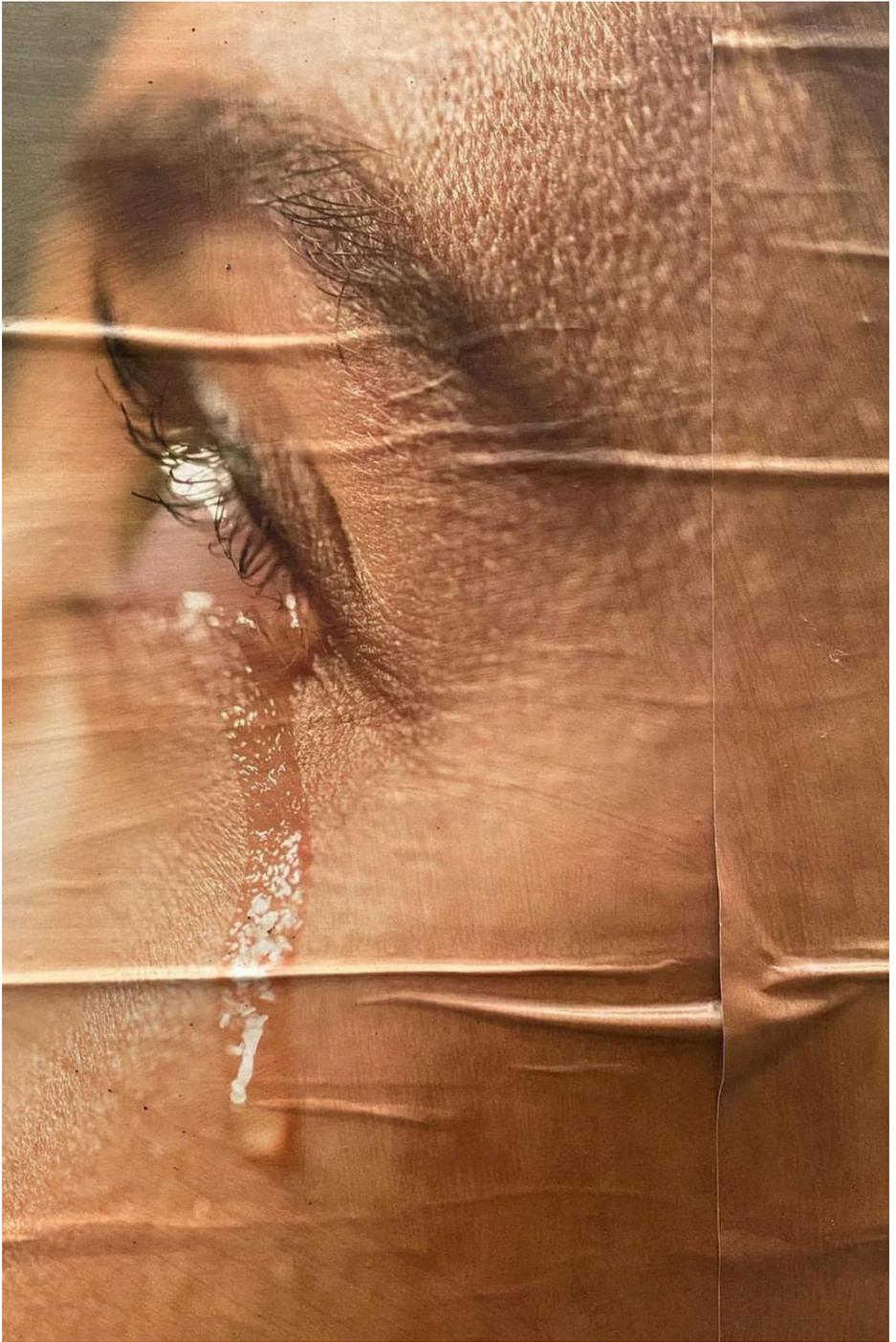
It also shows that even though so many deal with anxiety nearly 50% of them don't feel like they are being understood from others in their generation.

Viral TikTok trends named «Social anxiety fears you» spotlight those who display total social freedom yelling in public, talking to strangers, seemingly without a trace of social fear. For many, this feels surreal and out of reach. These extremes reflect a world where the baseline is often anxious compliance, driven by worries about missing out or not fitting in. When events ban phones and open up for consumers of narcotics, the result is sometimes more physical engagement like dancing, because the primary triggers of digital comparison and self-consciousness are removed.

Increasingly, Gen Z is opting to stay home, watching events unfold through their screens, rather than facing the anxieties of real-world interaction. This shift is documented in media coverage and studies, tying social anxiety closely to digital habits and extreme anxiousness like FOMO.

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joining sports, et
nobody shows u
anymore but the
complain about

ntroverted now.
nool with things
mes, clubs,
tc. literally
up for anything
en go on to
how"

@.blueribbonsparkler

The Power of gentle physical touch

Human connection often begins with a simple gentle touch.

According to family therapist Virginia Satir, people need four hugs a day to survive, eight to feel good, and twelve to grow inwardly. This idea aligns with what neuroscience now confirm. Physical touch is not a luxury but a biological necessity. Touch brings forth safety, care, and belonging long before language can.

Research of the swedish University Linköping and the University of Skövde shows that touch triggers the release of oxytocin, a hormone that reduces stress and strengthens trust between individuals (Neuroscience News; Greater Good Science Center).

Dacher Keltner and Matt Hertenstein built a barrier in their lab that separated two strangers from each other. One person stuck their arm through the barrier and waited. The other person was given a list of emotions, and they had to try to convey each emotion through a one-second touch to the strangers arm. The person whose arm was being touched had to guess the emotion. Given the number of emotions being considered, the odds of guessing the right emotion by chance were about eight percent. But remarkably, participants guessed compassion correctly nearly 60 percent of the time. Gratitude, anger, love, fear. They got those right more than 50 percent of the time.

The National Library of Medicine in Washington and the non profit Organisation eLife write that, beyond emotional comfort, touch supports physical health boosting the immune system, lowering blood pressure, and reducing anxiety. For example, studies reported by the New York Times on premature babies, highlight how skin-to-skin contact dramatically improve survival rates and develop mental outcome.

B6
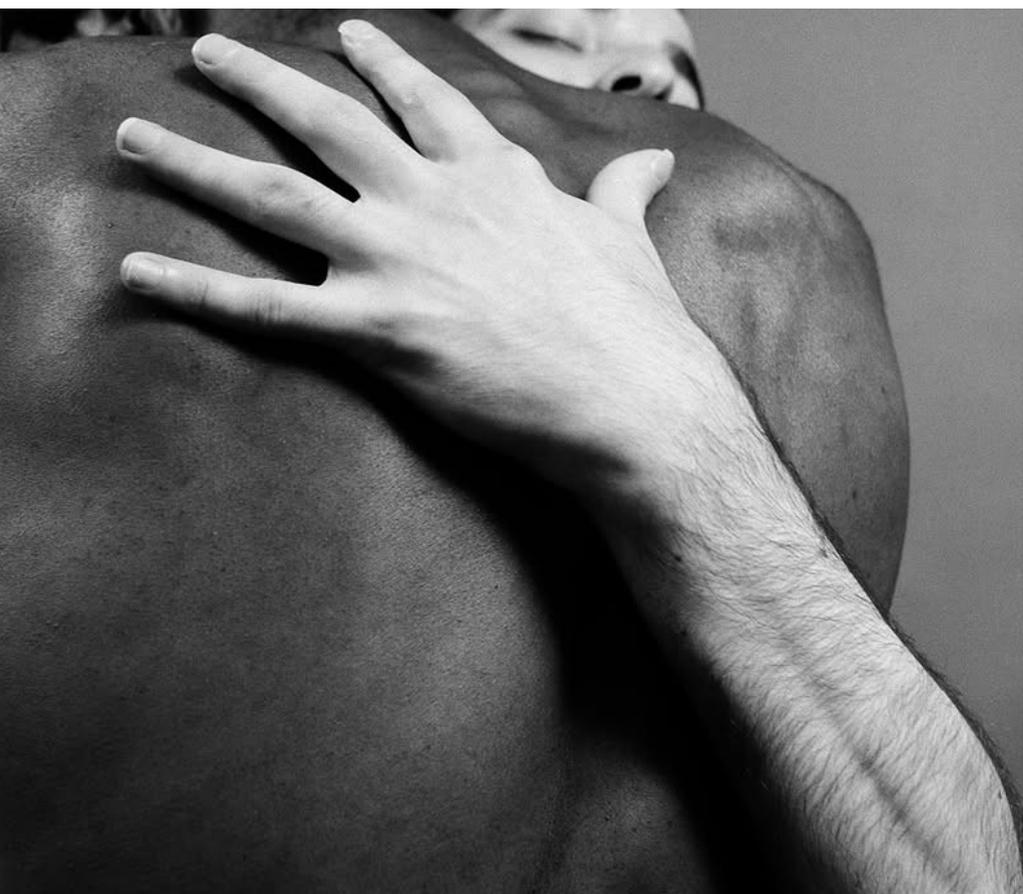
In a world more and more mediated by screens, physical presence becomes a powerful act of resistance against digital disconnection. A handshake, a hug, or even a gentle rub can remind people of their shared humanity.

Yet, for younger generations, especially Gen Z, touch is tangled with ambivalence. Many navigate dating where emotional vulnerability feels risky. Two Types often emerge.

We call them the irrationally fearful, who avoid closeness due to past disappointments or social anxieties, and the rationally fearful, whose heartbreaks have taught them to guard themselves. Both respond to a paradox, longing for connection while fearing intimacy.

4 hugs a day for sur maintenance. 12 hug

In this context, the act of touch, whether through romantic intimacy or simple gestures of care, becomes both healing and confrontational. It asks younger people to face their fears of closeness while acknowledging their bodies' deep need for it. Visual and digital narratives across social media capture this tension between isolation and desire, distance and warmth.

Touch, then, is not only a biological phenomenon but a cultural signal. An expression of modern longing in an era of mediated distance.

viral. 8 hugs a day for
s a day for growth."
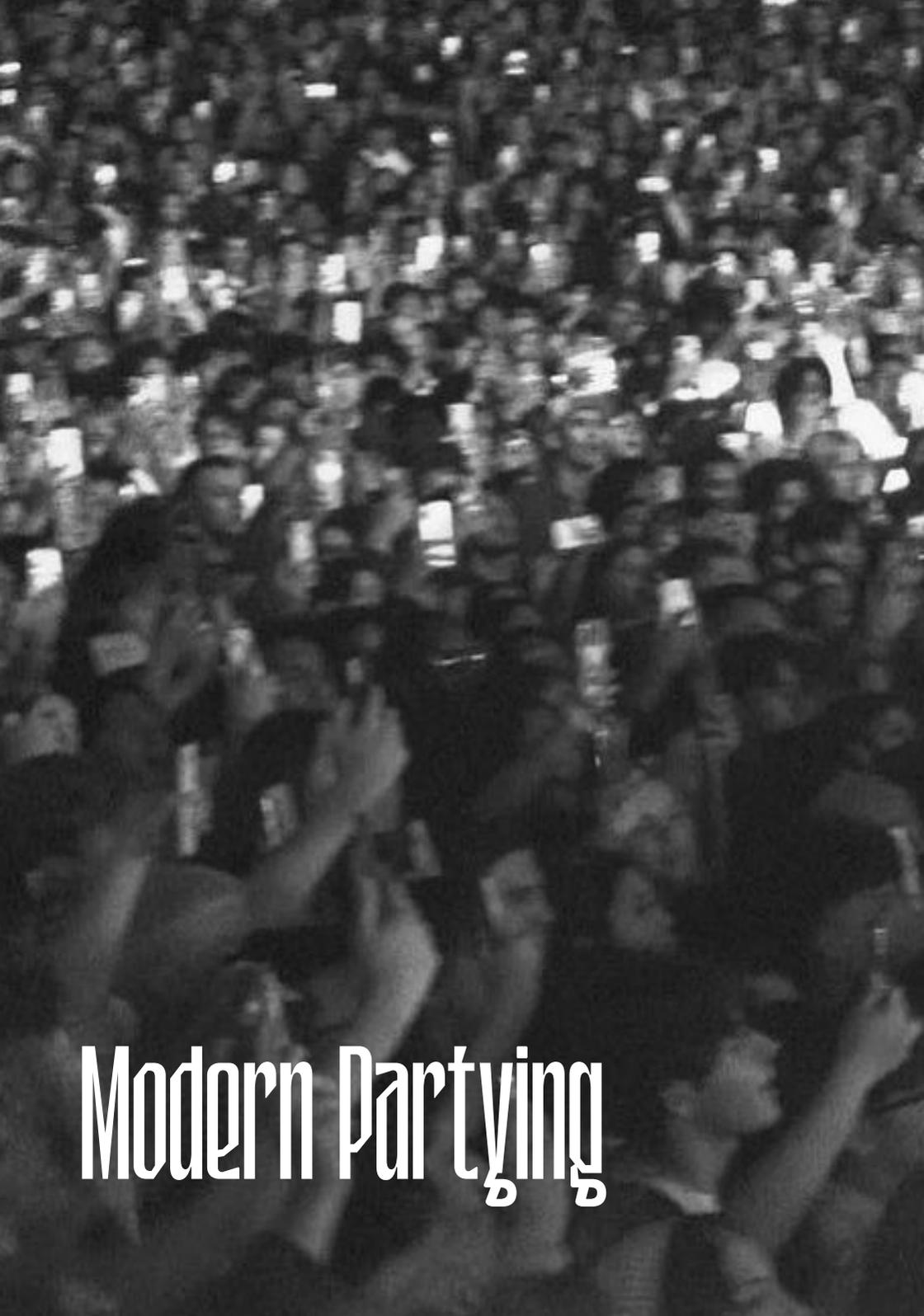
Modern Partying

Is this the end of party culture? Are young people really going out less than before? American YouTuber Cole Hastings explored this topic in a video entitled "The death of party culture: how Gen Z became isolated." He conducted a survey with over 6,500 responses, asking the question "How many house parties do people attend?" 88% percent responded "zero per month." People are seeing each other less and less in person and for less time. Studies also show that loneliness is the biggest trigger of unhappiness among young people. The younger generations are the loneliest in history.

Party is over, clean-living-kids take over

Young people tend to advocate a healthy and balanced lifestyle. As an article in the Telegraph in the UK would say: "From rowdy behavior to clean-living kids: why Gen Z gave up on clubbing," young people are described as "clean-living kids." Could it be that the idea of partying is also misrepresented in today's society?
If we take, for example, one of the iconic party movies, "Project X," and compare it to other more recent movies and series, we see quite a few differences in terms of morality.

The portrayal of "partying" in films such as Project X focuses on the fun and more entertaining aspects of party culture. However, if we take a closer look at this same portrayal in current films and TV series, we find conflicting messages. Current movie releases tend to emphasize the negative and harmful aspects of partying. A person who goes to a party is generally portrayed as unstable, with problems such as addiction, sadness, or unhappiness. There are no parties for positive reasons. Partying is an escape, and not a healthy one. Obviously, as young people, we don't want to be pigeonholed and seen as people who need to escape their daily lives, someone who is not well or who is seen as having addiction problems.
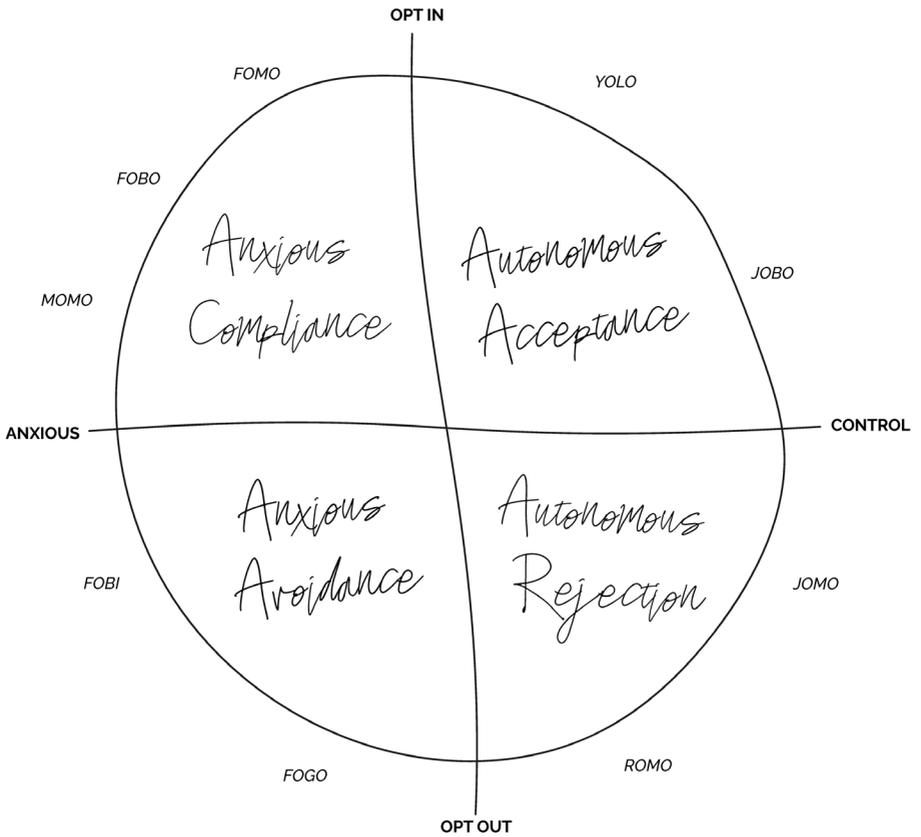
For example, finding love in a movie usually means the end of the party. It's as if we no longer need social contact, fun, etc., if we find "THE" person. But when you think about it, there's no direct link. Why should we stop having fun just because we're in a relationship? It's because partying, dancing, and singing are misrepresented in today's world. If we go out, it's just to flirt, have sex, or consume. So why would we need that if we're in a relationship?

Mapping

OPT IN

FOMO   YOLO

FOBO

Anxious   Autonomous
Compliance   Acceptance   JOBO

MOMO

ANXIOUS   CONTROL

Anxious   Autonomous
FOBI   Avoidance   Rejection   JOMO

FOGO   ROMO

OPT OUT

34

We have created a circle explaining the different phenomena observed during our work.

The circle has four main sections: anxious avoidance, anxious compliance, autonomous rejection and autonomous acceptance. Each section contains different fears or choices. As fear is an anxious behaviour, it will always be associated with the two sections on the left, as being free and aware of your choices will be associated with the two sections on the right.

On the circle itself, the elements are classified by intensity. If we draw a straight line from one term to another, we find its opposite. For example, FOMO is opposed to JOMO. FOMO is characterised by speed and the anxiety of missing out on something, so we overdo it. On the other side is JOMO, which is much more relaxed and slow.

This circle is the starting point for our research into the paradox of speed.

Autonomous acceptance
JOBO & YOLO

The section between "opt in" and "control" in this research project, we call "Autonomous Acceptance."
This space represents individuals who willingly engage in experiences or communities while maintaining a strong sense of personal freedom and self-direction.

Within this quadrant, two key attitudes are highlighted:

Jobo (Joy of Being Out) reflects the idea of choosing to participate in social activities or experiences for absolute enjoyment, not out of fear of missing out but from an authentic desire for adventure, connection, or discovery.

Those who embrace Jobo opt in freely, guided by internal motivation and pleasure rather than external pressure or anxiety. They accept opportunities as they come but set boundaries that respect their own values and desires. Freedom remains integral even as they engage.

Imagine deciding to stay home on a Friday night while friends go to a the Halloweenparty. Instead of feeling anxious about what you might be missing (FOMO) or worried about better options (FOBO), you feel peaceful and content reading a good book or enjoying the kids ringing at the door for candy. This satisfaction in simply being "out" of the social rush stands for a joyful embrace of solitude and presence without social pressure.

You don`t
to make

have
sense.

Literally, go live life to the fullest not just what you think is safe choices

Yolo (You Only Live Once) captures the spirit of embracing life's possibilities and taking intentional risks. For example you organize a Halloween party for your friends with many expensive gadgets that are not really in you budget. You also use a lot of haze to create an amazing ambiance, the haze is toxic however you use it anyways. This example shows that you are in Yolo mode because you do not care about spending more money than you have or putting yours or others health at risk for example.

In this mindset, people act with autonomy, seizing the moment because life is finite. Yolo is not about reckless abandonment, it's about self-driven participation, valuing experiences that align with one's true interests while recognizing freedom in choice.

In a nutshell, "Autonomous Acceptance" is marked by opting into life with joy and intention. Jobo and Yolo invite people to say yes to meaningful opportunities while remaining true to themselves, making choices grounded in personal control and fulfillment.

Autonomous rejection
JOMO & ROMO

We find ourselves between opting out and controlv. This means that the person chooses to stay at home or not participate in an event independently and on purpose. We have identified two movements within this segment: ROMO and JOMO. On one hand, there is the joy of missing out, and on the other, the relief of missing out. The two are similar, but one is more intense than the other.

Imagine a situation where all your friends are going to a Halloween party and you decide to stay at home and enjoy some quiet time, and you are very happy to be alone. This is JOMO. If your decision to stay at home is a real relief rather than just joy, this is ROMO. "Relief" evokes a more intense feeling than someone who is just happy to be at home.

At first glance, it is interesting and positive to see that this trend of staying at home and seeking a healthier lifestyle is so prevalent among younger generations. What's wrong with that?

One of many articles on this subject was published in The Guardian in 2024: "Meet generation stay-at-home: 'You don't need to pay to go clubbing: you can sit at home and watch it on your phone.'" It discusses the trend of young people missing out on formative social experiences. These experiences are necessary for the full development of human beings and their complexity, whether in terms of risk-taking, social interactions, mistakes, etc. Online socialization is growing rapidly, while the real world is increasingly being lost. What are the long-term consequences?

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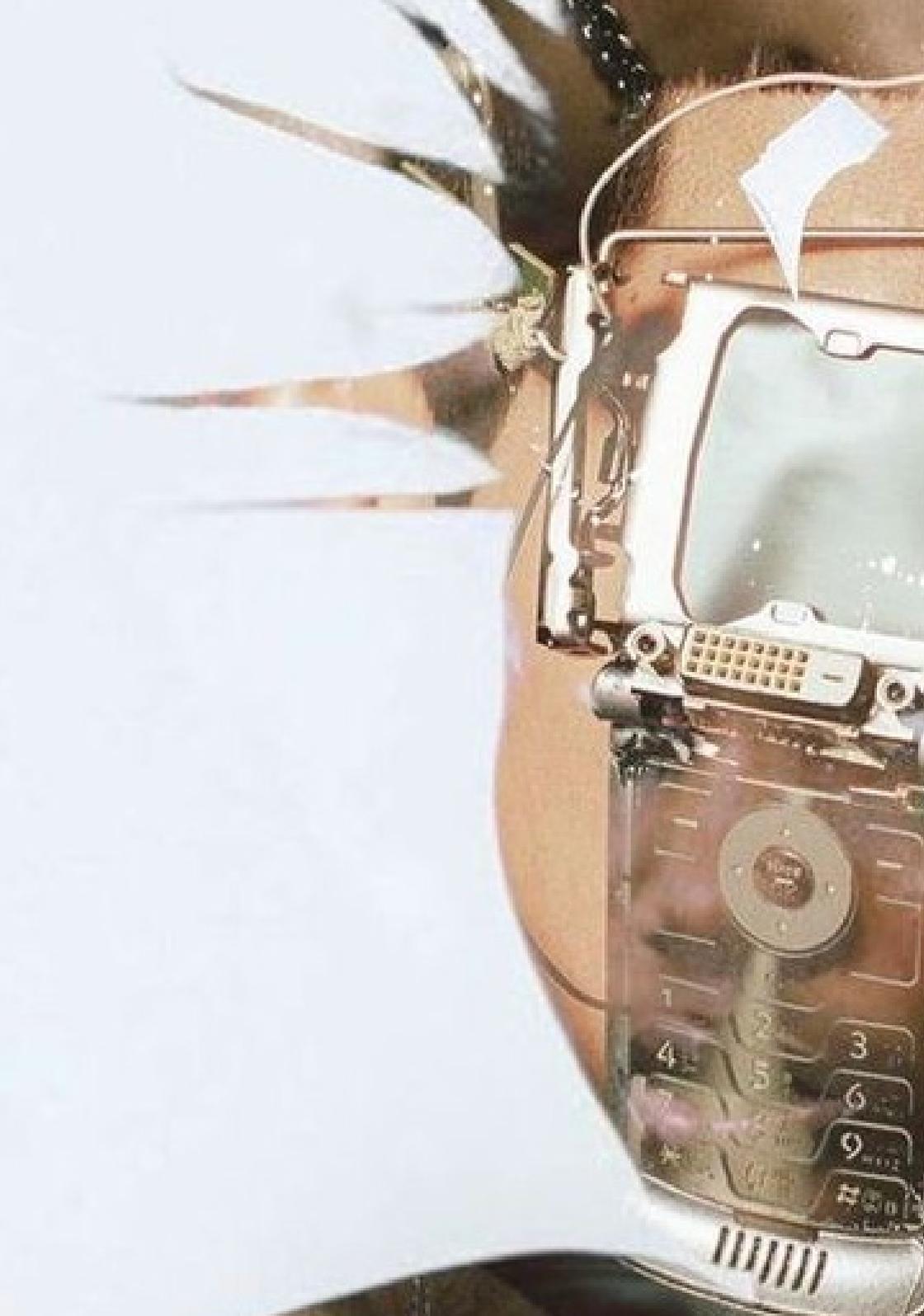
A member of this generation gives his opinion on how he feels about it in a TikTok video that has generated many different reactions. In the video, the young boy explains that Gen Z has problems with social relationships, and that these shortcomings lead to a huge lack of empathy among young people. There is often talk of artificial intelligence or how humans are being replaced by technology. Yet young people seem to be voluntarily dehumanizing themselves. There is such an extreme quest for individuality and well-being that it ends up tarnishing social relationships, physical contact, and closeness between people. With this stay-at-home generation, a kind of loneliness epidemic has emerged. Gen Z is often described as the most lonely and isolated generation to date.

GEN ZZZZ

Is isolation the only
path to a healthy life ?

FOGO & FOBI

Anxious Avoidance

B12

The anxious avoidance section deals with fears and the inability to control them. It includes FOGO and FOBI, which involve a fear of leaving home and socializing. Imagine you are walking down the street and you see someone you know coming towards you. You cross the street or change direction to avoid contact with that person. The goal is to avoid any invitation to participate in a social event, such as, "Oh, it's been a long time since we've seen each other. We should go for a drink together soon." In this situation, we would refer to FOBI, fear of being included. On the other hand, if we go to the extreme, we talk about FOGO, fear of going out. This is a word that is not listed on social media and that we invented ourselves.

It is a term that refers to a person who does not want to leave their home, who cuts off all social contact, not because they enjoy staying at home but because they are afraid to leave it.

FOBI is also a term that was used in the series "Wednesday" by the main character, Wednesday Addams. She rejects anything that resembles: forced sociability, group spirit, the idea of belonging to a social circle. For her, being included in a group means losing her independence.

Anxious Compliance
FOMO, FOBO & MOMO

The section between "anxious" and "opt in" in the diagram is labeled "Anxious Compliance."
This area describes individuals who participate in activities or communities, but their engagement is driven more by underlying anxieties than by free choice or genuine desire.

"Anxious Compliance" is defined by opting in under the influence of worry or uncertainty, rather than personal conviction. The subcategories here Fomo, Fobo, and Momo, each represent unique flavors of anxiety: Momo reflects a subtler form of apprehension. it's not a specific fear of missing out, but a vague sense that something wonderful or important could be happening elsewhere, out of sight or awareness. This uncertainty prompts people to opt in just in case, resulting in engagement stalked by unease and curiosity, rather than excitement.
Imagine scrolling through your social media feed at the evening of Halloween. None of your friends have posted anything lately. You start to feel anxious, wondering if they are doing something fun without you. But you have no evidence or details about what could be happening. This vague sense of unease and curiosity, trying to piece together what you might be excluded from, is a classic case of MOMO.

Overall, "Anxious Compliance" describes a state where people agree to participate more out of anxiety and social pressure than authentic preference, shaped by worries about exclusion or making the wrong choice.

Fobo characterizes the discomfort of making choices due to worries that a superior alternative might exist elsewhere. People with Fobo might join events or commit to decisions not out of enthusiasm, but because they fear that by choosing one option, they could be missing out on something even better. This leads to indecision and less satisfying participation.

It feels like ur
not doing enough
in ur life and just
wasting ur time
sitting in bed.

For example, you want to watch a Halloween Movie cozy at home but you end up scrolling for hours on Netflix, unable to choose a movie because you worry a better film might show up soon. This fear causes you numbness and frustration.

Fomo describes the anxiety that arises when individuals fear they might miss rewarding experiences, opportunities, or connections if they do not take part. Their motivation to opt in often stems from concern about being left out or falling behind what others are experiencing, rather than a true desire for the activity itself.

Imagine all your friends talking and promoting this one Halloween party. Normally you would like to just stay at home with your roomies but all the talking and posting makes you feel excluded and worried that you miss out on a fun and important social event.

In this context the lack of social skills refers to the difficulties many people of the Gen Z face when interacting face-to-face, often resulting from growing up with digital communication as the norm. Also many young people who grew up during the Corona pandemic missed out on chances to learn social skills by interacting one on one with others. Instead of spending time with friends, they mostly connected through screens or social media, which made real-life conversations and reading body language harder. Because physical touch was avoided to stay safe, they didn't get to experience hugs, handshakes, or simple gestures that help people feel close and confident together.

Now, talking with new people and joining groups feels much more challenging for many, since thos ways of connecting weren't practiced enough. This gap can lead to more social anxiety, making it uncomfortable to meet new people or to join inperson events. The cycle of social anxiety gets more intense as avoidance prevents the practice needed to build these skills, leading to further feelings of inadequacy and isolation. Ultimately, lack of social skills nurture anxiety-driven behaviors like anxious compliance and digital reliance, which are now common concerns among Generation Z.

Light shouldn't only come from screens

B14

Conclusion

While writing this paper, we kept asking ourselves: "What will happen now?" "What trends will be triggered, or are there already signs of weak signals?" After further research and discussion, we now present our three slightly exaggerated scenarios.

DEHUMANIZATION
On the 16th of april 2025, the zdfheute
writes about China being on its way of
becoming the hightech superpower.
Obviously we start thinking about the
ultra digitalization, which leads to minimal
social interactions as humans. Advanced
AI, 5G, drones, and robotics could become
dominant forces shaping society, reducing
face to face contact and potentially
handing over critical decisions and power
to machines. This creates a future where
social bonds weaken, and robotic systems
govern many aspects of life, spreading
fears of loss, control and connection in a
hyper-digital world.

SOCIETAL RESISTANCE
In Amsterdam a group of 50 people took over a Metro for a no phone ride, as a gentle protest against the constant scrolling and social isolation in public transports. After we saw this rebellion we started thinking about a complete backlash developing with people rejecting digitalization and social media interactions. Society might witness a strong movement "against the screen", where individuals refuse to participate in online social spaces or digital communication. This digital strike emphasizes the reclamation of face-to-face human connection and mental well-being by severely limiting technology and social media's influence, challenging the omnipresent digital culture.

THOUGHTFUL BALANCE
According to the Institute for Generational Research in Germany, Gen Alpha is the most educated generation, growing up with the newest technology and so far the most wealthy generation the world has ever seen. So here is what we think: Gen Alpha introduces a healthier, more balanced approach to technology and social engagement. Growing up with awareness of both digital benefits and risks, they focus on integrating technology thoughtfully with real-world interaction, emphasizing well-being, intentional connectivity, and sustainable social relations. Their approach suggests a future where digital and physical worlds coexist harmoniously.

Gen Z is the first generation to have grown up with technology. The question we ask ourselves when we look at Gen Alpha is: were we, Gen Z, the trial-and-error generation?

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Quellen

BILDER

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Composite of screenshots from TikTok videos created by multiple authors, on page 12-13:
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FUCK
NORMAL
I WANT
MAGIC

Trends & Identity

&ZINE