

# **CANCEL CULTURE'S EVOLUTION.**

Investigating the evolution of Cancel Culture and the impact it has on Society.

by  
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# **Abstract.**

The purpose of this paper is to research the evolution of Cancel Culture alongside providing examples of Cancel Culture up to 2020 and the understanding Generations Z, X and Baby Boomers have of the term. Furthermore, it will look at the input Social Media has in Cancel Culture and what the future of Cancel Culture could be. Finally, the paper will give future recommendations to those who wish to conduct research into Cancel Culture in future.

When conducting the research, both Primary and Secondary research methods were used. Journals, Books, Studies and Online articles were used to research the worldly perspective on Cancel Culture along with where it began and how it has affected people and brands. Individual, anonymous interviews with six people from three generations were used to gain understanding of the term from each and detect similarities and differences in opinion on the topic. Online and Social Media surveys were conducted to gain a wider scope of opinion. Industry questionnaires were sent to those from Social Media sites Facebook and Instagram in addition to Mental Health professionals to obtain an outside standpoint on Cancel Culture.

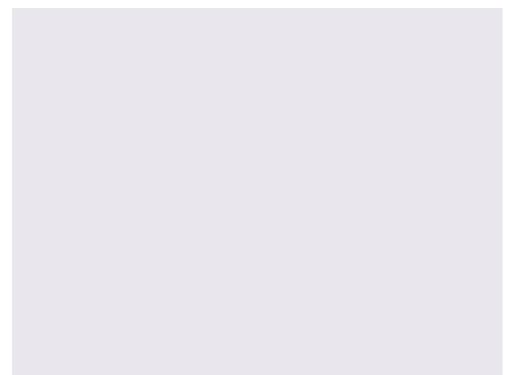
Both the Secondary and Primary research show that although cancelling only became mainstream in 2017 due to the #MeToo movement, the act of Cancelling an individual has been used since before Christ with the death of Socrates. Social Media has played an important part in the rapid rise in Cancel Culture since 2013 with the use of negative hashtags and lack of mental health support from the sites themselves. Furthermore, the understanding that each Generation has about Cancel Culture can affect their views on the subject, possibly due to their different values and beliefs. Finally, Cancel Culture seems to be in decline with the law changing to eradicate online bullying and the release of 5 books against Cancel Culture in 2020.

# **Acknowledgements.**

I would firstly like to thank every educator who has taught me, inspired me and guided me throughout my education which without them I would not have reached this point.

Secondly, my family, who may not have understood the information, but understood the importance and passion I felt whilst writing. Without their moral support I never would have achieved what I have.

Last but not least, my friends, who helped me through the sleepless nights, early mornings and coffee runs I shall be forever grateful for.



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**Table 1. Secondary research methods explained.**

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Podcasts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aided the investigation into the effects of CC on the individual.</li> <li>- Qualitative research on the factors which are influencing CC in 2020.</li> <li>- Both podcasts gave perspective from those who had been cancelled themselves.</li> <li>- 'No Kids Allowed' by the Saccone-Joly's gave their insight into CC and how it has changed within the last 10 years and their experience of being cancelled. (YouTube, 2020)</li> <li>- Podcast 'John Solomon Reports' interviewing Alan Dershowitz and his opinion on CC including more context to his book 'Cancel Culture' released in November 2020. (Solomon, J, 2020)</li> </ul>
Research articles & Journals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provided evidence into both individual and generational views on Mental Health and the effect CC can have on those who have been cancelled and participated in Cancelling.</li> <li>- Included both Qualitative and Quantitative data.</li> <li>-The National library of Medicine study 'Self-Harm, Suicidal Behaviours, and Cyberbullying in Children and Young People: Systematic Review' gave insight into cyberbullying effects including self-harm and suicide. (National Library of Medicine, 2018)</li> <li>- A study into Suicide Trajectories by the National library of Psychiatry stated that suicide could be caused by internal influences such as mental health issues not just external like CC. (Ségiun, M et al, 2014)</li> </ul>
Debate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Helped to gain four different perspectives on CC.</li> <li>- Qualitative data.</li> <li>- Intelligence Squared debate on CC provided insight on arguments for and against CC by academic professionals including cancelling free speech and examples of CC in recent history. (Intelligence Squared, 2020)</li> </ul>
Books.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Helped to gain qualitative information which may not be online.</li> <li>- 'Cancel Culture' by Alan Dershowitz, a lawyer, writing on CC and the idea that is it cancelling free speech from a Baby Boomer perspective. (Der-showitz, A, 2020)</li> <li>- 'Inside YouTube Cancel Culture' by Chris Boutte focusing on a first-person perspective of CC and how it can affect those who are. (Boutte, C, 2019)</li> <li>- Books on research methods such as 'Social groups for the social science researcher' helped the researcher to know what Primary data to not use.</li> </ul>
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Limitations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Only included the information which the author/presenter wanted to give.</li> <li>- Secondary data usually only includes opinionated data, can be bias as written one from point of view.</li> <li>- Time constraints on the debate.</li> <li>- Podcast topics are only seen by the interviewee's point of view.</li> <li>- Books can often contain out of date information, searching for the latest edition can take time.</li> </ul>

Table 2. Primary research methods explained.

Primary research method.	Example.
One to one interviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Semi-structured over the telephone.</li> <li>- 2 participants from each Gen Z, X and Baby boomers.</li> <li>- Conducted during October and November 2020.</li> <li>- Lasted 20 minutes on average.</li> <li>- Consent forms signed prior to interview. (Blank example shown in Appendix II).</li> <li>- Participants were contacted online and made aware of anonymity and pseudonym use.</li> <li>- Discussion surrounded their personal view on CC, their knowledge of people or brands who have been cancelled along with the responsibility of Social Media.</li> <li>- Included probes and prompts such as the definition of CC which were anticipated before the interviews as per advice from the book 'Interviews in qualitative research'. (King, N and Harrocks, C, 2010)</li> <li>-The interviews were transcribed to be appropriately analysed and resulted in forty pages.</li> </ul>
Online survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anonymous.</li> <li>- Twelve questions.</li> <li>- Used to uncover the reasons behind CC, the generations which are willing to cancel and who each understood to be cancelled.</li> <li>- Questions were shared on the researcher's Instagram which aimed to receive a larger sample size than the interviews.</li> <li>- Gen X and Z responded.</li> <li>- 50 responses were collected from October to November 2020 from both males and females aged 18-70.</li> <li>- The survey used both open and closed ended questions resulting in qualitative data which is referenced throughout the study.</li> </ul>
Social media survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sent out on the researchers Instagram in November 2020.</li> <li>- Answers from Gen Z and X who follow the researcher.</li> <li>- 56 responses were collected after a 24-hour period.</li> <li>- Results were purely quantitative.</li> <li>- Helped to gain an understanding of the opinion on the effect of CC and mental health.</li> </ul>
Industry Questionnaire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Email interviews.</li> <li>- Marketing manager for Facebook and Instagram and found through LinkedIn.</li> <li>- 3 Mental Health Specialists.</li> <li>- Took place over email due to location and health limitations.</li> <li>- Helped to gain an educated view on CC.</li> </ul>
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Limitations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Only four industry professionals were interviewed, and due response could not be asked or expanded on.</li> <li>- Social Media and online survey results were anonymous meaning they could not be asked.</li> <li>- Social Media survey answers being quantitative prevented in depth analysis.</li> <li>- COVID-19 restrictions prevented focus groups being used.</li> </ul>

Table 3. Values and needs of Generation Z.

Name	Generation Z.
Age range.	1995 - 2010.
Education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cross Curricular learning between subjects is common, such as history and social science. (eSchool, 2020)</li> <li>- Gen Z have had two school leaving ages, they could leave at age 16 until 2015 when the age was raised to 18. (Study, N/A).</li> </ul>
Values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gen Z are on track to becoming the most diverse, accepting and educated generation to date. (Pew Research Center, 2018)</li> <li>- In 2018, Gen Z voted climate change, racism and economic inequality as their most important issues to face; with 66% of them voting that they 'totally disapprove' of Donald Trump. (Politico, 2020)</li> <li>- Exit polls suggest that 65% of those between 18-24 voted for Joe Biden, a Democrat. (CNBC, 2020)</li> <li>- 74% believe in Equality for Transgender rights. (WGSN, 2015)</li> <li>- 73% of Gen Z favour brands who speak out against Racism compared to just 39% of those in Gen X and Baby Boomers, (Stylus,2020)</li> <li>- Gen Z are the most racially diverse generation yet. (NPR, 2018)</li> </ul>
Social media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gen Z use social media as their main form of interaction, they are the first 'truly digital generation'. (Business Insider, 2020).</li> <li>- In 2019, Gen Z spent 7hours per day using social media, 3 of those exclusive to social media. (Vogue Business, 2020)</li> </ul>
Where they experience CC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Instagram. Or Tiktok."</li> <li>- "I've only ever seen it occur on social media."</li> </ul>



Table 4. Values and needs of Generation X.

Name	Generation X.
Age range.	1965 - 1980.
Education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early Gen X were not raised with technology in the classroom, however during the mid 1990's Microsoft became available to education. (Smith, B, 2015)</li> <li>- University was not an aspiration many students had and was seen as a 'passport to a well paid job'. (Curriculo Solutions, 2017)</li> <li>- In 1964, Parliament raised the school leaving age to 17. (Study, N/A)</li> </ul>
Values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Name taken from the book 'Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated culture' in 1991. (Douglas, C, 1991).</li> <li>- Gen X grew up with higher rates of divorced parents or both working parents, leaving them as the generation with a lack of parental guidance. (Business Insider, 2020)</li> <li>- Gen X are the most worried about Climate Change, with 75% of them believing in the subject compared to a 71% national average, alongside 25% of Gen Z worried about it compared to 20% of Baby Boomers. (Kuppa, S, 2018)</li> </ul>
Social media.	- The last generation before social media took off, in 2018 they spent on average 2 hours per day on social media and had 7 different social media sites compared to 9 in Gen Z. (Weforum, 2019).
Where they experience CC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "On social media!"</li> <li>- "More mainstream I'm not a big social media person."</li> </ul>

Table 5. Values and needs of Baby Boomers.

Name	Baby Boomer
Age range.	1944 – 1964.
Education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education Act was created in 1944 meaning free education was offered to all, and schools must offer free meals and milk to children who previously would have left for work. The act also raised the school leaving age to 15. (Centre for Social Investigation, 2016)</li> <li>- Only 44% of Baby boomers attended University in America shown in a study by the U.S Bureau of Labour Statistics. (U.S Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2019)</li> </ul>
Values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most conservative of the 3 Generations, being raised under Margaret Thatcher reign as Prime Minister. Baby boomer's net household worth is 17 times that of Millennials. (Financial Times, 2018)</li> <li>- £78 thousand more financially stable than those 20 years ago were at their age. (Mail Online, 2019).</li> <li>- Baby Boomers are the most disconnected to social issues, for example not realising that half of the National Trust properties, which memberships require 60 year of age or up, were built using Slaves. (Independent, 2013)</li> </ul>
Social media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 86% of Baby Boomers use Social Media Daily, and they use Facebook the most. (The Manifest, 2019).</li> <li>- Baby boomers use Social Media as an extension of their previous interactions, with 52% of Baby boomers posting their images on social media, whereas they would send a letter previously. (The Manifest, 2019)</li> </ul>
Where they experience CC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "You see it in the press, you'll see it on Facebook mainly it's happening in universities."</li> <li>- "Mostly social media."</li> </ul>



Table 6. Themes which have risen from Primary and Secondary research.

Theme.	Evidence.
Entertainment Industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gen Z named all Entertainment examples of people cancelled.</li> <li>- James Charles, Jeffree Star and Logan Paul are influencers.</li> <li>- Caroline Flack and Taio Cruz are within TV and Music.</li> <li>- All have received their own 'isoverparty' hashtag on Twitter.</li> <li>- All have removed themselves from social media at one time.</li> </ul>
Multiple Industries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gerald Ratner, CEO of a high street business.</li> <li>- Jordan Peterson, Canadian professor.</li> <li>- Camilla Parker-Bowles, the Duchess of Cornwall.</li> <li>- Online Survey answers from Gen Z all within the Entertainment industry.</li> <li>- Answers from Baby Boomers from varied industries.</li> <li>- E.G 'Jeffree Star and Jake Paul' answer aged 18-20.</li> <li>- E.G 'Edward Colston due to Slave Trade' from age 61 -70. (Duval, G, 2020)</li> </ul>
Platforms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gen Z use 'Citizen Journalism' which allows them to cancel people themselves.</li> <li>- Gen X and Baby boomers were made aware of those cancelled through news outlets.</li> <li>- Pre 2013 newspapers or television interviews cancelled people.</li> <li>- Post 2013 Social Media cancels most people or brands.</li> </ul>
Movements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Baby Boomers walking with Martin Luther King,(Insider, 2020)</li> <li>- Generation X demonstrating against the Berlin Wall, (DW, 2019)</li> <li>- Generation Z protesting for Black Lives.</li> <li>- Gen Z becoming an Activist Generation. (The Guardian, 2020)</li> <li>- Gen Z are the most vocal generation on CC according to Olivia Johnson. (Duval, G, 2020)</li> </ul>

Table 7. Individuals or Brands who have been cancelled from 2010 -2020.

Individual / Brand.	Cancellation period.	Reason for cancellation.	Repercussion.
Jk Rowling.	2019 - Present.	Transphobic comments.	Books burnt, loss of fanbase, celebrity comments against her.
Kate Moss.	2010 - 2011.	Drug use.	Lost multiple job campaigns.
Glossier.	2020 – Present.	Racial discrimination against employees.	Loss of customers, Instagram account 'OuttatheGloss' created by former employees to boycott the brand.
Donald Trump.	2016 - Present.	Racism, Dangerous/ Misleading comments on Climate change, societal issues and more.	Loss of customers.
Brandy Melville.	2019 - Present.	Racism, classism, misogyny, fake news, bullying, cyberbullying.	Loss of customers.
Jeffree Star.	2020 - Present.	Triggering videos, pro-life comments, homophobic comments.	Loss of fanbase, dropped from Morphe brand deal.
Logan Paul.	2017 - Present.	Triggering videos, pro-life comments, homophobic comments.	Loss of revenue for Youtube videos. Removal of videos from You tube.
Kevin Hart.	2019 - 2019.	Homophobic tweets.	Removal from hosting the Oscars.
James Charles.	2019 - 2020.	Paedophilia, gaslighting, emotional abuse.	2.5 million fanbase fall, brand deal losses, influencer comments against him.
Stephanie Yeboah.	2020 - 2020.	Anti-Semitic comments.	Loss of contributing role to Grazia magazine.

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- Figure 4. A YouTube comment on Logan Paul's YouTube channel to show how his comments are still cancelling him in 2020. 51.
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# Glossary.

Cancel Culture: A social climate in which a person, organisation, etc is likely to be ostracised in response to a perceived wrongdoing.

Cancelled: The act of boycotting, removing or denying a person, brand or groups work.

Citizen Journalism: The activity of recording or writing about news stories when this is done by ordinary people rather than by trained reporters.

Content Creator / Influencer: People who have built a reputation for their knowledge and expertise on a specific topic. They make regular posts about that topic on their preferred Social Media channels and generate large followings of enthusiastic, engaged people who pay close attention to their views.

Social Media: Websites and applications which enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.



IS THIS

GOOD

FOR

ME?

Image 1.

**“As the years have progressed, the level of cancelling has gotten dirtier.”**

**“One million percent.”**

**- No Kids Allowed, 2020**



# Introduction.

Cancel Culture, (CC) was named one of Oxford Dictionary's words of the year in 2020. (Oxford Languages, 2020) Yet looking back just 10 Years ago there was no defining term for a publicly condemned brand, individual, or group however since the #MeToo movement in 2017 outed Harvey Weinstein for sexual harassment, the term CC has risen. (BBC, 2020) Lisa Nakamura defines CC as '*A Cultural boycott; an agreement not to amplify, signal-boost or give money to the person who's been cancelled.*' (Bromwich, J, (2020). The Black lives matter movement is what sparked the investigation into CC for the researcher. Following this, collection of Primary and Secondary data such as Interviews, Surveys, Studies and News Articles were used to delve deeper into CC. The four chapters of this paper will discuss: the evolution of CC, Social Media's input, the knowledge of CC across generations, the effect being cancelled has along with what the future of what CC may look like. The conclusion will summarise and discuss what was found within the chapters. The paper will also provide recommendations for those who are researching CC in the future.

## **Rationale.**

After the researcher graduates, they wish to start up their own online magazine targeted towards Gen Z females. Important movements from summer 2020 such as Black Lives Matter is an example of a topic which the researcher wishes to cover within this magazine. This is due to current online magazines such as Sheerluxe having a large negative response and subsequent cancellation from a portion of their readers due to their response to the movement. Furthermore, the term CC is relatively new; the researcher is interested in knowing through research the origins and what the future could be. The researcher believes that covering important topics which were once seen as taboo to speak on an accessible platform is important. For too long the younger generations have gone uneducated which leads to Social Media becoming a toxic environment as there is often no research behind the content uploaded.





## **Aim.**



To investigate the evolution of Cancel Culture and what the future could be.

## **Objectives.**

1. To investigate the evolution of Cancel Culture.
2. To evaluate Social Media's input in Cancel Culture and develop changes which could lower it.
3. To research the understanding that different generations have about cancel culture.
4. To identify which notable individuals or brands have been cancelled and the effect it has had on them.
5. To explore the future of Cancel Culture.



## **Methodology.**



This study focused on CC, researching the history of CC along with more recent examples of cancelled brands/individuals along with who was cancelling them. Within this study both Primary and Secondary Research was used to dive deep into when, how and who was being cancelled. Before conducting Primary research, the participant was made aware of the research aim and objectives and consent forms were completed exemplified in the Appendix.

Table 1. Secondary research methods explained.

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Podcasts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aided the investigation into the effects of CC on the individual.</li> <li>- Qualitative research on the factors which are influencing CC in 2020.</li> <li>- Both podcasts gave perspective from those who had been cancelled themselves.</li> <li>- 'No Kids Allowed' by the Saccone-Joly's gave their insight into CC and how it has changed within the last 10 years and their experience of being cancelled. (YouTube, 2020)</li> <li>- Podcast 'John Solomon Reports' interviewing Alan Dershowitz and his opinion on CC including more context to his book 'Cancel Culture' released in November 2020. (Solomon, J, 2020)</li> </ul>
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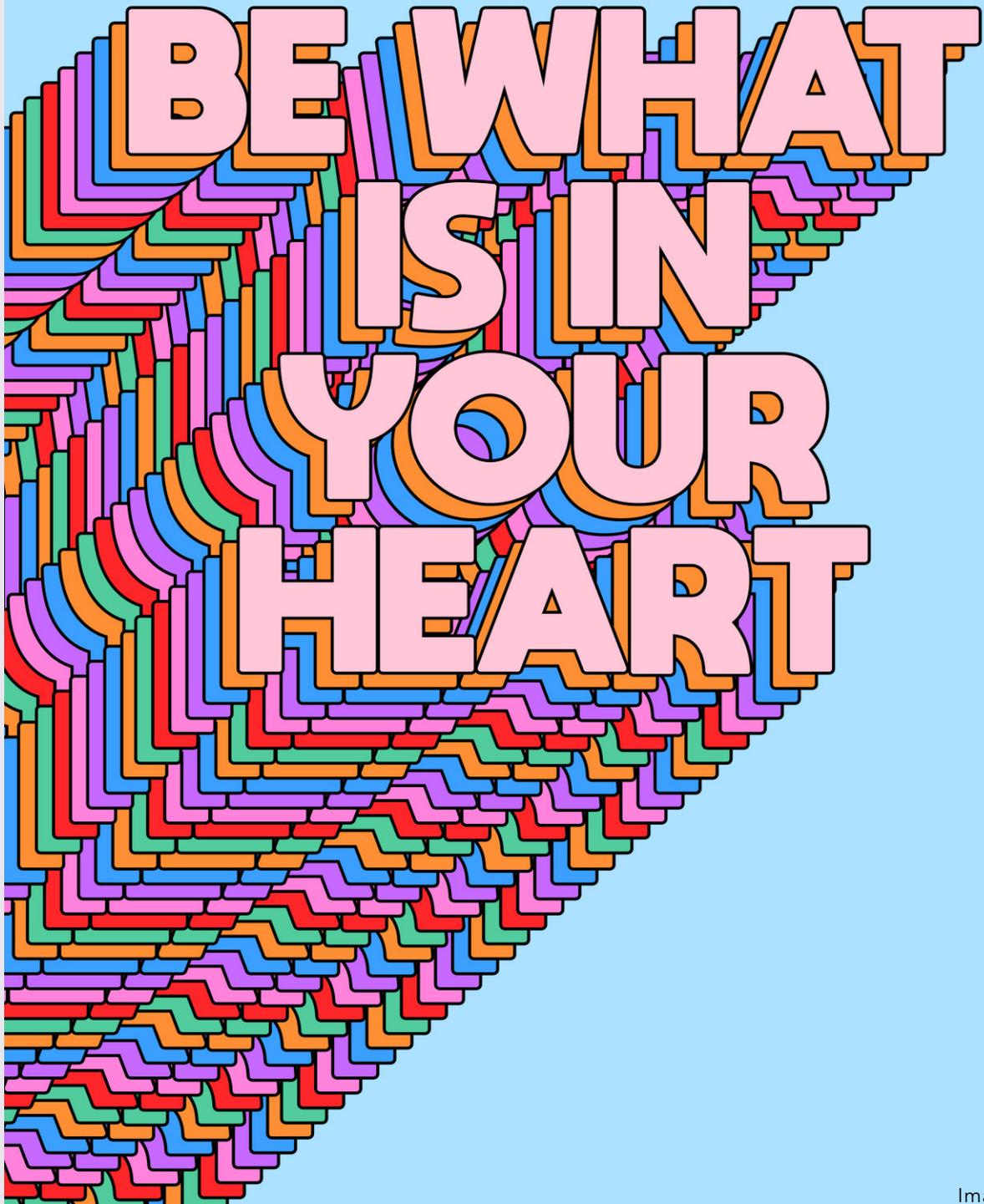


Image 2.

**“ You’re cancelled to me”**

**- Levi, 2020.**



# **CHAPTER ONE.**

# **Chapter One. The evolution of Cancel Culture.**

CC has always been present in society even if it was not given that label. Throughout history, brands or individuals have been cancelled due to a majority's offence to their actions. This chapter will focus on the origins of CC, the first individuals to be cancelled and the effects it has in 2020.



## 1.1 The origins of Cancel Culture to 2020.

CC dates back to before Christ. One of the first examples is Socrates who was sentenced to death in 399BC for criticising democracy during an unstable period in Athens in which the majority supported democracy. (Clementine, H, 2020). The Christian Church is another example of the origins of CC; with the 'Gospel of James' being removed from the second testament due to the final version of the bible being settled upon. After this, the authors of the Gospel were cursed to a lifetime of hatred in purgatory. (Nixey, C, 2020). In the 1900's the Suffragettes were silenced by male politicians preventing them from having the vote, a historical instance of a group being cancelled, not singular individual or brand. (British Library, 2018)

In 2020 CC reached a new high, with the release of 5 books on the topic. Examples include Chris Boutte's book on his own experience of being cancelled, 'Inside YouTube cancel culture' and 'We will not cancel us' by Adrienne Marie Brown which discusses the need and effect of CC from a Minority point of view. Similarly, an Online Survey released to gather information on the understanding of CC within society presented 68% of respondents were aware of the term. (Duval, G, 2020). With a nationwide lockdown in March 2020, the public headed online for their interactions according to Business Insider; with US users spending 7 minutes more online in 2020 compared to 2019. (Business Insider, 2020) The most recent place CC can be seen is the Netflix series 'The Crown' being labelled as 'trolling on a Hollywood budget' by those closest to the royal family. (Andrews, E, 2020).

These examples demonstrate that CC has been around since the beginning of society and although it was not always named cancelling, the action of a majority silencing a minority has always been present. This also shows how throughout history Cancel Culture has always been opinion based with the largest majority conducting the cancelling.

## **1.2 Individuals or brands cancelled in the 21st Century.**

Evidence suggests Journalism has changed over time, recently shown in the rise of Citizen Journalism where a member of the public records and uploads items to Social Media. (Lumen, 2020) This change in journalism has caused brands and individuals to be caught out in social settings where they have not before. Examples of this are Kate Moss and John Galliano. They were both recorded by the public participating in drug abuse, racism and anti-Semitism which would not have been possible with the technology just 50 years ago. Consequently, they both have lost career achievements which include Creative Director for Dior and Advertising campaigns for Chanel. (BOF, 2020) (Horyn, C, 2011). Results of an online survey in 2020 found the top 5 most common answers to celebrities/brands who have been cancelled to be: JK Rowling, Kate Moss, John Galliano, Glossier and Donald Trump. (Duval, G, 2020) Each individual was cancelled for a different reason including racism and transphobia and almost all of them lost a career opportunity because of their actions. Furthermore, 56% of respondents to the survey agreed with the cancellation. (Duval, G, 2020)

## 1.3 Cancel Culture cancelling society.

Evidence suggests individuals believe CC is cancelling history. In 1933, Nazi students burned any book which they deemed to be 'Anti-German' at a time when those Jewish faith were being murdered and anything related to them or against the Nazi ideal was being eradicated. (Holocaust Encyclopaedia, 2020) This is an extreme example of CC cancelling history; the Nazi's were trying to cancel the history which did not match the one they wanted to create.

A recent, similar case of this in the Summer of 2020 where over 50 statues and monuments in the United States were either toppled by protestors at the Black Lives Matter movement or taken down by government due to their controversial past. 40 more were removed worldwide, including Edward Colston and Robert E Lee. (Shearing, H, 2020) A study by the Think Tank the Democracy Institute show that 74% of Americans agree with Donald Trump's opinion that taking down the statues would be erasing American history. (Closson, D, 2020). Similarly, 100% of those who took part in the one-to-one interviews with the researcher agreed that taking down the statues was in fact cancelling history in the act itself; with one participant saying *"You can't change history. And if you haven't got history you haven't got a future, it's that simple."* However, Gen Z believed they should be taken down permanently and used in museums. This could be due to their upbringing including more diversity and inclusivity within education and social norms. (Duval, G, 2020)

Research suggests that CC is restricting free speech. For example, Alan Dershowitz, President Trumps lawyer who defended him against impeachment in 2020 who has been cancelled himself has made the claim that CC is 'to join the First Amendments club.' In a podcast interview with John Solomon he stated,

*"To get membership in the First Amendment club you have to actively support the right of people you strongly hate. If you're a Jew, you have to be out there supporting the right of Holocaust deniers to preach their horrible evil in the court of public opinion. If you're African American, you have to be out there being able to defend the Ku Klux Klan or anybody else's right of free speech. You have to be willing to support the free speech of your enemies."* (Solomon, J, 2020)

Similarly, in an open debate hosted by Intelligence Squared, Ayaan Hirsi Ali argued that *"there is no good faith in CC."* The nature of it is to silence and shame those who have different ideals. (Intelligence Squared, 2020) Additionally, one participant from the online survey highlighted: *"Cancelling occurs from a difference of opinion between the individual and the greater majority of people on social media, which is wrong - everyone should be allowed an opinion."* This response is an indication that some believe CC is stopping discussion surrounding sensitive topics.

In contrast to these findings, evidence suggests that CC is not restricting free speech but is an appropriate repercussion to those who deserve it. One participants response to the question of whether a controversy should mean an individual loses career opportunities was *"It depends on the morality"* which was a common theme between Gen Z and X; that a person should only be condemned if the crime was going to endanger someone. (Duval, G, 2020).

These examples show that CC could be rewriting and repeating history. Shown in the removal of the statues of controversial figures reflecting the Church denying the writers of the Gospel of James.

## **1.2 Conclusion.**

This chapter identifies that CC dates back to 399BC, even if it was not named as such. It evidences that historically the power to cancel was held by those with the most power, such as the Church or Politicians. In 2020, the power is held by the public due to the rise of Social Media. Furthermore, CC and its effect on free speech is viewed differently by each generation, which will be explored further in Chapter Three.




# **CHAPTER TWO.**

## **Chapter Two. Social Media and Cancel Culture.**

Evidence suggests that Social Media is responsible for the significant rise in CC over the last 7 years, this chapter will dive into the rising use of Social Media, the consequences it can have and what the future of Social Media could look like.



## 2.1 The usage of Social Media from 2004 – 2020.

Social Media began in 2004 as a business tool at its core. In 2020, just under 4Billion users access the Social Media sites Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter, comparing to just over 1Billion in 2013. (Our world in data, 2019). Evidence of Social Media changes can be seen in the Netflix documentary 'The Social Dilemma' outlining the role Social Media has on mental health, politics and addiction. (Netflix, 2020) Evidence of user experience changing can be seen in the emergence of a new Social Media application 'Parler' being created in 2018 and amassing 8million users since. (Wired, 2020) Parler labels itself an application for free speech but does include rules on content. (Parler, 2020) The creation of this application indicates the changing use of Social Media and what users wish to post. Further evidence Social Media usage changing since it first began is twitter user 'MoodyfromtheO' tweeting *"Twitter has definitely changed a lot from 2010. If you been around you done seen every phase of this app come & go."* in 2020. Similarly, content creators on Social Media have seen a change, creator Jim Chapman stated in 2020:

*"We Made a lot of our mistakes when a lot less people were watching, so we got away with much more... young people now put themselves online and push the envelope a little bit because they need to do that crazy stuff to get the attention but also then have to not do anything too crazy or they'll get cancelled."* (Youtube, 2020)

This belief is also evidenced in the primary researched with 100% of the one to one interviewees saying they have seen a change in Social Media usage since they began using it. (Duval, G, 2020)

Overall, Social Media usage has changed since 2013 from a place of fun to anxiety and fear of cancellation. But as the number of users continues to rise the control Social Media has over users will rise.

## 2.2 Is Cancel Culture driven by Social Media?

It can be argued that CC was born out of Social Media sites and users themselves. According to Insider, hashtags are becoming the heart of Twitter CC. (Insider, 2020) The hashtag 'isoverparty' is what users add to a tweet to cancel an individual or brand which often results in cancellation. A study taken by Linchpin in October 2020 supports this explaining if you use a hashtag, your tweet receives 100% more engagement than those which do not. (Linchpin, 2020) This is comparable to Facebook articles where brands allow users to comment and voice their opinion under these. One example is of Reformation's posts on Facebook which lead to comments from users cancelling the brand because of Racism. (Facebook, 2020) Evidence of this belief is present in results from the online survey, 95% of respondents believe that Social Media is somewhat responsible for the large scale of CC; one respondent replied:

*"Even if it appears disagreeable/controversial, the individual's ideas/comments are often blown way out of proportion by people getting carried away over Twitter etc. It can be extremely damaging to the person's career and mental health."*

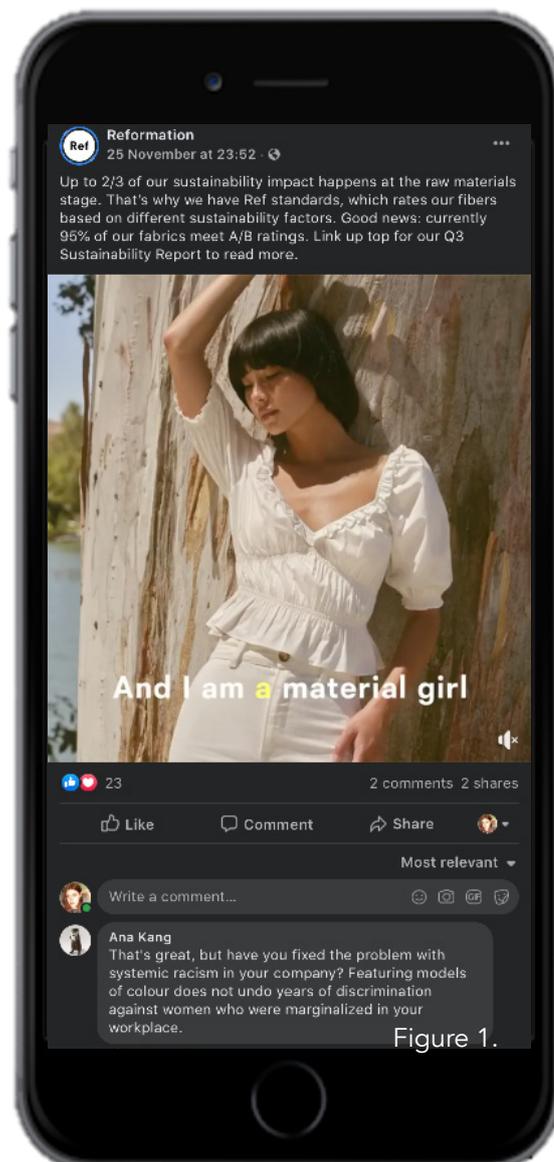


Figure 1.

In comparison, evidence suggests that CC is not driven by Social Media. An example of this is the 2020 Sainsbury's Christmas advert which received a significant number of complaints due to the advert focusing on a Black Family. Subsequently there were calls for the advert to be taken down however Generation Z defended the use of a Minority Family using the hashtag #SainsburysXmas on Twitter which received over 1.5 thousand replies evidence in Figure 2. (Twitter, 2020) This also had an impact on Facebook, with over 2.2 thousand comments of which the top ones were showing support for the advert. (Facebook, 2020) Another example of CC driven by traditional media is when dance group Diversity received 24,000 Ofcom complaints regarding a performance supporting Black lives matter. However, the backlash only came two weeks after the BBC posted the routine on their front pages. (BBC, 2020)

Drawing from this we can see CC is driven by both traditional and Social Media; however Social Media has been the catalyst for the rise since 2013 and how active it has become in society.



## 2.3 The effects of online Cancel Culture on mental health.

Evidence of CC affecting Mental Health is shown in Chris Boutte's book where he writes about being "somewhat traumatised" from his experience of being cancelled. (Boutte, C, 2019) There are cases of suicide from cancellation such as Caroline Flack due to her Domestic Violence court case spreading on Social Media. (BBC, 2020) A study by the National Library of Medicine indicates that those who have been cyberbullied are 2.1 times more likely to show suicidal behaviours than those who have not. (National library of Medicine, 2018) This is evident in Taio Cruz quitting TikTok due to 'Suicidal Thoughts' over videos and comments directed towards him. (BBC, 2020) Furthermore, during a one-to-one interview it was said that *"On TikTok you can make a video and people will actually watch the video."* meaning you will undoubtedly see the hate you receive. In addition, 100% of Social Media Survey respondents they believe Social Media can negatively affect user's mental health, (Duval, G, 2020)

Conversely, the British Journal of Psychiatry also suggests it is not Social Media which causes the negative consequences of CC, but the depression and burdens that the individuals faced are more likely the cause, and Social Media just the catalyst. (Séguin, M et al, 2014) Similarly, 41% of people who were cyber bullied develop anxiety and 37% depression. (First Site Guide, 2020) According the industry professional at Facebook and Instagram, there is no support system in place for those who have been at the receiving end of any online attack, which in some cases may have prevented the affect Social Media has on mental health. (Duval, G, 2020) However when analysing the interview data, the findings provided evidence that all generations agreed that Social Media impacted on individual's mental health with one interviewee saying,

*"It just affects everything in your life, unless you're a strong personality and confident in your own skin to be happy with the way you are then you won't be influenced by people on social media."*

Overall, it is not a quantifiable affect that Social Media has on mental health, but the research indicates Social Media CC does affect it negatively.

## 2.4 Future Social Media changes to prevent Cancel Culture.

An analysis of Social Media by the New York Times indicates that Social Media will continue to be at the heart of social interactions. With a 27% increase in the use of Facebook and over 6Million Zoom users since March; the COVID-19 Pandemic has left society connecting through Social Media. (New York Times, 2020) However, Social Media can change to prevent CC from becoming increasingly toxic.

Although sites such as Facebook and Twitter do have links to pages which address bullying and harassment they are hidden behind multiple links. Furthermore, there are no visible warnings against any content which could be harmful to a user's mental health. (Facebook, 2020) More recently, Twitter has instigated a new warning against 'Fake News' exemplified under Donald Trump's tweets 'This claim about election fraud is disputed.' is displayed in Figure 3. This could be taken one step further with trigger warnings over content such as the one created for Netflix by Danielle Leong. (MCASA, 2016) Additionally, although users can block key words from advertisements, this could be made applicable to traditional posts too. (Duval, G, 2020) Primary research suggests that surveys on Mental Health could be sent to users to determine effects of Social Media however only Gen Z said they would participate in these, with Gen X and Baby Boomers claiming it would not work as the sites have revenue at their core. (Duval, G, 2020)

Finally, evidence from the research suggests education should include CC. Syllabus books could include 'Guilt by Accusation' by Alan Dershowitz, (Dershowitz, A, 2019) a book on how quickly CC could ruin a career, along with Chris Boutte's book mentioned previously to understand the mental effects of CC. Drawing on primary research, mental health professionals have seen a rise in CC in recent years presenting a need for mental health support within schools. (Duval, G, 2020)

These changes could prevent CC from rising and further damaging to individual's mental health. These changes are explored further in Chapter 4.



## **2.5 Conclusion.**

Most evidence supports the idea that Social Media has been a catalyst for CC since its rise in 2013. However, the evidence within this chapter does demonstrates how Social Media can be a force for good, and of change. It is clear that CC is not always driven by Social Media, but traditional media too. Ultimately, there is a human behind each user, but each generation views Social Media as the responsible party in CC and the effects on mental health.



things look  
different



from the  
outside

**“ I’m definitely not an advocate for cancel culture I think it’s  
very dangerous and just not great thing...”  
- Alix Coburn, 2020.**




# **CHAPTER THREE.**

## **Chapter 3. The knowledge of Cancel Culture in Gen Z, X and Baby Boomers.**

The term CC has only become common terminology in recent years after the #MeToo movement. This chapter will look into the values and needs of each generation, the similarities and differences of opinion that Generation Z, X and baby boomers have on CC and examples of who each generation sees as cancelled.



## 3.1 Values and needs of Gen Z, X and Baby Boomer.

Table 3. Values and needs of Generation Z.

Name	Generation Z.
Age range.	1995 - 2010.
Education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cross Curricular learning between subjects is common, such as history and social science. (eSchool, 2020)</li> <li>- Gen Z have had two school leaving ages, they could leave at age 16 until 2015 when the age was raised to 18. (Study, N/A).</li> </ul>
Values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gen Z are on track to becoming the most diverse, accepting and educated generation to date. (Pew Research Center, 2018)</li> <li>- In 2018, Gen Z voted climate change, racism and economic inequality as their most important issues to face; with 66% of them voting that they 'totally disapprove' of Donald Trump. (Politico, 2020)</li> <li>- Exit polls suggest that 65% of those between 18-24 voted for Joe Biden, a Democrat. (CNBC, 2020)</li> <li>- 74% believe in Equality for Transgender rights. (WGSN, 2015)</li> <li>- 73% of Gen Z favour brands who speak out against Racism compared to just 39% of those in Gen X and Baby Boomers, (Stylus,2020)</li> <li>- Gen Z are the most racially diverse generation yet. (NPR, 2018)</li> </ul>
Social media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gen Z use social media as their main form of interaction, they are the first 'truly digital generation'. (Business Insider, 2020).</li> <li>- In 2019, Gen Z spent 7hours per day using social media, 3 of those exclusive to social media. (Vogue Business, 2020)</li> </ul>
Where they experience CC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Instagram. Or Tiktok."</li> <li>- "I've only ever seen it occur on social media."</li> </ul>

Table 4. Values and needs of Generation X.

Name	Generation X.
Age range.	1965 - 1980.
Education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early Gen X were not raised with technology in the classroom, however during the mid 1990's Microsoft became available to education. (Smith, B, 2015)</li> <li>- University was not an aspiration many students had and was seen as a 'passport to a well paid job'. (Curriculo Solutions, 2017)</li> <li>- In 1964, Parliament raised the school leaving age to 17. (Study, N/A)</li> </ul>
Values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Name taken from the book 'Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated culture' in 1991. (Douglas, C, 1991)</li> <li>- Gen X grew up with higher rates of divorced parents or both working parents, leaving them as the generation with a lack of parental guidance. (Business Insider, 2020)</li> <li>- Gen X are the most worried about Climate Change, with 75% of them believing in the subject compared to a 71% national average, alongside 25% of Gen Z worried about it compared to 20% of Baby Boomers. (Kuppa, S, 2018)</li> </ul>
Social media.	- The last generation before social media took off, in 2018 they spent on average 2 hours per day on social media and had 7 different social media sites compared to 9 in Gen Z. (Weforum, 2019).
Where they experience CC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "On social media!"</li> <li>- "More mainstream I'm not a big social media person."</li> </ul>



Table 5. Values and needs of Baby Boomers.

Name	Baby Boomer
Age range.	1944 – 1964.
Education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education Act was created in 1944 meaning free education was offered to all, and schools must offer free meals and milk to children who previously would have left for work. The act also raised the school leaving age to 15. (Centre for Social Investigation, 2016)</li> <li>- Only 44% of Baby boomers attended University in America shown in a study by the U.S Bureau of Labour Statistics. (U.S Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2019)</li> </ul>
Values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most conservative of the 3 Generations, being raised under Margaret Thatcher reign as Prime Minister. Baby boomer's net household worth is 17 times that of Millennials. (Financial Times, 2018)</li> <li>- £78 thousand more financially stable than those 20 years ago were at their age. (Mail Online, 2019).</li> <li>- Baby Boomers are the most disconnected to social issues, for example not realising that half of the National Trust properties, which memberships require 60 year of age or up, were built using Slaves. (Independent, 2013)</li> </ul>
Social media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 86% of Baby Boomers use Social Media Daily, and they use Facebook the most. (The Manifest, 2019).</li> <li>- Baby boomers use Social Media as an extension of their previous interactions, with 52% of Baby boomers posting their images on social media, whereas they would send a letter previously. (The Manifest, 2019)</li> </ul>
Where they experience CC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "You see it in the press, you'll see it on Facebook mainly it's happening in universities."</li> <li>- "Mostly social media."</li> </ul>

Tables 3-5 indicate that the values and needs are different in each generation which could influence their different opinions on CC. For example, Gen Z being the most socially adaptable compared to Baby Boomers who are the most conservative, perhaps due to their difference in education levels. Overall, these connect directly to the opinions of each on CC and are explained further in 3.2.

## 3.2 Differences and similarities in opinion on Cancel Culture.

Evidence from the Secondary and Primary research within this study show there are similarities of opinion surrounding CC as well as differences between the 3 generations covered within this study.

Evidence suggests each generation believes that Social Media needs to assume more responsibility to prevent CC. Throughout the paper tweets from each generation have been referenced, indicating each contributes to the online conversation of CC. However, brands such as Unilever, CocaCola and HP are boycotting against advertisements on Social Media as they will not take action against CC. (Econsultancy, 2020) Instagram accounts created to specifically attack individuals or brands have been created, such as 'pullupforchange' asking the public to Cancel brands for offensive behaviour towards the black community, (Instagram, 2020) or 'karensgoingwild' exposing individuals for their behaviour, which encourages Social Media CC. (Instagram, 2020) 64% of those who answered the Social Media Survey answered they do not believe that Social Media is a safe place for controversial discussions such as CC. (Duval, G, Social Media Survey, 2020)

Furthermore, each generation believes Social Media is profiting due to CC. An example of this is within the Netflix Documentary 'The Social Dilemma' which exposes how the Social Media sites control a user's experience with specific advertisements. (Netflix, 2020). Supporting this, 83% of those interviewed believe that Social Media is a business and consequently profits due to CC. Interviewees responded, *"I know they will never do it because social media is just out to make money but they need to advertise that like social media isn't real and it can be harmful"* (Gen Z), *"...Drama sells, bad news sells."* (Gen X) and *"Like I said, social media platforms want to make money. And they will do whatever they can to make money and will go around any issue to continue to do so."* (Baby Boomer), indicating that each believe Social Media profit due to CC yet do not take action as it may damage their income. (Duval, G, 2020)

Likewise, all generations believe Social Media could be improved to prevent CC. For example, including hashtags on a post increases engagement within CC. By using 'isoverparty' on Twitter engagement increases by 100% and using 'canceled' on Instagram increases engagement by 54%. (Best Hashtags, 2020) Despite Social Media taking steps towards preventing CC, such as being able to choose who can reply to a tweet, (Buro, 2020), primary research suggests there is no way of blocking users from accessing an account completely nor a support system in place for those who have been cancelled. (Duval, G, 2020) In support of this, each interviewee gave examples for how they believe Social Media could be improved to prevent CC such as 'Social Media platforms actively looking for and removing hateful comments' and 'They could say for instance you've been using Instagram for 10 hours today maybe it's time to take a break'. (Duval, G, 2020) Similarly, all 3 mental health experts have seen a rise in both mental health issues and cyber bullying in the last 10 years due to Social Media. (Duval, G, 2020)

Where each generation differ is shown in that each want different outcomes for the monuments of controversial figures. American councilwoman Viola Baskerville, a member of Generation X, believes that the statue of black tennis player Arthur Ashe should stay in Virginia despite protesters. (National Geographic, 2020) Furthermore, older generations see the act of protest against history as futile, having lived through JFK and Martin Luther King assassinations Boomers want future generations to be educated about history. (UPCEA, 2019) Similarly, the South African Rhodes statue, which is linked to Slavery, stood during the apartheid yet is being vandalised now almost 20 years later which Gen X interviewee agreed with stating "I think it's ridiculous; it didn't bother anyone 20 years ago so why does it now?". (BBC, 2020) (Duval, G, 2020) Despite each generation believing that taking them down is Cancelling history, only Gen Z believe they should be removed and put into a Museum whilst Gen X and Baby boomers believe they should continue standing. (Duval, G, 2020)

Research suggests that the older Generations believe that CC is Cancelling Free Speech evidenced within Alan Dershowitz book 'Cancel Culture'. Nigel Farage also stated that CC is a war on free speech within an interview with TalkRadio in 2020. (TalkRadio, 2020) Additionally, this mentally is seen within a one to one interview with one Baby Boomer commenting ***"If they wanted to be free to the extent of people voicing their opinions form every side of the argument they should've let them have their say."*** Surrounding Social Media content filters.

Further evidence is seen within how the brands or people during each generation have been cancelled. In older Generations, Cancellation of a person was not named Cancelling, for example Gerald Ratner was cancelled through the newspapers for his controversial comments but was not labelled as 'Cancelled' despite being fired from his position of CEO. (Business Blogs, 2020). Furthermore, Camilla Parker-Bowles was cancelled in the 90's for having an affair with Prince Charles. Traditional news outlets would report on the affair such as in a 1992 Newspaper when a private phone call between the two was reported to the public. (Daily Mail, 2007) Additionally, a 1997 survey of the British public suggested 71% believed she should not become queen. (IPSOS, 1997) Despite these reports mirroring a 2020 Cancellation, neither were labelled as such.

Dissimilarly, in 2020 being cancelled takes place predominantly on Social Media, with over 250,000 posts on Instagram under hashtag 'cancelled' and individuals quitting Social Media due to their cancellation including Kanye West for his controversial political views. (People, 2020) Furthermore, 150 public figures including JK Rowling and David Frum are calling for a society where open debate is common and is not a 'Vogue for public shaming and opinion' within an open letter in Harpers Bazar. (Harpers Bazar, 2020)

### 3.3 Generational themes risen throughout the research.

Throughout the research process themes have arisen, the most common being industrial focused cancellations and movements, which have been outlined in the table below.

Table 6. Themes which have risen from Primary and Secondary research.

Theme.	Evidence.
Entertainment Industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gen Z named all Entertainment examples of people cancelled.</li> <li>- James Charles, Jeffree Star and Logan Paul are influencers.</li> <li>- Caroline Flack and Taio Cruz are within TV and Music.</li> <li>- All have received their own 'isoverparty' hashtag on Twitter.</li> <li>- All have removed themselves from social media at one time.</li> </ul>
Multiple Industries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gerald Ratner, CEO of a high street business.</li> <li>- Jordan Peterson, Canadian professor.</li> <li>- Camilla Parker-Bowles, the Duchess of Cornwall.</li> <li>- Online Survey answers from Gen Z all within the Entertainment industry.</li> <li>- Answers from Baby Boomers from varied industries.</li> <li>- E.G 'Jeffree Star and Jake Paul' answer aged 18-20.</li> <li>- E.G 'Edward Colston due to Slave Trade' from age 61 -70. (Duval, G, 2020)</li> </ul>
Platforms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Gen Z use 'Citizen Journalism' which allows them to cancel people themselves.</li> <li>- Gen X and Baby boomers were made aware of those cancelled through news outlets.</li> <li>- Pre 2013 newspapers or television interviews cancelled people.</li> <li>- Post 2013 Social Media cancels most people or brands.</li> </ul>
Movements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Baby Boomers walking with Martin Luther King,(Insider, 2020)</li> <li>- Generation X demonstrating against the Berlin Wall, (DW, 2019)</li> <li>- Generation Z protesting for Black Lives.</li> <li>- Gen Z becoming an Activist Generation. (The Guardian, 2020)</li> <li>- Gen Z are the most vocal generation on CC according to Olivia Johnson. (Duval, G, 2020)</li> </ul>

Each theme draws on why each Generation views CC differently. For example, Baby Boomer's viewing CC as 'ridiculous' as they were shown who was being offensive using news outlets and therefore 'cancelled' whereas Gen Z are able to cancel themselves using Citizen Journalism. Overall, the themes show how CC affects each Generation differently.

## **3.4 Conclusion.**

The research suggests that younger Generations are predominantly cancelling those within the entertainment industry, yet Gen X and Baby Boomers cancel across many industries. The opinion of CC cancelling society also differs between generations with older Generations wanting to keep historical monuments and free speech alive whilst younger generations are fighting for them to be removed and used for educational purposes. These differences and similarities are influenced by factors such as the access to Social Media or the education they had. Overall, Gen Z have a better understanding of CC than Gen X or Baby boomers which could be a reason as to why it is so influenced by Social Media.

# **Chapter Four.**



## **Chapter four. Effects of Cancel Culture on individuals and brands.**

CC affects both individuals and brands alike but the reason for cancellation differs. This chapter aims to outline those who have been cancelled from 2013-2020 and why. It also aims to look at the future of CC and what may change.

## 4.1 Individuals and brands who have been cancelled since 2010.

Evidence shown throughout this paper suggests there have been many cancellations from 2010-2020. Table 3 exhibits, in no particular order, the top 11 brands or individuals who were referred to as cancelled when conducting research, further answers can be seen in Appendix XV.

Table 7. Individuals or Brands who have been cancelled from 2010-2020.

Individual / Brand.	Cancellation period.	Reason for cancellation.	Repercussion.
Jk Rowling.	2019 - Present.	Transphobic comments.	Books burnt, loss of fanbase, celebrity comments against her.
Kate Moss.	2010 - 2011.	Drug use.	Lost multiple job campaigns.
Glossier.	2020 – Present.	Racial discrimination against employees.	Loss of customers, Instagram account 'OuttatheGloss' created by former employees to boycott the brand.
Donald Trump.	2016 - Present.	Racism, Dangerous/ Misleading comments on Climate change, societal issues and more.	Loss of customers.
Brandy Melville.	2019 - Present.	Racism, classism, misogyny, fake news, bullying, cyberbullying.	Loss of customers.
Jeffree Star.	2020 - Present.	Triggering videos, pro-life comments, homophobic comments.	Loss of fanbase, dropped from Morphe brand deal.
Logan Paul.	2017 - Present.	Triggering videos, pro-life comments, homophobic comments.	Loss of revenue for Youtube videos. Removal of videos from You tube.
Kevin Hart.	2019 - 2019.	Homophobic tweets.	Removal from hosting the Oscars.
James Charles.	2019 - 2020.	Paedophilia, gaslighting, emotional abuse.	2.5 million fanbase fall, brand deal losses, influencer comments against him.
Stephanie Yeboah.	2020 - 2020.	Anti-Semitic comments.	Loss of contributing role to Grazia magazine.

Table 5 indicates there is not a singular reason for being cancelled nor effect it can have. The table suggests the main cause of being cancelled is damaging minorities including racism, anti-Semitism and homophobia. 9/10 of those shown in Table 5 committed one of these and were consequently cancelled after.

Evidence suggests cancellation effect and length varies. When James Charles was 'cancelled' in 2019, he lost 2.5million subscribers on YouTube, yet later regained them and more indicating the end of his cancellation in less than a year as he defended his innocence on Social Media. (Social Blade, 2020) Conversely, Logan Paul filmed a corpse in the Japanese suicide forest in January 2018, and since then has continually lost views on YouTube. (Social Blade, 2020) Paul still has comments on his videos cancelling him almost 4 years on, evidenced in Figure 4.

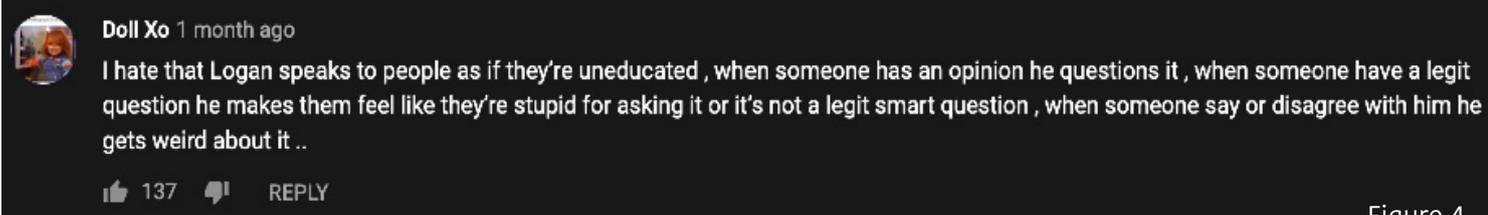


Figure 4

Analysing Primary research, it is evident one reasons for the uncertainty surrounding effect and cause of cancellation is the opinion of the individual. The one to one interviews and online survey further suggest that it is down to personal discretion. One example from the one to one interview is,

*"I disagree with some things, but I think its blown way out of proportion and really unfair like everybody makes mistakes and just being in the public eye makes it so...they're living to impossible standards really."*

Overall, since 2013 there have been many brands of figures who have been cancelled despite there being no defining reason or solid repercussion in CC explored in section 4.2

## 4.2 Reasons for cancellation and the effect it can have.

There is no one reason for Cancellation, but evidence of those cancelled in 2020 suggest that Racism, Homophobia and Transphobia are the top 3 reasons. Racism has caused the Cancellation of Jeffree Star and Shane Dawson, both using Racist slurs on their platforms as well as Blackface by Dawson; as well as brands such as Glossier who were accused by former workforce through an open letter on Instagram under an account named 'Outtathegloss' of 'Mishandling Racist incidents in the workplace'. (Instagram, 2020) Evidence suggests some individuals or brands may be too large to cancel, such as JK Rowling as explained by one interviewee that "you can't exactly just cancel her like that because she is so high profile". (Duval, G, 2020) The following section will evidence the effect cancellation has.

Firstly, John Galliano was named 'one of fashions most controversial and creative talents' by the Business of Fashion. (BOF, 2020) Galliano had a long history of success stories behind him. (Darcella, A, 2019) Despite this, the anti-Semitic remarks he made resulted in a £6000 fine by the French Government and his removal as designer at Christian Dior. (Horyn, C, 2011). Consequently, Galliano left the public eye in response to the backlash he faced; but returned in 2013 revealing he was invited by Oscar de la Renta to work on their latest collection. Galliano's cancellation was severe, forcing him out of his role yet not enough to terminate his career. Evidence of his cancellation was still seen in 2017 when Katy Perry was ridiculed for wearing one of his designs to the Met Gala. (O'Connor, R, 2017)

Comparably, JK Rowling tweeted "*People who menstruate.* I'm sure there used to be a word for those people. Someone helps me out. Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud?" in response to an article trying to change the way those who menstruate are treated post COVID. (Glamour, 2020) This caused backlash from fans on Social Media and Rowling then defended herself in further tweets and an open letter. (JKRowling, 2020) Responses to her both indicate cancellation, for example Emma Watson.



The Cancellation of JK Rowling has little effect on her career, according to The Guardian Rowling's latest novel still went to Number one and she still retains 14 million twitter followers, the same in millions she had before the cancellation. (Guardian, 2020) (Social blade, 2020)

In contrast, one brand which was affected by CC was Glossier. In August 2020 they made all their retail staff redundant, and from that an Instagram account named 'OuttatheGloss' was formed providing evidence of mistreatment of retail employees, especially those who were Black or Brown. (Glossier, 2020) An open letter was written to the founder outlining the treatment they had faced within the brand and that they hoped to help the brand change in the future. (DazedDigital, 2020) The account received over 13 thousand followers, with Social Media influencers reposting the content. This cancellation has caused a constant decline in Glossier's followers on Instagram since June 2020. (Social Blade, 2020) There is no evidence of monetary effect on Glossier as of November 2020.

The evidence suggests that there is usually affect in societal and social status due to cancellation if the offense is opinion based, but not necessarily on financial status for high profile individuals or established brands.

## **4.3 The future of what Cancel Culture could mean.**

Chapter 4 illustrates the future is uncertain for those who have been cancelled and in that so is the future. Evidence of CC's future can be seen in books such as Dianne Anderson's book 'Problematic: How Toxic Callout culture is destroying feminism' investigating how CC is affecting feminism and 'Cancel Culture' by Alexander Graves discussing how society has cancelled 'everything' and how damaging this can be. (Anderson, D, 2018) (Graves, A, 2020) These books, alongside online articles such as Loretta Ross's New York Times article 'I'm a Black Feminist. I Think Call-Out Culture Is Toxic.' explain how cancelling is counterproductive to society. (New York Times, 2020) In support of this, 92% of those who answered the online survey answered they have not participated in CC, and one answered, "Because I believe all individuals are capable of getting things wrong, and many are capable of ultimately learning from their mistakes." demonstrating the decline in CC. (Duval, G, 2020) The presented evidence supports the idea that CC may recede in the next few years.

In contrast, CC can have serious effects on mental health as shown in Chris Boutte and Caroline Flack. There is currently no UK Law against cyber bullying, but in 2017 Parliament discussed a new law surrounding Online harassment and cyber bullying. (UK Parliament, 2017) When being accused of cyber bullying, there are protection acts that the victim can come under such as the Protection from Harassment act of 1997 or the Communications Act of 2003. (Local Solicitors, 2020) Evidence throughout this paper indicates CC in 2020 exists online through Social Media and thus would come under these. Consequently, it is recommended by the researcher that when the new law is reviewed CC be included within it.

Overall, the future of CC looks to become less active in society, and with harsher consequences on those who are participating within it.

## **4.4 Conclusion.**

To conclude this chapter, the impact CC has is situation specific but seems to target those who have offended a minority group the most. It can lead to losing career positions or public support however there is still a possibility of having a career and continuation of success as shown in JK Rowling and Glossier. In the future, CC could decrease due to new laws and less toleration of the subject in Gen Z and their education towards the younger Generation Alpha. (McCrindle, 2020).

## **Conclusion.**

Through the assessment of public and professional opinion, this study aimed to investigate the evolution of CC, discovering people and brands who have been cancelled throughout history, the impact this has had on them along with investigating what the future of CC may look like.

The study identified that CC has been around since 399BC, examples of the Christian Church condemning the writers of the James Gospel to a lifetime of hatred in purgatory, being one of the first instances of people being cancelled. Later, the Holocaust is an example of not just cancelling one person but a whole religion or race. Also identifying a shift in who is cancelling, from high power figures throughout history to society on Social Media in 2020. In the 21st Century, Generation X and Baby Boomers believe that not just people or brands are cancelled; but history itself. Evidenced by the removal of monuments and statues of past figures labelled as offensive by movements such as Black Lives Matter. Furthermore, research suggests Baby Boomers and Gen X believe that CC has caused Society to regress into one with no free speech or accountability for its history, however that opinion is not shared by Generation Z who want history to be used as an education for future generations. Furthermore, with CC being cited as a word of the year in the OED 2020, shows societal recognition of CC is rising.

Studies of Social Media usage and interviews provide evidence of Platforms facilitating CC; for instance, there being no trigger warning on content or support for those who feel it has affected mental health. Further evidence of this is in the Social Media survey results showing Social Media's responsibility for CC and having a negative effect on their mental health. Studies by multiple research centres found that tools of Social Media, such as hashtags, (E.G 'Isoverparty'), cause a rise in engagement which can lead to a Cancellation through the majorities use of it, again evidencing Social Media's accountability for the rise in CC since 2013.

The examples of those cancelled throughout the study show how unpredictable CC can be. JK Rowling, Kate Moss, James Charles and John Galliano variously epitomise how repercussions and effect of CC can differ. Their offences were similar, however societal opinion and law decided the outcome of their offences; with Galliano having to pay a fine for his behaviour due to breaking the law, but James Charles receiving more support from those with the same opinion and values. Furthermore, those who were cancelled before Social Media were less recognised by society for their offences as cancellation took place using traditional media. Since 2013, the popularity of Social Media has allowed access to almost every aspect of people's lives. Cancellation is conducted through Social Media and Citizen Journalism and evidence suggests that this does not necessarily mean a negative impact on their career.

Material released in 2020 including 'Cancel Culture' by Alexander Graves and Loretta Ross's article 'I'm a Black Feminist. I Think Call-Out Culture Is Toxic.' suggest that CC is evolving into a negative movement and reducing conversation surrounding topics such as Feminism. With parliament debating new cyberbullying laws this may mean CC becomes a criminal offence, reducing participation in conversation on Social Media. With interviews and surveys indicating Social Media causing a decline in users mental health alongside brands reducing advertisements on these platforms, sites will include warnings and support systems to counteract this and increase trust.

CC in its current form is a new phenomenon in society and in 2020 has become common terminology. Recent reports show a societal shift causing a decline in CC and a further decline will be seen in future as a result of potential new laws, books released against CC and the ideology of declining freedom of speech.

# **Recommendations.**

## **Business training.**

Identified within this study was the effects on CC and the most common reasons for being cancelled which were career, reputation and monetary loss as well as Racism, Transphobia or Homophobia. This study should be sent out to business teams for training on how to understand the effects cancellation and ways to avoid being so.

## **Charity Collaborations.**

Throughout this study, Twitter and Facebook were the two Social Media sites where CC was seen most regularly. These sites collaborating with cyberbullying or mental health charities such as Mind or Support line to help support their users is recommended.

## **Trigger warnings.**

The study has identified that Social Media sites such as Twitter and Facebook do not include trigger warnings over their content which is recommended by the researcher to avoid users seeing content which could negatively affect their mental health.

## **Future Studies.**

This study focused on Gen Z, X and Baby Boomers only. Their views do not represent the whole of society so including further Generations and participants in interviews would be beneficial to access a wider scope of opinion on the topic.

Similarly, only four industry professionals were included within this study from Social Media and mental health practices. In future, collecting Primary research from further industry professionals would be beneficial to understanding the responsibility and effects of CC on individuals deeper.

There were limitations beyond the control of the researcher throughout the study. COVID-19 prevented face to face interactions and government law left many Industry professionals too busy to connect with. In future, in person interviews should be held to understand fully what is meant by participants as online answers can be misread as you cannot gage human expression or body language as well.