THE SCHOLAR

Independent Research by Sixth Form Students

SCROLLING INTO STRESS: HOW 'DOOMSCROLLING' REWIRES THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN

Envision this: it's 2am, your eyes grow weary, a dull ache throbs behind your temples whilst your phone illuminates a ghostly glow. Hours have passed since you swore you would check 'one last thing'.

This is not just a bad habit; it is a behaviour, commonly known in the modern world as "doomscrolling". A perpetual abyss of mindless information that literally rewires your cognitive structure to feeling addicted to these fast dopamine hits that's available at your fingertips. The inability to break away from this recurring cycle in our everyday lives affects us in numerous ways, with that being physical and mental.

The struggle with doomscrolling and rotting our lives away behind a screen is not entirely down to a person's discipline or willpower but rather it's a neuroscience issue. Dopamine is the neurotransmitter in our brain that constantly urges us to return to the compulsive pull of doomscrolling. This brain chemical also plays a vital role in motivation and reward, driving our pursuit to find out and repeat experiences. Humans have always wanted dopamine, anciently only three or four times a day when we found food, water or shelter. Now we are getting up to five hundred times a day from these constant hits which we fuel with each swipe. Neuroscientist, TJ Power, stated that dopamine is addictive because it is pleasurable. "Addiction is the progressive narrowing of things that bring you pleasure" Power remarked when asked if this addiction could feed into smart phone usage. The excessive use of the digital world for mindless scrolling affects our brains gray matter over three key areas: the left insula, the temporal lobe and the hippocampus. Each area is responsible, respectively, for memory, emotional regulation and decision making.

A study was conducted by Powers which illustrated the fact that "areas in the brain are shrinking" putting the colloquialism of "brain-rot" into a concerning new perspective.

His study continued to display the effects of brain rot, also known as cognitive decline, such as the inability to sit without external stimulation, for example eating without watching something. Continuous, compulsive and consumerism of doomscrolling effectively 'hijacks our fundamental brain chemistry'. Having dopamine released in such unnatural and large proportions, after (quite literally) doing nothing, our brains essentially deplete the motivation to do anything but whilst craving more without the ability to act, consequently making us lazier as humans.

While we may believe that sitting on our phones is for relaxation purposes, it is frankly doing the opposite to our bodies. Negative or fast-paced content can release small amount of cortisol, which is our stress hormone. Not enough for our brains to start panic but enough to keep it constantly alert. This can overtime lead to relentlessness or tension.

'The less you stimulate your brain, the happier you seem to become,' says Power. 'It's almost like stimulation is leading us to sadness, and boredom can lead us to happiness.' By understanding the neuroscience behind our digital habits and taking small, intentional steps to change them, we can stop being passive consumers and start living with purpose. Because at 2am, your brain doesn't need another swipe – it needs stillness and a shot at recovery.

Sona Jacob

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"SHOULD GOVERNMENTS PROVIDE A PUBLICLY FUNDED LEGAL SERVICE, FREE AT THE POINT OF USE, IN THE WAY THAT MANY GOVERNMENTS PROVIDE A PUBLICLY FUNDED HEALTH SERVICE?" BY ZOEY LI

Initially, you may think that, yes of course a publicly funded legal service should be at equal access to healthcare. However, I can almost guarantee that after you delve into this question a bit more you may start to realise why this is not the case.

In many ways legal services funded by the public would be beneficial. For example, it would lessen the number of wrongly sentenced civilians annually. For it is estimated that up to 15% of prisoners in the United States of America are wrongly sentenced at any given time. Leaving everything that they know behind, leaves psychological warfare on these innocent people. It sets them back in life greatly, imagine being wrongly sentenced for a decade, away from your family, friends, loved ones, career, and your whole life ahead. The sacrifice that these individuals are forcibly undergoing is simply unjust. Ironic considering that it's named the 'Justice system'.

This fantasy could only derive from countries which already possess publicly funded healthcare, like the NHS in the UK. For majority of the world healthcare is considered a luxury, often impossible to source during their time of need. And in the US, it is often self-funded through insurance.Analysing the NHS, we can almost accurately predict the outcome of developing publicly funded legal services.

Although, the NHS is seen as a service which saves lives and create opportunities for many people through employment. Yet it also proposes strikes at inconvenient times to protest the lack of funding. However, it is clear to the public that the funding from the government is not the issue. The issue is corruption from the system, unorganised distribution of money into the departments, and an unproductive workforce resulting from unrealistic expectations set by those higher up the ladder. The utopia which most counties dream of may not be as good as it seems.

In the UK, the government organises the NHS, yet 12% of people chose to use private healthcare anyway. Why would they do that? Well, the NHS has a major flaw: The wait list. The system naturally supports a never-ending list for patient waiting to receive treatment, but the rate at which the list grows, is far too vast for the staff to catch up to. This fault in the system causes unnecessary deaths of patients who come in with mild symptoms, which progress before they make up the list. Children and those in serious conditions are prioritised to receive the procedure, often leaving middle aged citizens to suffer for longer. This group of people also happen to be the backbone of the country's work force; without them the whole nation would suffer. Although there is criticise towards the NHS, people need to realise how much they have supported the nation,

especially during the recent global pandemic. The general public displayed their gratitude by giving rounds of applause out in the street at set times and drawing rainbows to stick onto their windows, even getting the children involved.

However, if there was a publicly funded legal service, where would we draw the line? Would everyone, no matter the case, receive the best lawyer that was available? Surely you wouldn't feel comfortable offering a murderer and an innocent victim caught up in the crossfire the same equal chances in court. Not to mention how it's fuelled by taxpayers' money.

It's almost definitely going to have a never-ending wait list too. So, when people are awaiting trial do they suffer no consequences? If the wait is so long that they never receive a fair trial, are they just essentially off the hook? That is the one obvious flaw out of the many in offering a funded legal system. However, it may be the case that the top 1% fail to escape jail time by paying their way out of their crimes. In that sense, you could evaluate the system to appear fairer. But still all of these celebrities and entrepreneurs are so wealthy, beyond your comprehension, that they could still run away from their crimes. Leaving the upper class to suffer the most.

Secondly, the term 'legal services' refers to more than just a court representative. Its meanings reach out to supporting those who just need guidance or legal advice for businesses or housing. In the NHS, not every procedure or test is simply available on demand. The ones they offer are the ones that are considered necessities, or ones that would otherwise have a heavy impact on your quality of life. If we had the same process for legal services however, the line may be crossed with ease. As its much more interpretive and often, when emotions become involved, the system could become slightly foggy. This is a for sure way of tempting corruption.

There is legal aid available currently, but only to those in exceptional circumstances. With cutbacks happening, it means that many more families are facing pressure to meet certain criteria. Making it difficult for people to receive legal guidance when they're entitled to it, and it also diminishes the number of clients that lawyers and law firms receive. If you don't have a legal representative with you, you may jeopardize your chances of a fair trail by lack of experience and real-life knowledge of how the court rulings work. This should be considered unfair and harsh on the individual, as they are unable to maximise their chances of a fair trial.

By asserting a more accessible legal system it largely benefits the poor. Lawyers often practise Pro Bono cases, which help ones who are most desperate. However, often lawyers will accept Pro-Bono cases in subjects that they may not specialise in. Although, the help is invaluable, it is a charity. Most are with limited funding, so many must turn away people as they are unable to support more clients. This service is solely reliant on volunteers, so the demand is constantly ahead of the supply. Yet it is still oneof the best chances that the poor can receive genuine legal assistant in courts, that they may otherwise not receive. This gives them the fairest trial that is offered.

In summary, majority of countries are just not in a stage of development where they can enrol a publicly funded legal system correctly. As even the healthcare system is far from perfect. However, there will be a time where this will become reality, and I think that we can learn a lot from the strengths and weaknesses of current healthcare services following this idea.

Zoey Li

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY- FEBRUARY

At the time of writing, the date is February 2nd - the end date for a battle largely forgotten in the western world, the biggest and deadliest battle in all of human history. More books have been written about World War 2 than hours since it ended- and yet, when looking into the Second World War, so much of the entire Eastern Front- the deadliest and largest front of warfare humanity has ever fought across- is so often forgotten in the pages of the Second World War. It is the biggest war that has ever been fought- and it can be argued the only one ever with the balance of power over the entire world in contention. However, the biggest and deadliest theatre is almost always overlooked in the western world. This can be partially attributed towards the efforts of the West to downplay the effects of the Soviet Union in the growing Cold War in the late 40s and 50s but even now, 80 years on, the general knowledge about the Eastern Front of WWII is still incredibly meagre.



Between 1941 and 1945, the Eastern Front played host to the largest invasion in human history. Approximately 3.4 million German troops, supported by 3,000 tanks and 700,000 allied soldiers from nations like Italy, Romania, and Finland, surged across the Soviet border. This massive offensive shattered the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and ignited a brutal four-year ideological struggle between Fascism and Communism. During this conflict, the world witnessed its largest battles and most significant tank engagements, with over 80% of all World War II combat occurring on thus front. The scale of the carnage was staggering; for every German soldier who perished fighting Britain and the United States in the West, roughly five fell in the East.

Man and Machinery:

T-34:

One of the most iconic and most produced tanks in history, with 85,000 units made. It proved to be notoriously unreliable, but its gun and sloped armour, as well as its incredible ease to manufacture- tested German tanks in the first year of the invasion, leading to the development of the Panzer V and Panzer VI.

Friedrich Paulus:

Field Marshal of the German 6th Army in Stalingrad. He oversaw the catastrophic campaign in the Caucasus that led to one of the heaviest defeats in the Second World War.

Leon Widell

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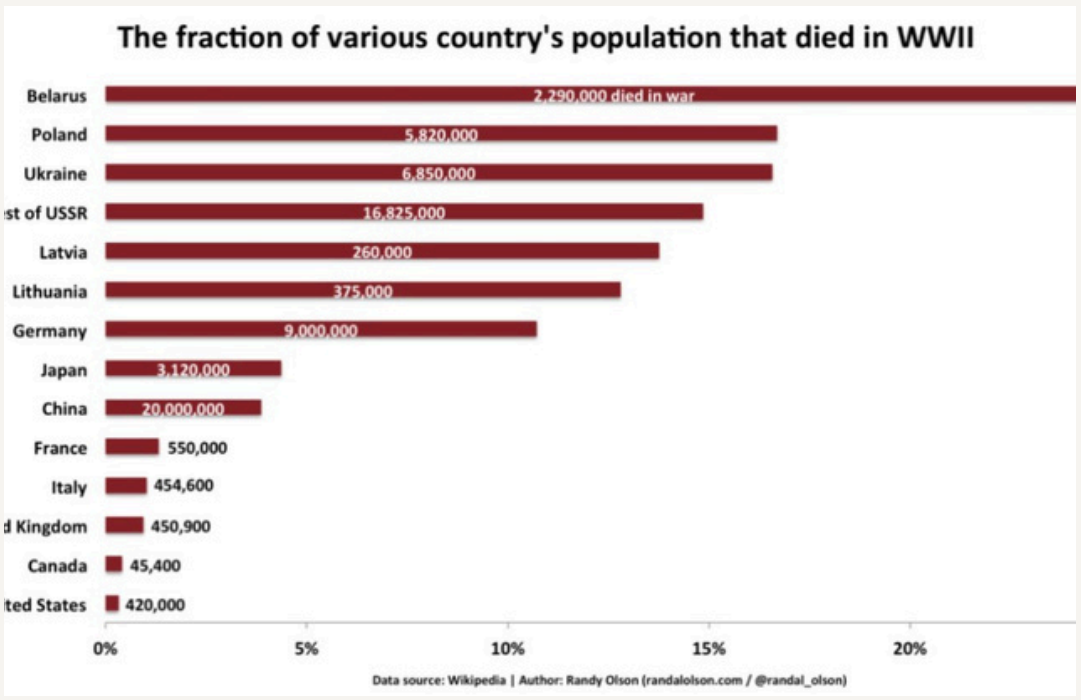
Georgy Zhukov:
Commander in Chief for all Soviet forces across the Eastern Front, and possibly one of the most competent generals of the war. He masterminded the defence of Moscow in 1941, and despite highly controversial human wave tactics, became Marshal of all Soviet armed forces in the years after the war. After he died, he was buried in a grave next to where Stalin lies today.

The fighting on the Eastern Front was the more ferocious and extreme scene across almost any modern war- temperatures that plummeted to -30 degrees in the freezing Russian winter in the north, torrential autumn rains known as Rasputitsa, and scorching summer temperatures.

The toll:
Germany and its armed forces, the Wehrmacht, would lose over 80 per cent of its personnel in the eastern theatre of war- more than 4 million on the Axis side. One quarter of all casualties happened at just one battle- Stralingrad. Out of more than 91, 000 troops taken in captivity following the battle, only 6,000 would ever survive to return to Germany at the war's end.



The Soviet Union, and all its republics, would rack up the highest death toll of any country in the war, both in civilian casualties and in military ones- with both counts totalling about 10 million in deaths in 4 years of fighting- a loss of life so extreme the impact of the war can still be seen on Russian demographics today- more than 80 years down the line, with a whole generation of people lost in the fighting, and more than 15 per cent of the people who had started out in 1941 lying, stretched out across the vast plains of Ukraine, Belorussia, the Caucasian mountains, the Baltic countries, and, finally, in the German and Polish plains in the final few years of the war.



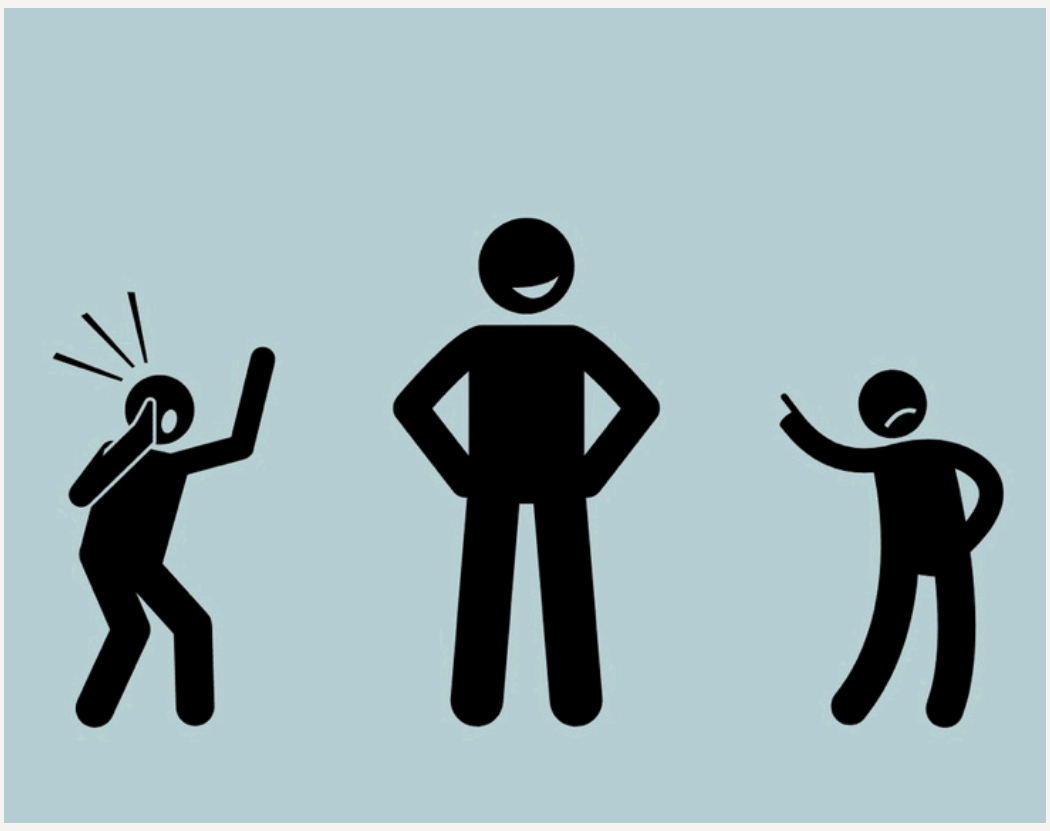
Leon Widell

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WHY DO WE CARE SO MUCH ABOUT WHAT OTHERS THINK?

Humans are social creatures and care deeply about what others think because our brains have evolved to depend on social groups for survival. Going back to our ancestral roots, early humans who were accepted by their group were more likely to find food and stay safe, whilst rejection increased the risk of danger and isolation. Because of this, the human brain developed systems that strongly respond to social approval and rejection.

During adolescence and teenage years, feelings of embarrassment, judgement or rejection can become powerful. Sensitivity to others' opinions increases due to brain development. The limbic system, which controls emotions and rewards, develops earlier than the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for logical thinking and emotional regulation.



This imbalance between development makes teenagers more emotionally responsive to what people around them say and become more aware of social judgments. As a result, young people are more likely to experience something known as the 'spotlight effect' where they overestimate how much others notice their appearance or behaviour.

Modern environments, especially social media strengthen this emotional response and through likes, comments and notifications the brains reward systems activates and released an excess amount of dopamine, thus reinforcing the desire for social approval. While caring about others' opinions may reflect positively and help maintain social relationships, excessive concern may increase anxiety and reduce self-confidence. Understanding the psychological and biological reasons behind this behaviour can help individuals grasp the understanding on social pressure and develop a healthier sense of social awareness

Pelham Aldrich

HOW MAGAZINES SHAPED THE WORLD OF FEMINISM

Magazines have been around starting from the late 18thcentury, yet its relevance and popularity spiked over the mid 19th century. Magazines were one of the mass forms of informative education, providing people with a form of entertainment while still embedding key skills that improvedoverall literacy. Many magazines were centred around women, especially through the popularisation of fashion magazines like 'Vogue', 'Harper's Bazaar and 'Elle' which established a new gateway for working class women. Although magazines, especially those as infamous as Vogue, were considered a luxury (as they were only applicable to upper class women). And so, Vogue began shifting their target audience towards those of the working class and began focussing on their social and fashion needs by demonstratingcheatsheets for working class women living in post-war Britain. These women were often desensitised to their daily life and simply being given sewing tips or advice on makeup, beauty and fashion offered these women inspiration for self-improvement and essentially pushed towards modern femininity. These magazines would unfold ways to, quote Vogue, 'make and do' with their old clothes, helping women align with the clothing shortages that were caused by the economic hardships after the war.

As society progressed, so did Vogue. And Vogue did it swiftly. Moving into the 1960s, women were now (subtly yet effectively) affecting the political and social realms of the country and suddenly women no longer wanted to be moulded into their tight-fitting skirts, conservative attires, and dull colours of grey and navy. Instead, women were opting for bold, bright colours, shades of orange and blue now being shone out like never before; the introduction of the mini skirtshighlighting this newfound fashion freedom that was previously never allowed. Vogue acknowledged, embraced,and implemented these contemporary trends into their magazines and merged the cultural shift by changing their fashion layout and branding to match the ideas of the new culture. They even added even more revolutionary features byadopting celebrity and fashion icons, like Jane Birkin and Brigitte Bardot, to Vogue which just encouraged the female empowerment movement. The new wave of feminism seen in magazines was incredibly significant to the way in which women viewed themselves in a male-dominated society.

Now, nearly 70 years later, Vogue has become the most iconic magazine of its time. It redefined what it meant to be a woman and decades later it remains a symbol of female empowerment and the pursuit of social equality.



Sophie Chukwu

THE EFFECTS PARENTING HAS ON CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Negative parenting can have profound and long-lasting effects on a child's emotional, social, and psychological development. When children are exposed to harsh discipline, unpredictable rules, or a lack of emotional support, they may feel unsafe or unimportant. Over time, they can internalise feelings of inadequacy, struggle with self-esteem, and develop behavioural problems. For example, a child whose parents frequently criticise or punish them without explanation may begin to believe they are incapable of doing anything right, which can reduce motivation and willingness to try new activities. Negative parenting can also affect social development: children may struggle to trust others, form friendships, or manage conflict effectively. Additionally, inconsistent or emotionally distant parenting can contribute to the development of stress, anxiety, or depressive tendencies as children grow older, showing how critical stable and supportive caregiving is to long-term mental health.

Authoritarian parenting is characterised by strict rules, high expectations, and low emotional warmth, with obedience valued above understanding or emotional connection. Children raised in these environments are often expected to follow instructions without questioning or expressing their feelings. This can suppress independence, emotional expression, and creativity. Constant pressure to meet expectations may create fear of failure, anxiety and reduced self-confidence. For example, a child who is punished for making small mistakes at school may become reluctant to participate in activities, withdraw socially, or develop perfectionist tendencies. Authoritarian parenting can also affect relationships later in life, individuals may struggle to assert themselves, express opinions, or cope with criticism, highlighting the importance of balancing discipline with emotional support. Hitler's authoritarian upbringing may have sparked rebellion not through open defiance, but through a warped rejection of his father's control that later emerged as ideological extremism. Under Alois Hitler's harsh discipline and physical punishment, young Adolf learned that obedience brought humiliation and that power belonged to those who dominated others. Unable to rebel openly, he internalised resentment while absorbing the very values he came to resent. This suppressed rebellion later resurfaced as a drive to destroy weakness and impose absolute control, first in his personal worldview and eventually in politics. Fascism allowed Hitler to convert private rebellion into public domination, replacing the powerless child with the figure of the all-powerful leader.

Stress in childhood is heavily influenced by the quality of parenting a child receives. Parenting that involves excessive control, criticism or inconsistency can create an environment of ongoing tension, leading to prolonged activation of the child's stress response. Chronic stress can interfere with concentration, memory, learning and emotional regulation, making it harder for children to perform academically or socially. For instance, a child who fears punishment for minor mistakes may constantly feel anxious, which can affect sleep, appetite and overall health. Stressful parenting experiences can also teach children maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance or aggression, which may continue into adolescence. Addressing stress through supportive parenting is therefore crucial for healthy development and emotional resilience.
Neglect occurs when a child's emotional or physical needs are consistently unmet, even if basic care is provided. Emotional neglect, such as ignoring a child's feelings or failing to provide attention and reassurance, can be

particularly damaging. Bowlby (1958, 1969) highlighted the importance of early emotional care in forming secure attachments, showing that children need consistent, loving caregivers to develop emotional security. This idea is supported by Harry Harlow's experiments with rhesus monkeys. In 1958, Harry Harlow conducted experiments with infant rhesus monkeys to investigate the importance of emotional care in development. He separated the monkeys from their mothers and provided them with two artificial "mothers": one made of wire that provided milk, and one made of soft cloth that offered comfort but no food. Harlow found that the monkeys overwhelmingly preferred the soft cloth mother, spending most of their time clinging to it, even when the wire mother provided nourishment. This demonstrated that comfort and emotional security were more important to the infants than basic physical needs, highlighting the critical role of emotional care and attachment in healthy development. Harlow's work showed that comfort, not just basic provision, is essential for healthy emotional development. Children who experience neglect may develop insecure or disorganised attachments, struggle with trust and self-esteem, and have difficulty forming healthy relationships later in life. Long-term effects can include emotional withdrawal, social difficulties, and increased vulnerability to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. This research underscores the critical importance of consistent emotional care in early childhood.

Depression in childhood often emerges in response to a lack of consistent support, criticism, or emotional unavailability from parents. Children who grow up in environments where they feel misunderstood or undervalued may internalise negative self-beliefs, leading to low mood, withdrawal, and decreased motivation. Over time, these patterns can contribute to more severe depressive symptoms. For example, a child whose parents rarely acknowledge achievements or respond only to mistakes may begin to see themselves as incapable or unworthy. These experiences can also affect social development, as children may avoid friendships or struggle with confidence in group settings. Understanding how early parental influence contributes to depression is essential for promoting mental health and providing early intervention strategies.

High ego development can occur when parenting focuses excessively on praise without teaching accountability or limits. Children who are consistently told they are exceptional without realistic guidance may develop inflated self-views, struggle with empathy, and become frustrated when facing failure. For example, a child who receives constant reinforcement for achievements but little guidance on handling mistakes may become entitled or overconfident, leading to difficulties in peer relationships or collaborative environments. Early caregiving experiences shape children's internal working models of themselves and others, influencing how they perceive competence, fairness, and social interactions. Balanced collaborative environments. Caregiving experiences shape children's internal working models of themselves and others, influencing how they perceive competence, fairness, and social interactions. Balanced parenting that combines encouragement with realistic feedback is therefore critical for emotional and social maturity.

WHY DO LANGUAGES DIE OUT?

There are more than 7000 known living languages spoken in the world today, with roughly 44% of languages currently at the risk of disappearing. Whilst the number of people speaking English and Mandarin is continuing to grow, languages such as Bolo, spoken in Angola and Kuay in Cambodia is at a severe risk of dying out. Today, dozens of languages only have one or two remaining speakers, and when they die, the language will too. But what is language death and how does it occur?

In linguistics, a language death occurs when a language loses its last native speaker. In the modern period, language death has generally resulted from the process of cultural assimilation leading to language shift and the gradual abandonment of a native language in favour of a foreign lingua franca. Languages have faded out for many reasons, too many to discuss in this article, but there are a few common reasons we will discuss.

Language death via transformation occurs when a language does not suddenly die out but rather gradually evolves or morphs into a new, distinct language, leaving the old form with no native speakers. A key example of this is Ancient Greek which went through a series of changes that make modern Greek look and sounds significantly different. In fact some languages, such as Latin, didn't die because all of its speakers did, it just gradually evolved.

Some languages die because of genocide. Language genocide is the systematic, often forced, destruction of a language, it is typically associated with eradicating a groups identity. This can happen when governments prohibit the use of minority languages in the public sphere, schools and media in order to promote a national culture. This systematic eradication often goes hand in hand with wider cultural genocide. A historical example of language genocide is the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire, which involved the destruction of indigenous knowledge, languages and cultural practices.

The final key cause of language death is absorption. Language absorption occurs when a community gradually shifts from, their native tongue to a more dominant, prestigious, or economically advantageous language. The speakers assimilate with a larger group that's geographically close, that language then becomes their dominant langue instead of their own. A relevant example is the Yupik Eskimos' language, which is endangered today because Yupik children began learning English and are using it more than their native language.

Language death is a significant issue facing the modern world, as the loss of language affects everyone, not just its native speakers. The loss of these languages effects our understanding of the worlds history, diversity and culture. The death of a language so often leads to the death of traditions and cultural practices that have been around for hundreds of years. The Endangered Languages Project is a collaborative online platform and non-profit organisation dedicated to documenting and revitalising endangered languages worldwide. It is already too late for hundreds of languages to be revived, but with the right support and focus, many can. It's important that research and materials are put towards aiding linguists in doing so

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If you would like to submit an article for the
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