



# WE ARE COMING UNTETHERED: HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN A CONNECTED WORLD

Dr. Julie M. Albright, Digital Sociologist  
Creating Healthy Organizations Conference, Oct 2019



GOOD NIGHT

SHOW OF HANDS.  
DO YOU SLEEP WITH YOUR CELL PHONE?

HOW MANY OF YOU CHECK THEM FIRST THING IN THE MORNING WHEN YOU WAKE UP?

HOW MANY OF YOU CHECK THEM IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT?

### Do You Sleep with

% who have ever played or right next to their

All

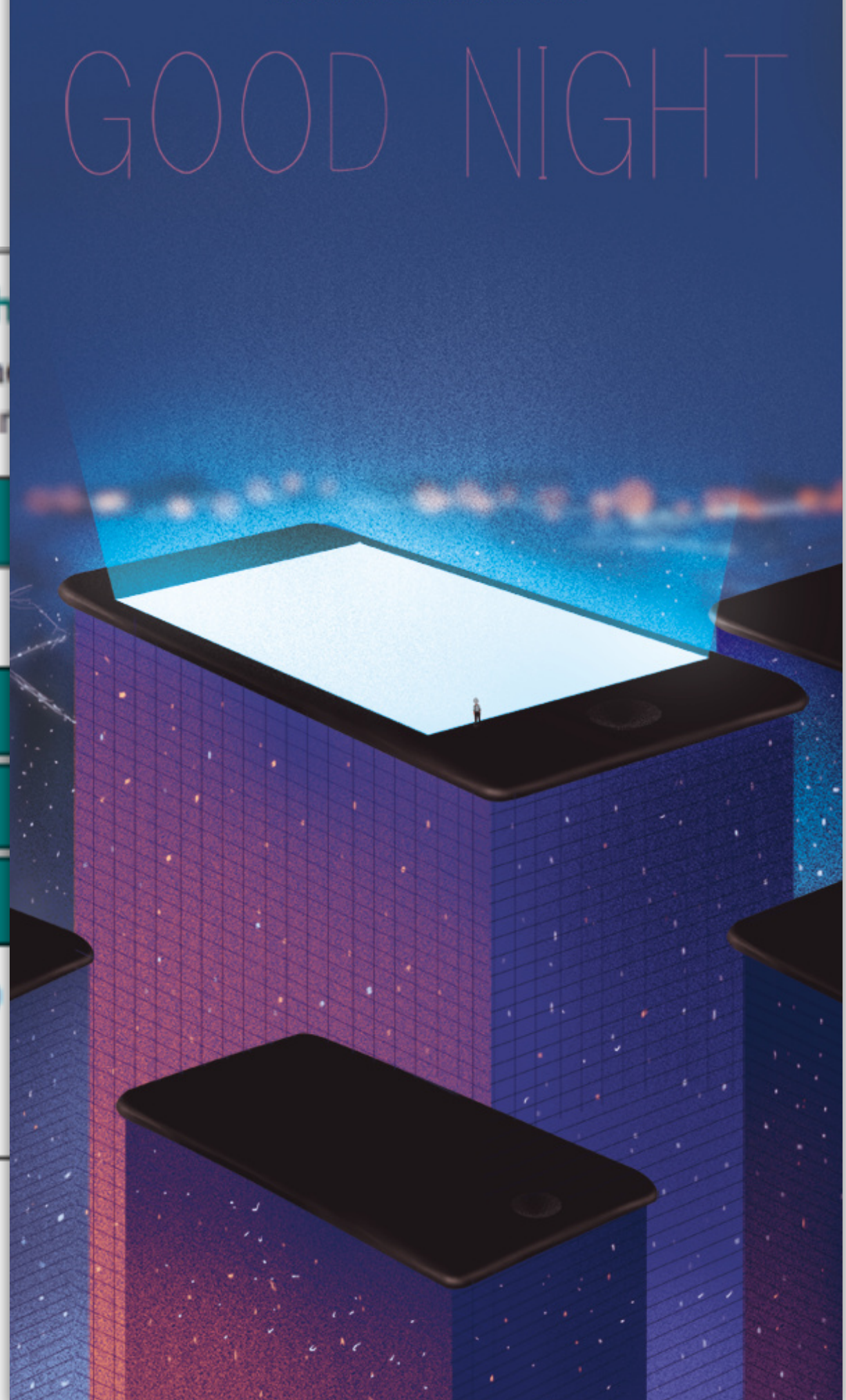
Millennial

Gen X

Boomer

Silent

20





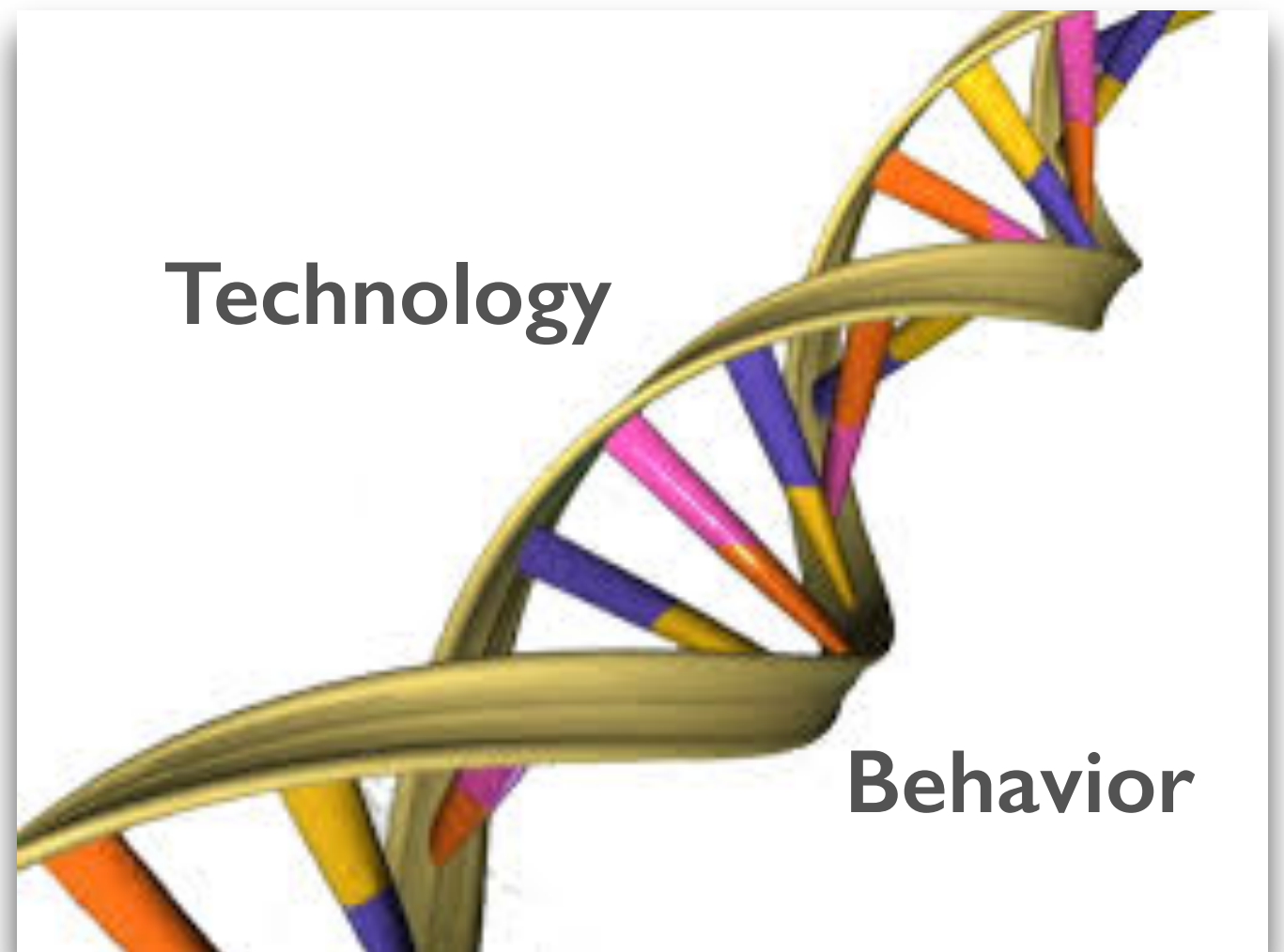
## WE ARE LIVING IN AN UNTETHERED SOCIETY - COMING “UNTETHERED:”

a condition in which ties to people, places, jobs, traditional processes, and organizing structures in society--like churches and political parties—are weakened or broken, and are being displaced by digital hyper-connectivity.



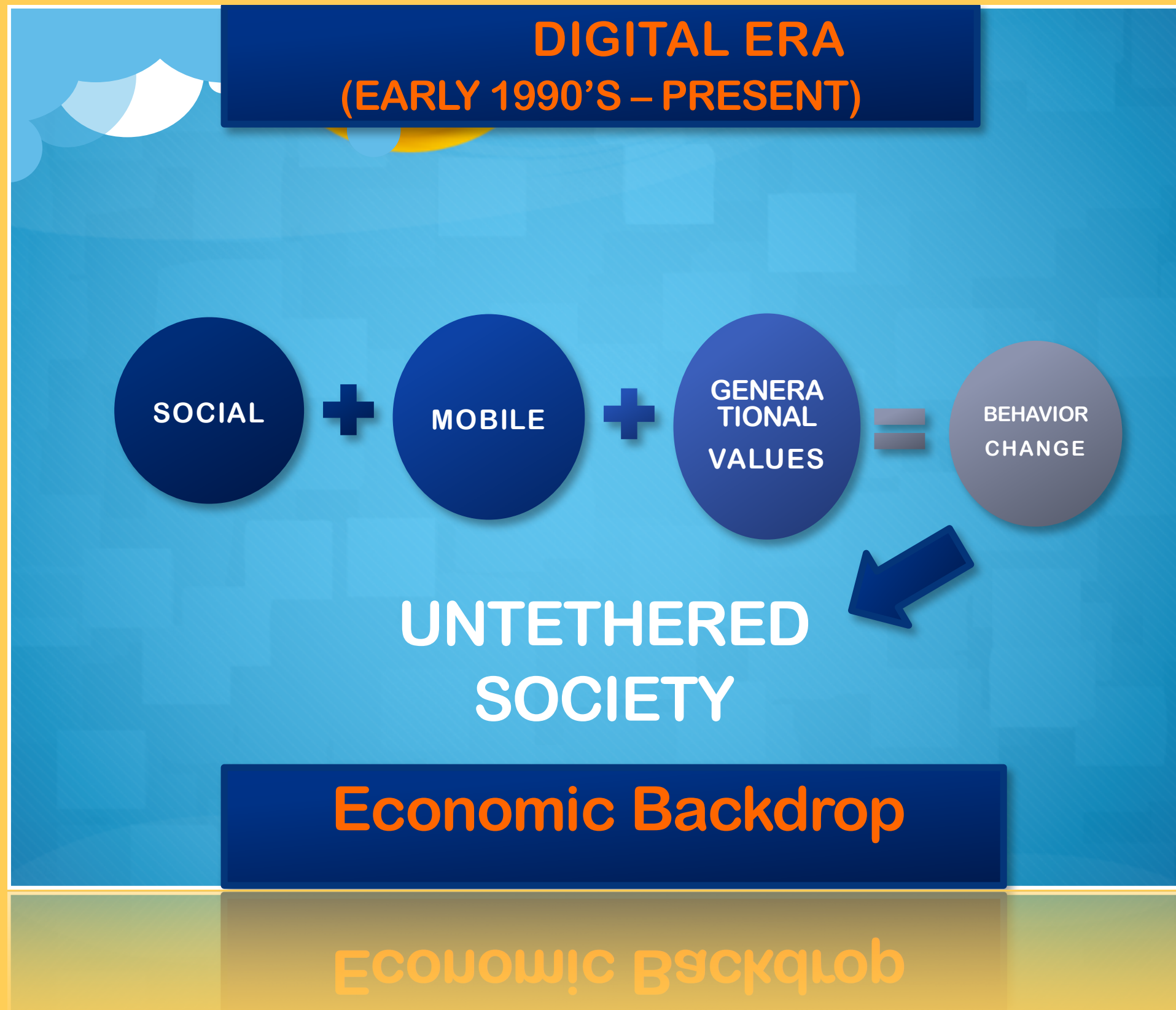
# DOUBLE HELIX OF TECHNOLOGY AND BEHAVIOR

- Our context:
- Double Helix of Technology and Behavior
- Technology and behavior are increasingly intertwined...
- Bring about seismic social changes

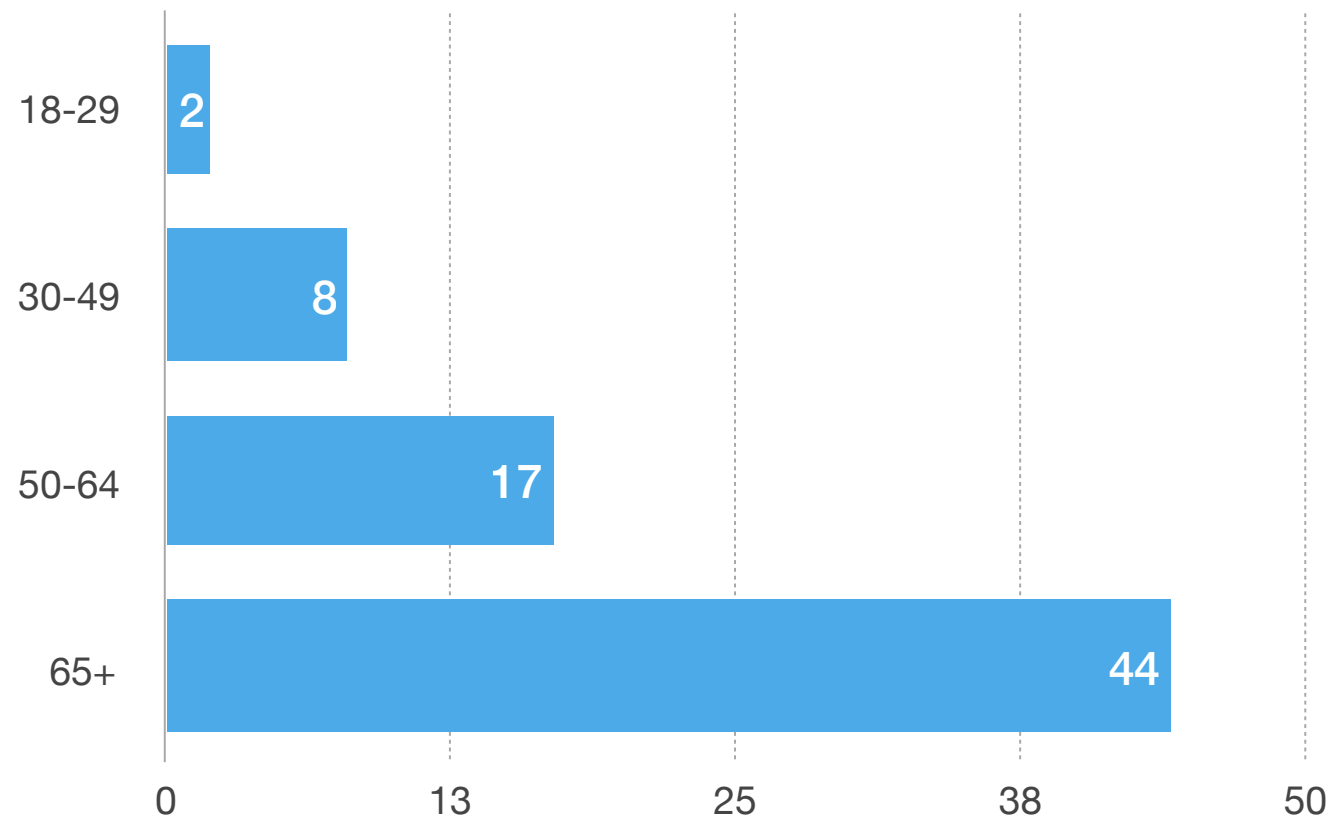




# CONTEXT FOR THESE CHANGES



PERCENTAGE ADULTS OFFLINE - U.S.



SOURCE: PEW INTERNET

UNTETHERING IS GENERATIONALLY  
UNEVEN



# KIDS NOW GROWING UP DIGITAL



1979



2018 - Fisher Price iPad Chair

REWIRING BRAINS:  
KIDS NOW ARE GROWING UP DIGITAL,  
ACQUIRING DIGITAL SKILLS BEFORE  
LANGUAGE...



**This One Works**



AND-THEY'RE GETTING  
ADDICTED JUST LIKE TEENS  
AND ADULTS...

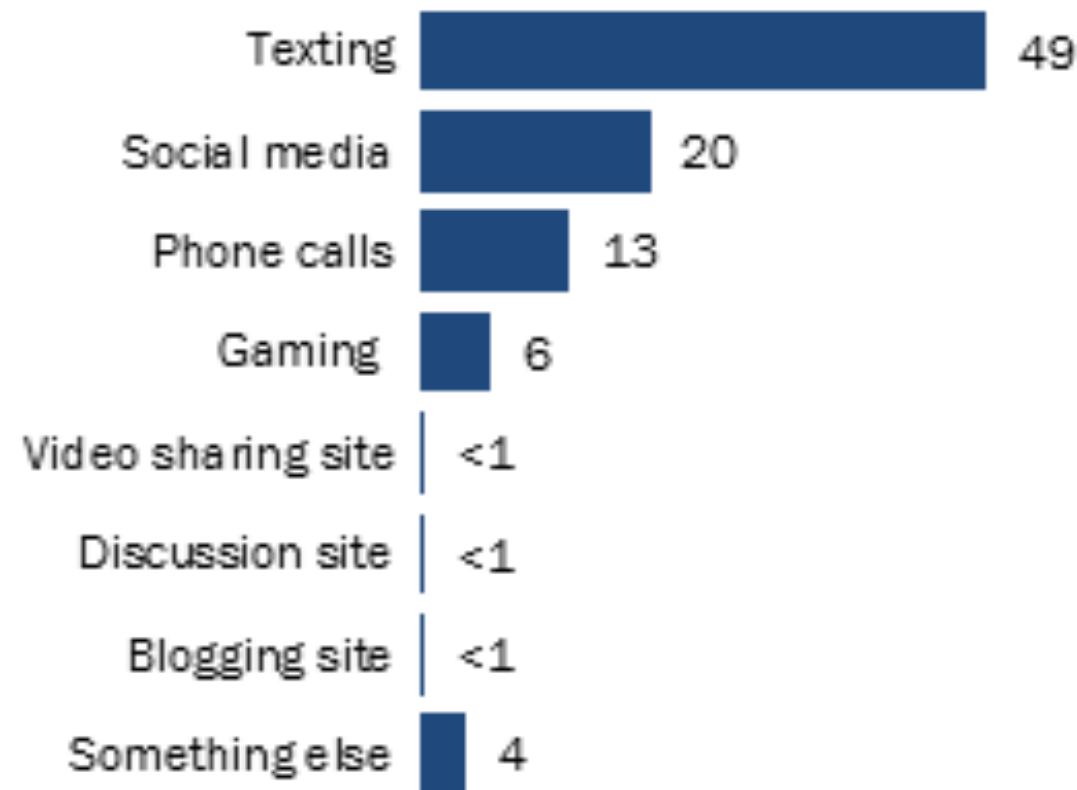




# Kids Growing Up Digital Would Rather Text than Talk

## Texting Is Most Common Way Teens Get in Touch With Closest Friend

*% of teens who say ... is the most common way they get in touch with their closest friend online or on a phone*



Source: Pew Research Center Teens Relationships Survey, Sept. 25-Oct. 9, 2014, and Feb. 10-March 16, 2015. (n=1,009 teens ages 13 to 17 with a close friend).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



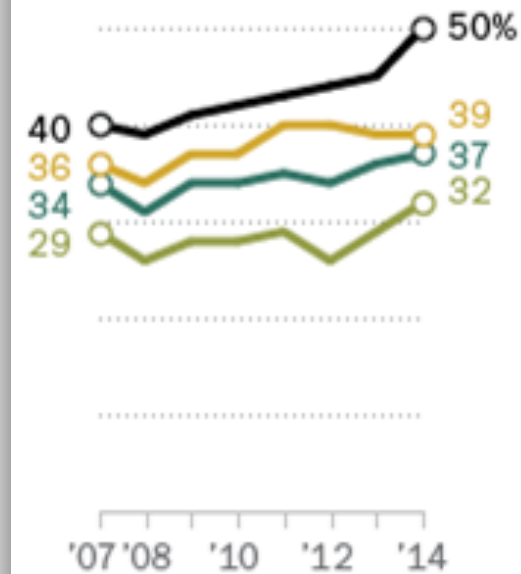


PART OF WHAT WE'RE COMING UNTETHERED  
FROM IS THE AMERICAN DREAM

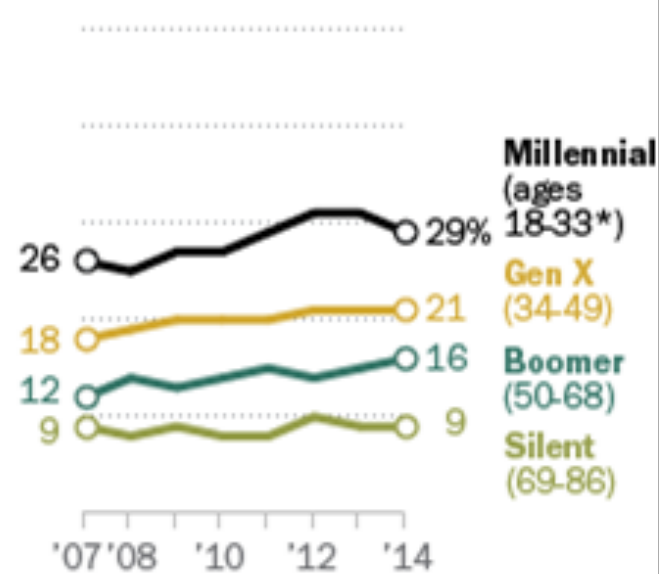


## Millennials: Unmoored from Institutions

Percent who consider themselves political independents



Percent of adults in each generation who are religiously unaffiliated



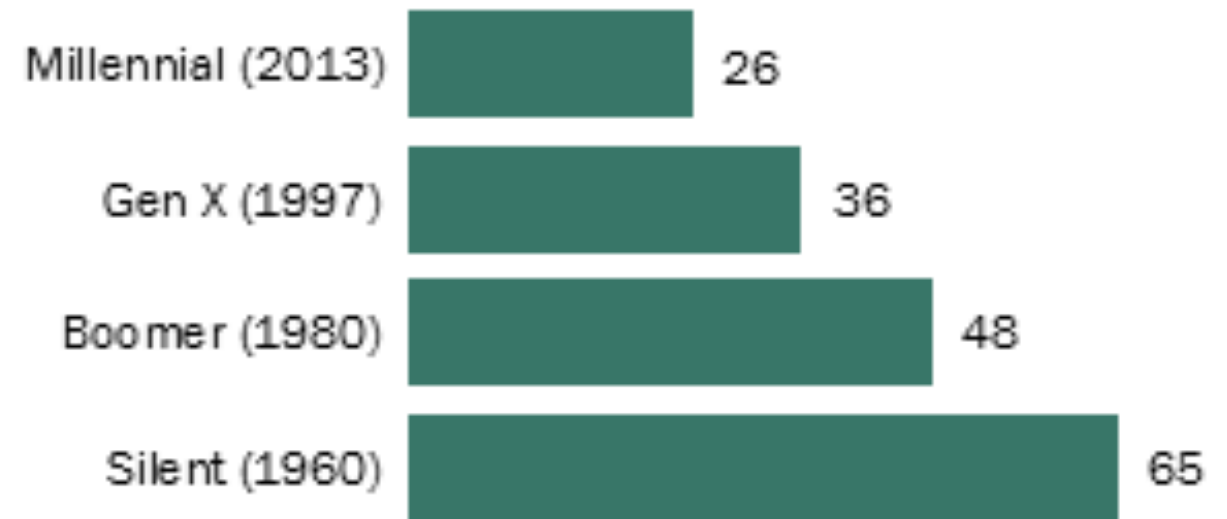
\* Age ranges are for 2014

Source: Data points represent totals based on all Pew Research surveys of the general public conducted in that calendar year.

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## The Decline in Marriage Among the Young

% married at age 18 to 32, by generation



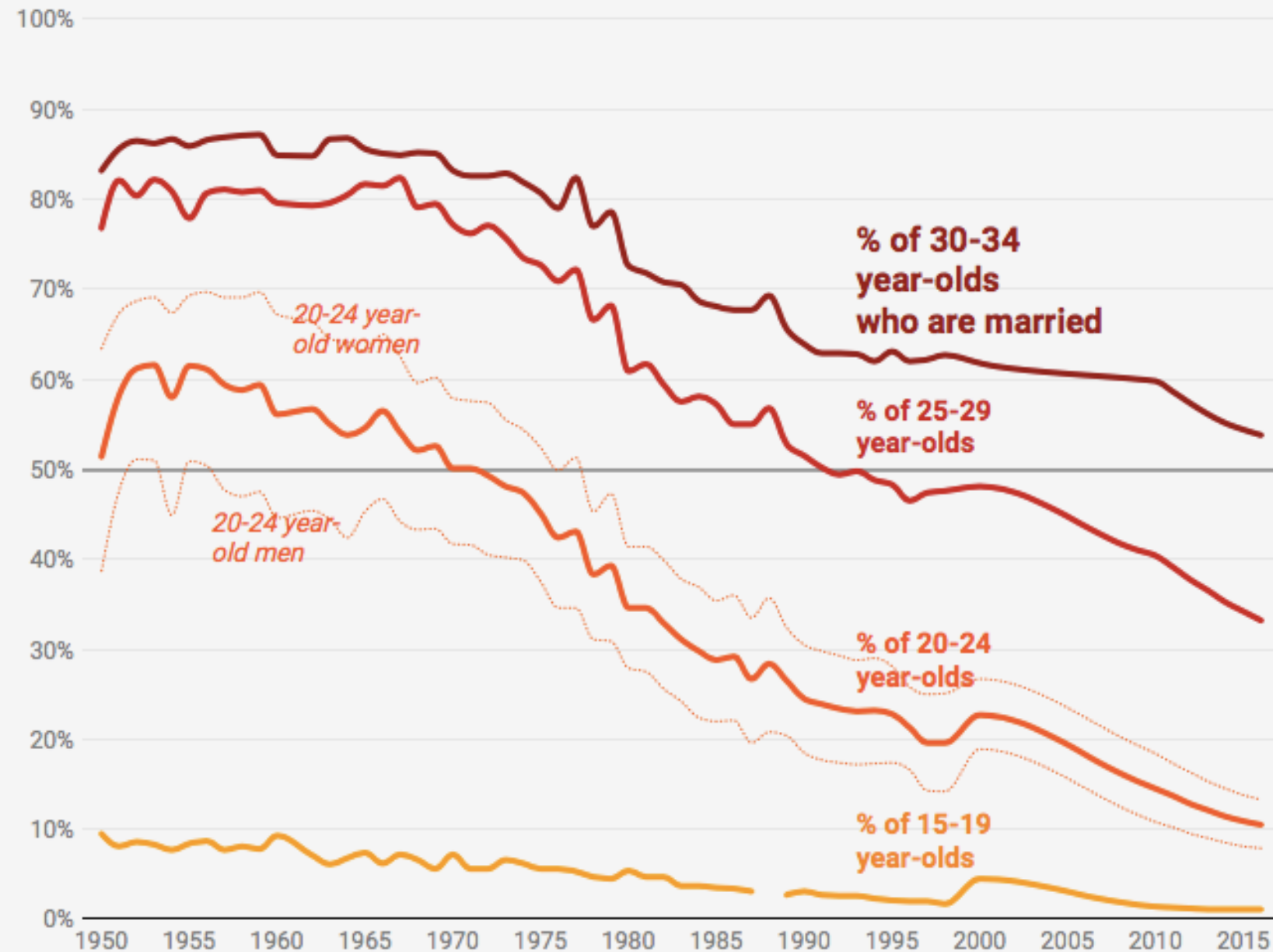
Source: Data from 1980, 1997 and 2013 are from the March Current Population Survey; 1960 data are from the 1960 Census

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# Digital natives are Unhooking from Social Structures

# YOUNG ADULTS ARE STAYING SINGLE LONGER - OR MAYBE, ALWAYS...

**Share of the married US population in different age groups, 1950-2016.** E.g., in 1960, 56% of the people who were between 20 and 24 years old **at that time** were married. 40 years later, 23% of the people who were between 20 and 24 years old in 2000 were married.



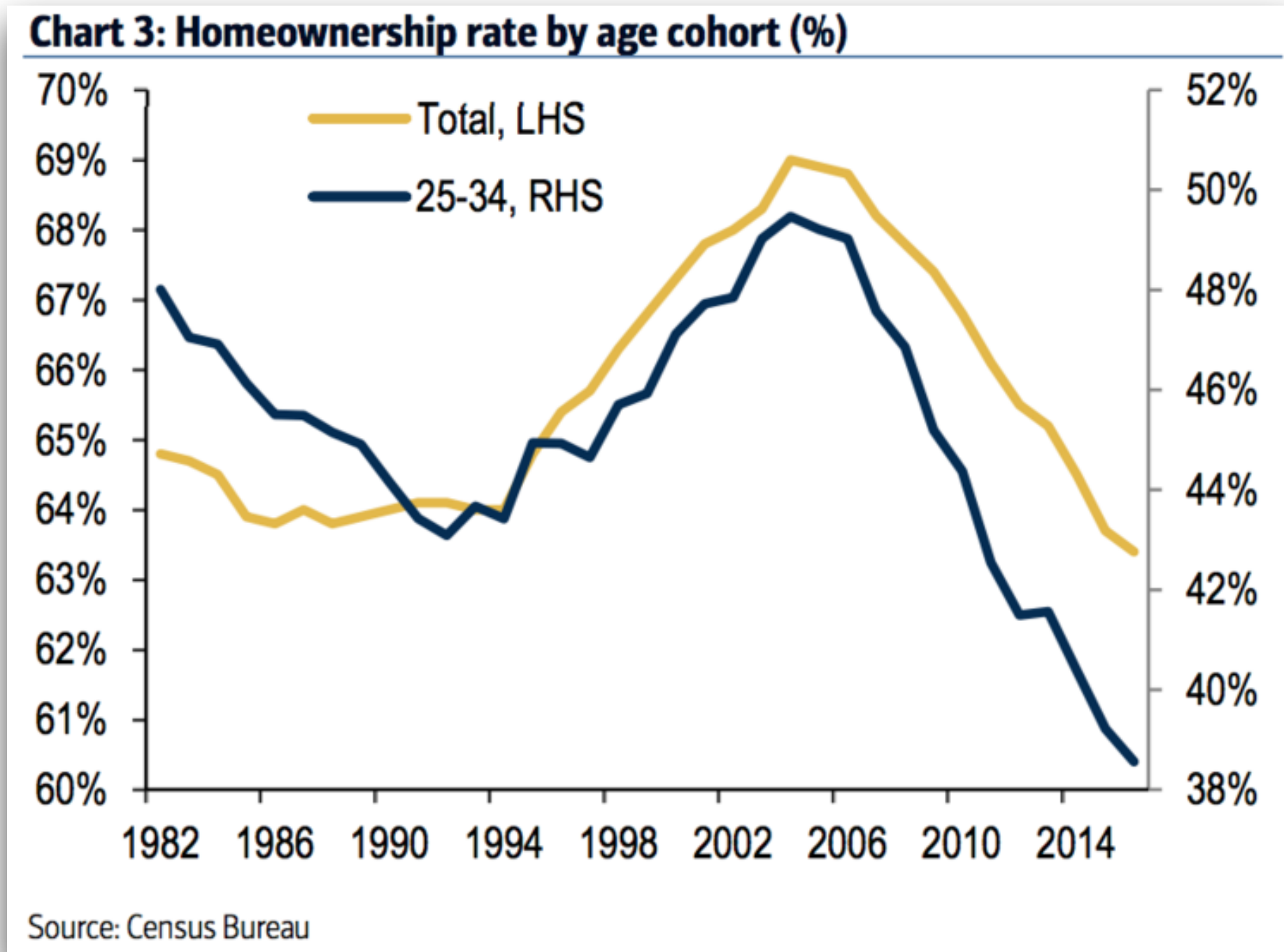
*From 1977 to 1979, the numbers for married 15-19 year-olds include 14 year-olds. Before 2009, the data was taken from [UN Data](#), who collected 20 percent samples of census returns.*

Lisa Charlotte Rost, Datawrapper • Source: [American Community Survey](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

40% of babies now born out of wedlock

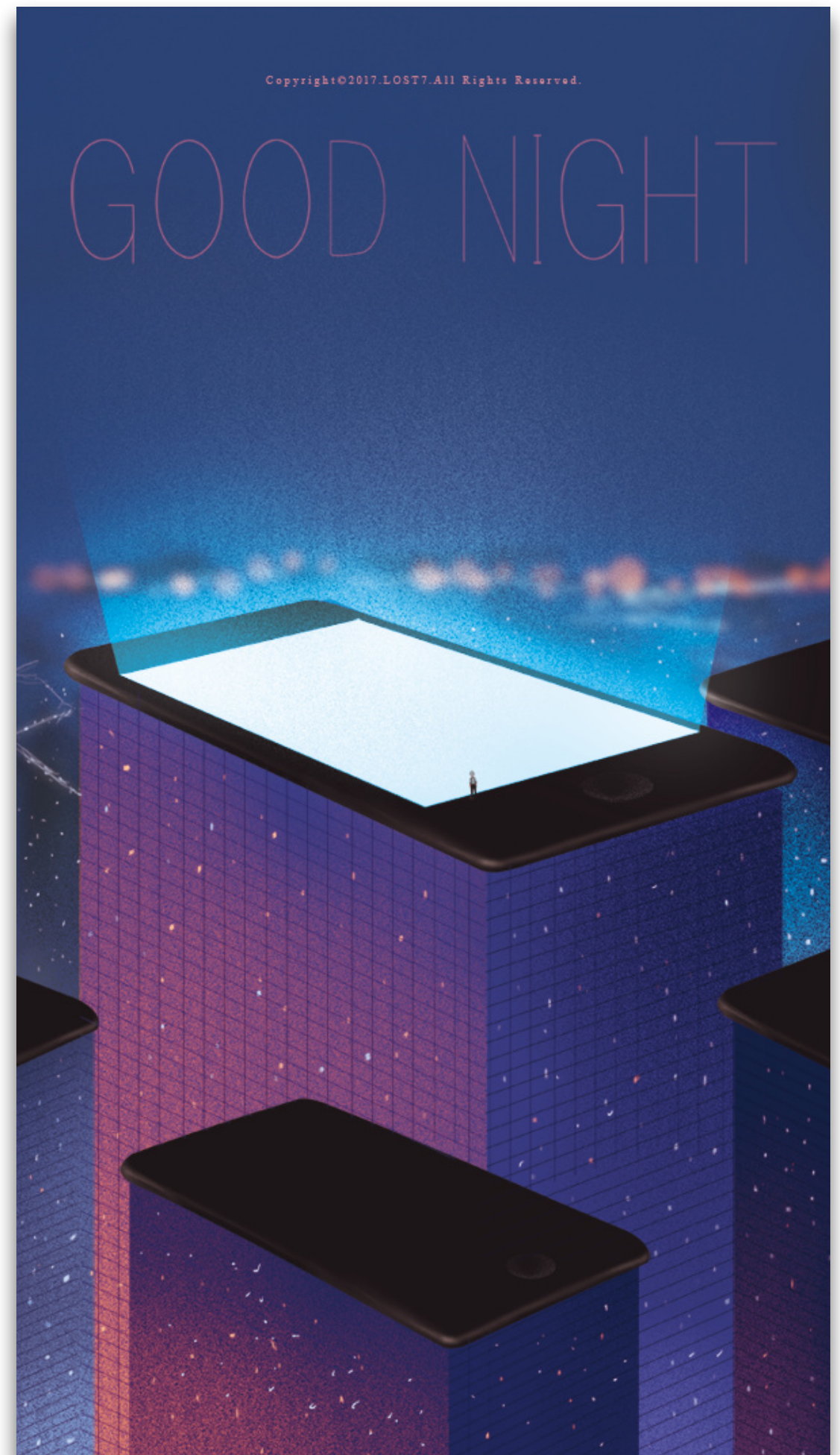


# NOT BUYING HOMES TO THE DEGREE OF PRIOR GENERATIONS...



# MOBILITY IS THE GAME CHANGER: CHANGING WORK

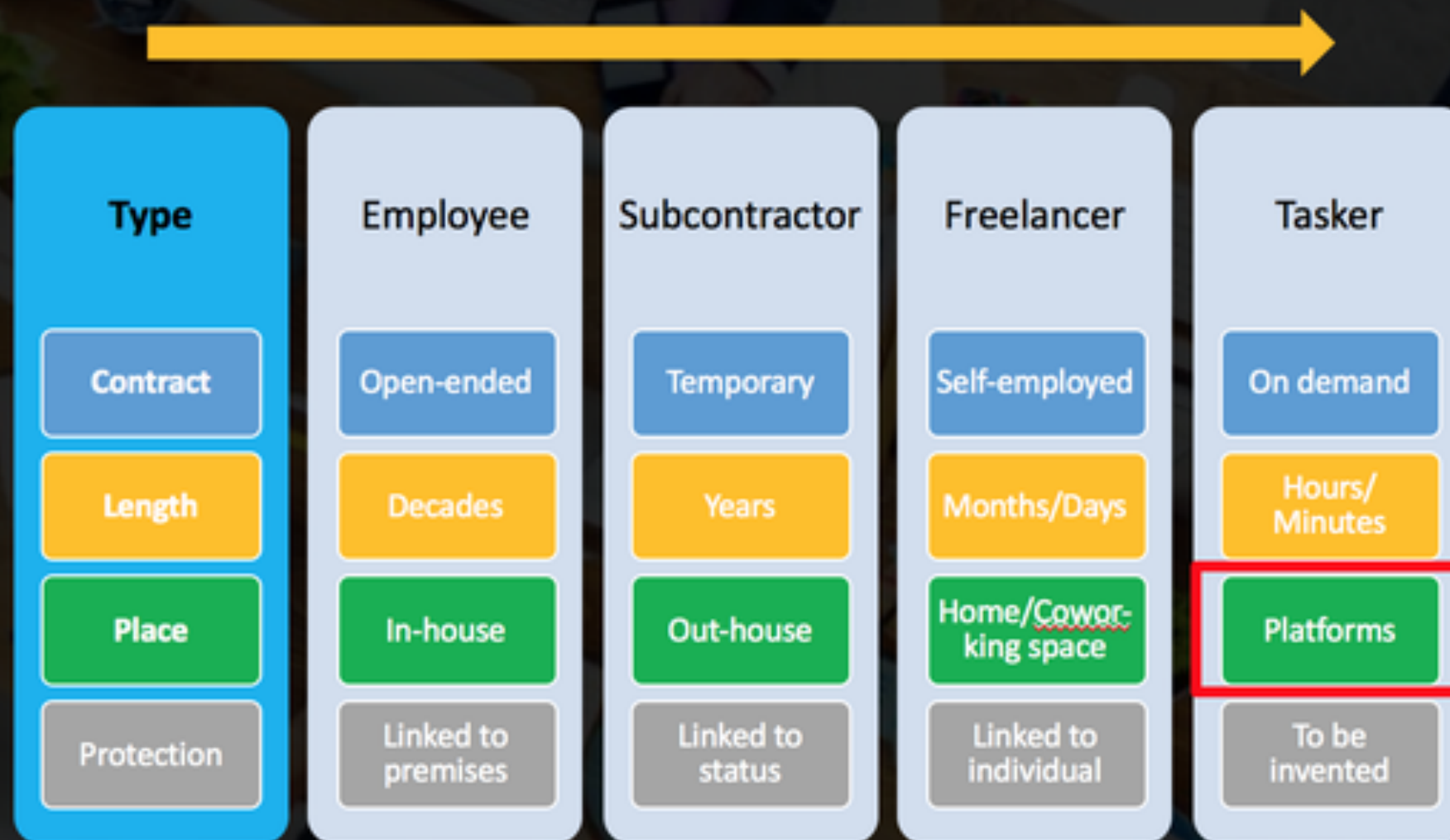
- ❖ Younger users: Desire for a digital interface
- ❖ Rather than easing the workload - connected smartphones have meant that work has encroached into the personal sphere -
- ❖ Can no longer “leave work behind” at 5:00 - expectation that workers will respond quickly to emails/ texts/ Slack/ Telegram etc.
- ❖ Workers now: As long as we’re working all the time, might as well do it in cool places...





# MOBILITY IS RESHAPING WORK AND THE WORKPLACE - WORK - FROM “WHERE YOU GO” TO “WHAT YOU DO”

## The Shortening of Work

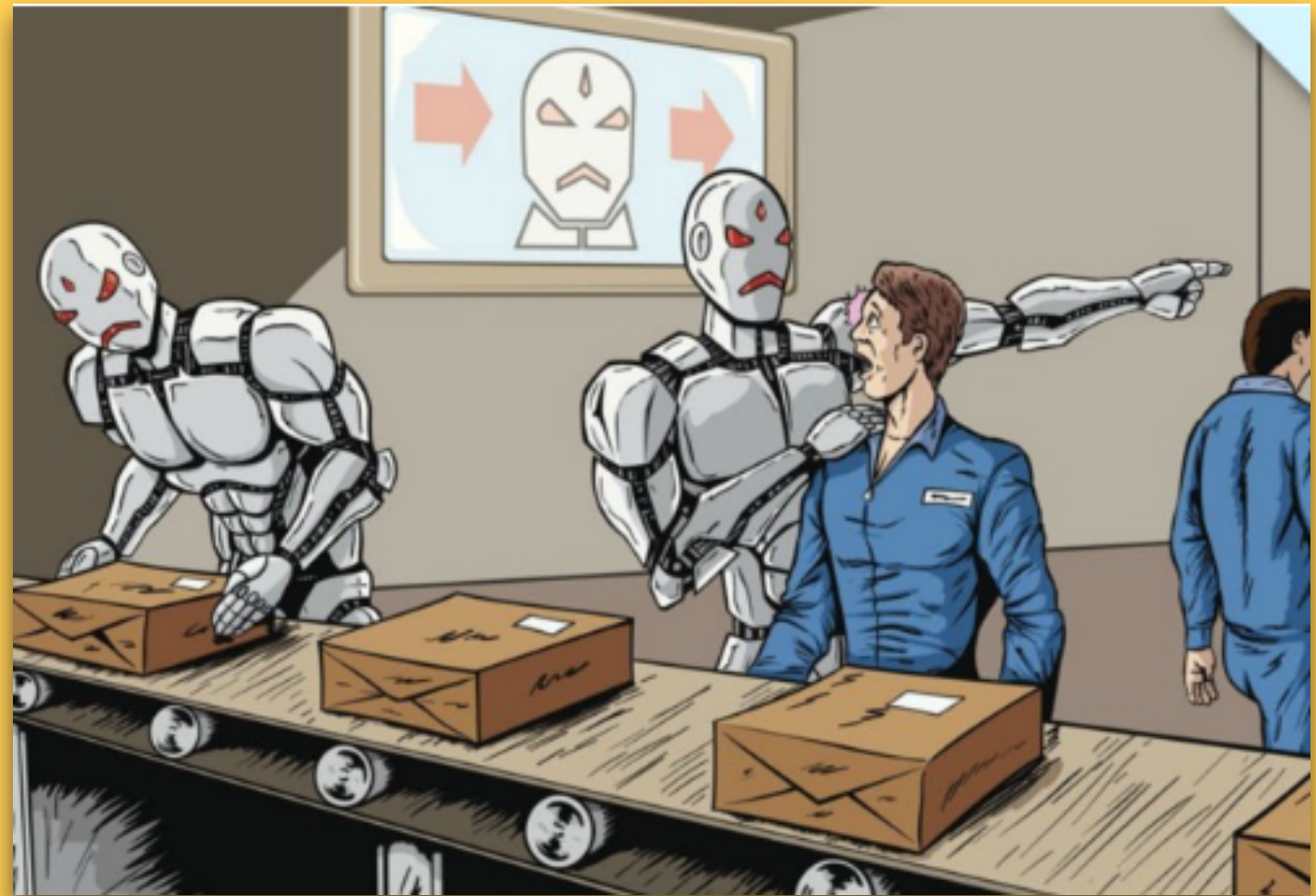


Adapted from Thomas Malone – The spectrum of jobs



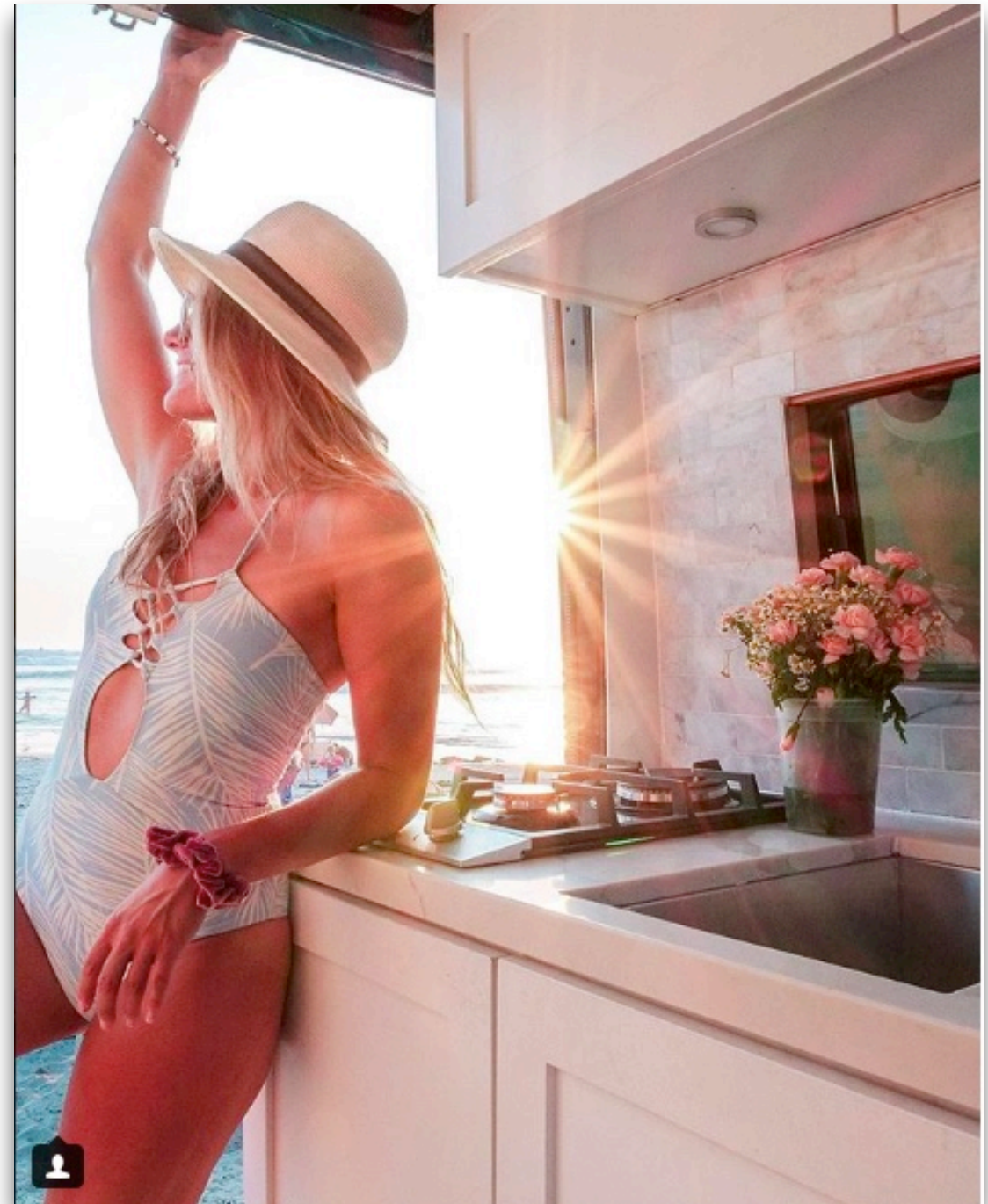
# AI AND AUTOMATION MAY MEAN THERE'S NO WORK AT ALL FOR SOME

- The end of jobs problem -
- Currently, less than 5% of occupations are entirely automated, and about 60% of occupations have at least 30% of tasks that can be automated.
- If not eliminated, perhaps lower pay: Many companies focusing on their core competencies and contracting out everything else — result is low pay, few benefits, and job insecurity for workers. End of retirement.
- Rise in the gig/tasker workforce



# DIGITAL NOMADS - “TASKER” BECOMING THE NEW NORMAL

- Three main trends: Rise in Gigging, Live/ Work Spaces and Digital Nomadism
- Now: 47% of connected Millennials are freelancing, as opposed to 28% of Baby Boomers
- Going forward: Patchwork of consecutive jobs rather than sequential “careers”



“Wild by the Mile”



# Mobility is changing the

≡ COSMOPOLITAN STYLE BEAUTY LOVE VIDEO GIFT IDEAS

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## Why I Gave Up a \$95,000 Job to Move to an Island and Scoop Ice Cream

Four years ago, I dismantled my life in New York and headed to a place where I knew no one.



By [Noelle Hancock](#) Apr 29, 2015

604.9k



If your current plans don't include another child,



system is a hormone-releasing IUD that prevents pregnancy for up to 5 years. Mirena also treats heavy periods in women who choose intrauterine contraception.

### IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

- If you have a pelvic infection, get infections easily, or have certain cancers, don't use Mirena. Less than 1% of users get a serious pelvic infection called pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).

FULL PRESCRIBING INFORMATION

### MORE FROM LIFESTYLE



Your Horoscope for This Week



# COMPANIES ARE STRUGGLING WITH AN UNTETHERING WORKFORCE

- 70% of Millennials now want flexible work options
- Untethered workers presents new challenges for companies trying to figure out how to adapt to this new form of working...
- Companies are responding in a couple of different ways -
  - Some are calling their workers back in ... “shoulder to shoulder”

**Business**

## IBM's Marissa Mayer moment: Staff ordered to work in one of 6 main offices – or face the axe

Marketing told to sit 'shoulder to shoulder' or else

By Shaun Nichols in San Francisco 8 Feb 2017 at 06:58

146

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Big blues ... This is your home now, like it or not

**Exclusive** IBM is cracking down on remote workers, ordering unlucky employees to either come into one of six main offices and work "shoulder to shoulder" – or leave for good.

In a confidential video message to staff seen by *The Register* on Tuesday, chief marketing officer Michelle Peluso told her US marketing troops they must work at "a smaller set of locations" if they want to continue with the company. Staffers have 30 days to decide whether to stay or go.



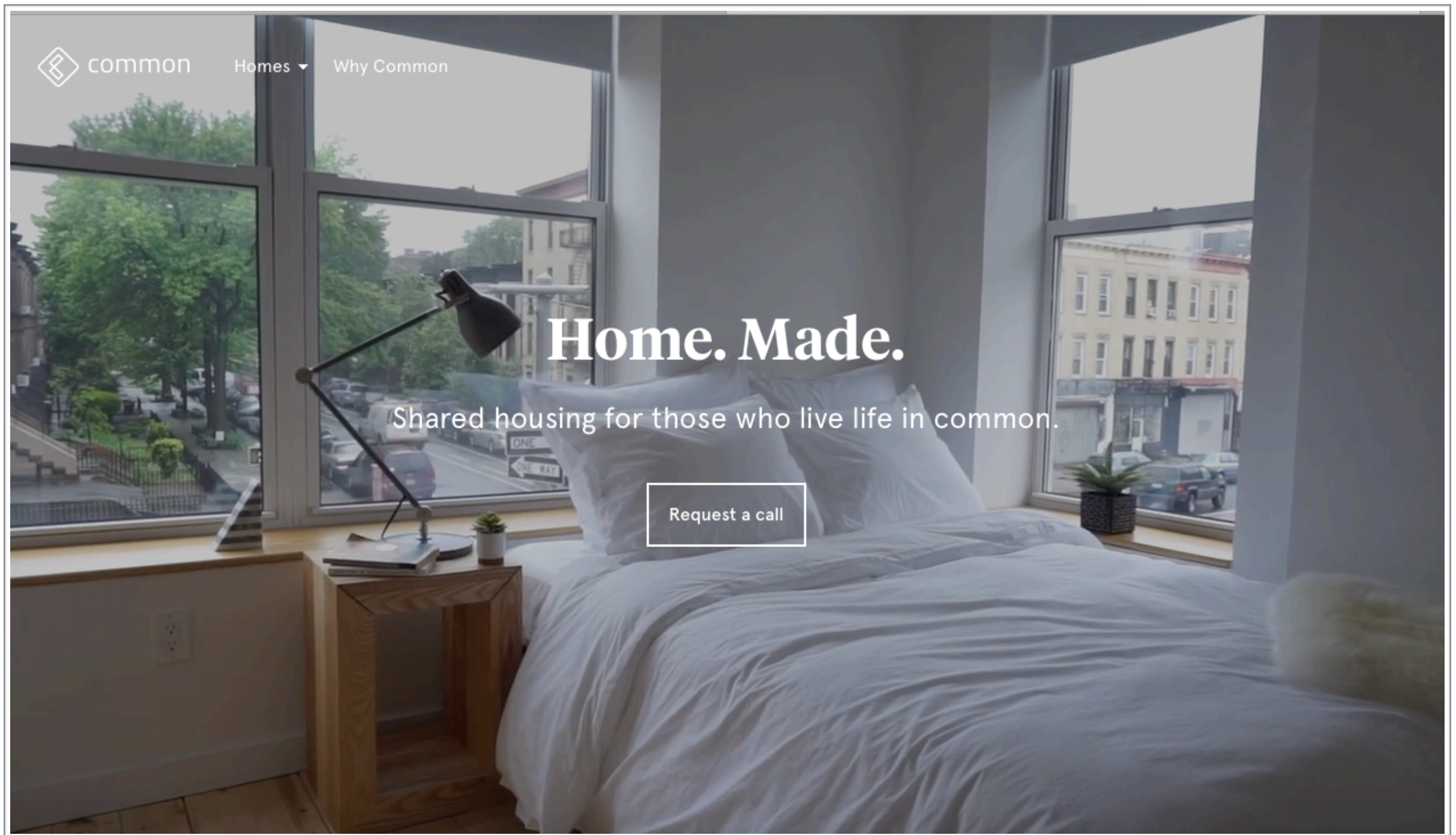
# OTHERS ARE TAKING THE OPPOSITE APPROACH....

SET THEM FREE

**The company behind WordPress is closing its gorgeous San Francisco office because its employees never show up**







# INFRASTRUCTURE IS EMERGING FOR UNTETHERED ADULTS

Ephemerality - No commitments - “move anytime”

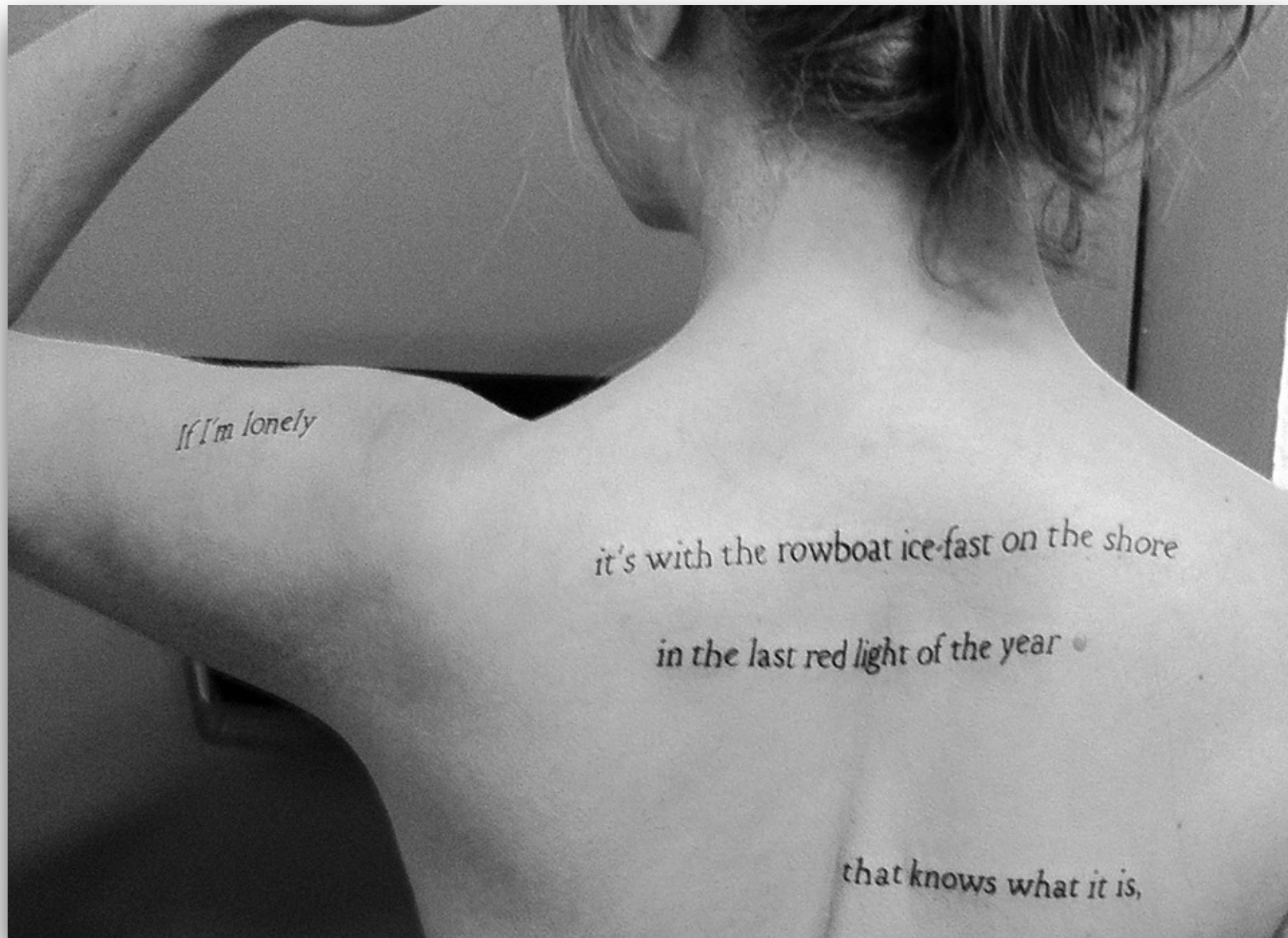
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*Co-working spaces and adult dorms*

# Being untethered = being unmoored...

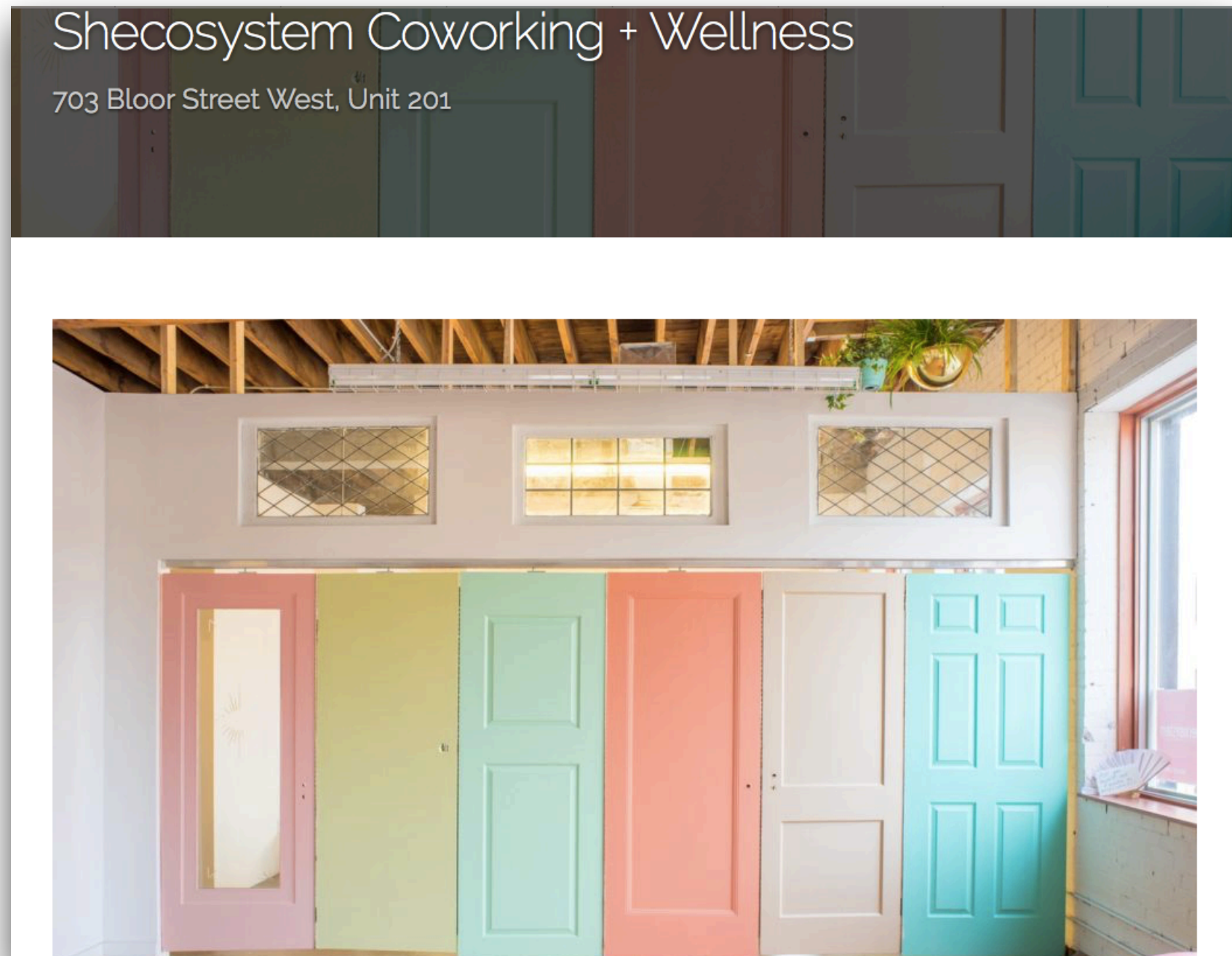
## Loneliness as an occupational hazard

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Other mental health issues: Coming untethered means coming unmoored from stabilizing structures



Anxiety, depression on the rise amongst young people

# DO YOU FEEL YOUR PHONE IS ADDICTIVE?

- 1/3 of Americans would rather give up sex for three months rather than give up their smartphones
- 84% of 18-29 year olds would rather give up alcohol for one month than their smartphone for a week





# I USED TO BE A SKEPTIC ABOUT INTERNET “ADDICTION”

Early days of the  
Internet - much like  
watching TV... Yet we  
didn't hear about “TV  
addiction,” really...



# WHAT CHANGED MY MIND?



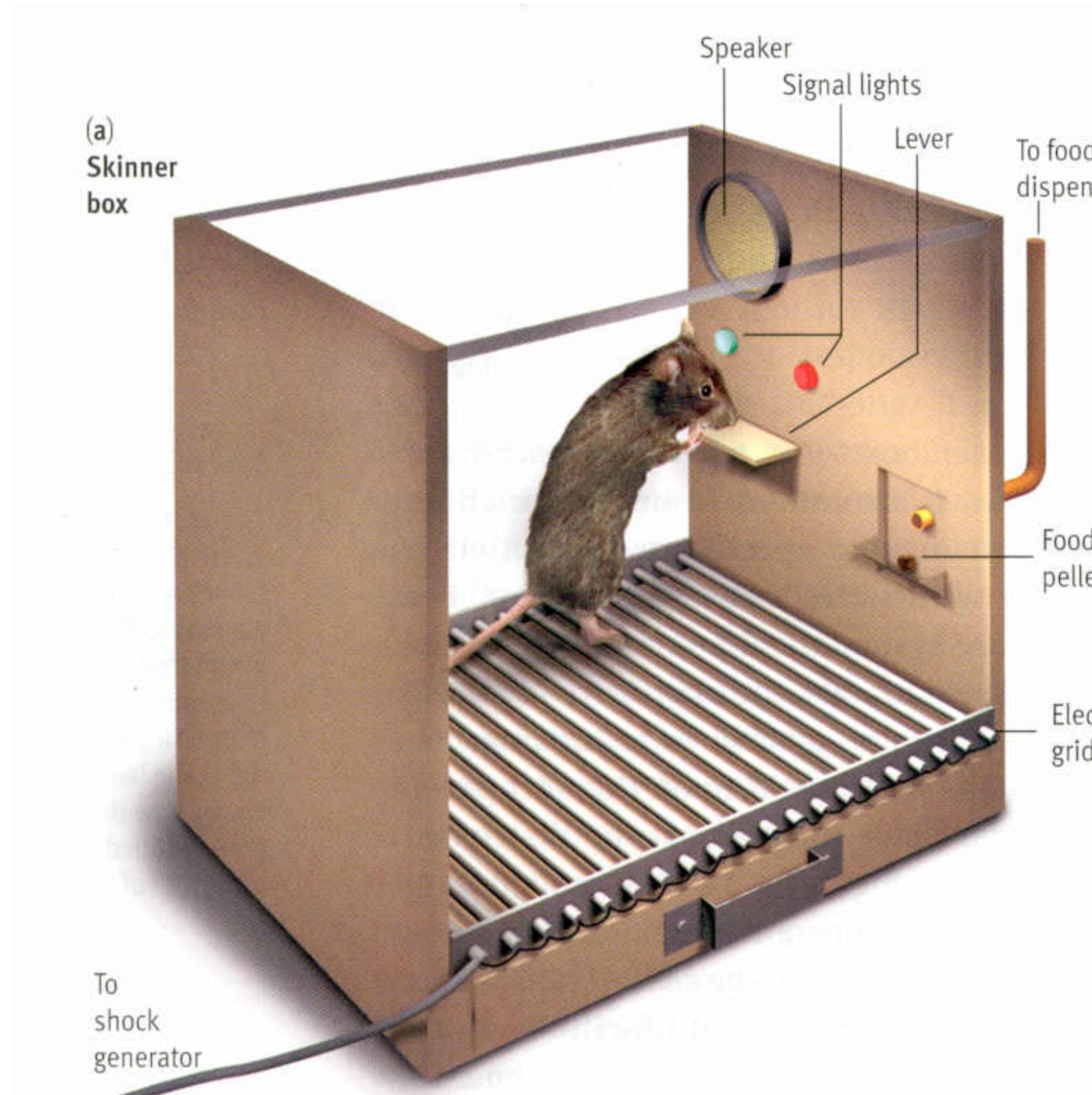
ty - Computers  
om the wall- can  
you in your pocket  
now.

Second:  
Social Media  
With its built in  
behavioral  
drivers

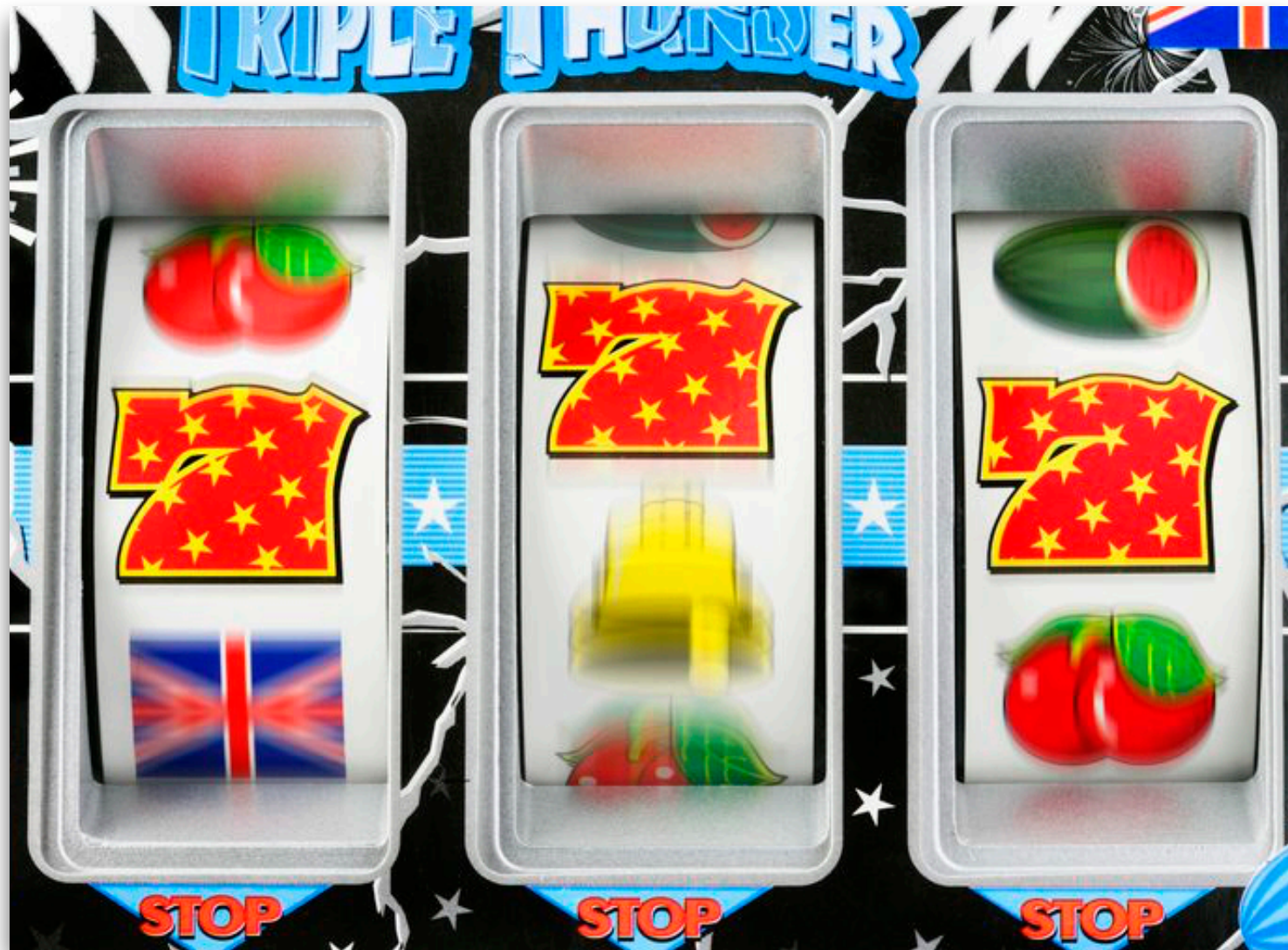




- Psychology -Skinner - talked about reinforcers of behavior
- Rat pushes bar for a pellet of food -
- Never gets one - stops pushing
- Always gets one- gets bored...
- But: RANDOM reinforcement - sometime you get it, sometimes you don't -most powerful behavioral reinforcer... its like...







“One armed bandit” - slot machines  
work on random reinforcement:  
Sometimes you win, sometimes you  
don't...  
*Gambling Addiction*



Scrolling on social media much the  
same:  
Content can be exciting, interesting - or  
boring.  
Likes drive posting behavior.  
Its random reinforcement- built right in.



# UNTETHERING FROM NA

❖ ANOTHER

❖ As we become more dependent on our phones, the time outdoors is decreasing. 87% of our time is spent indoors, and another 6%

❖ Only 7% of our time is spent outdoors

❖ Idea of “time outdoors” is becoming more important

❖ The digital world is now the natural sublime now

❖ Time outdoors is mediated...  
“Diffuse Attention”



LASTLY - THE PRESENTATION  
OF SELF ONLINE, AND THE  
VIRTUAL MIRROR



# Another aspect driving anxiety/depression amongst digital natives: The Virtual Mirror

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First modern glass mirror - 1300s, Venice, Italy

Mirrors - played an important role in the construction of the self over time







# Narcissus - pool of water as mirror

Ancient Greek myth

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*Later - the idea of "narcissism" - extreme selfishness, with a grandiose view of one's own talents and a craving for admiration, as characterizing a personality type.*



# Early 1900s- onward - The Mirror in Developing Sense of Self

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- ❖ Rise of sociology, psychology / psychoanalysis
- ❖ Mirror appears again - Jacques Lacan's (psychoanalysis)

“Mirror stage” - a reflected image of the body triggers *apperception*, or an external view of the self that gives rise to the internal mental representation of an “I.”





# Early 1900s- onward - The Mirror in Developing Sense of Self

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Charles Horton Cooley's  
“looking glass self” (1964) -  
That self-identity is a result  
of the reflected appraisal of  
others in social settings.





# Now: Virtual Mirror

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Digital technologies and social media now act as a *virtual mirror*, reflecting back a self which plays a fundamental role in the construction of self and identity in the modern era





# The Virtual Mirror

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Rather than reflecting back an accurate reflection of the self, the virtual mirror acts as a funhouse mirror, reflecting back a distorted image that may bear little or no resemblance to offline reality.

(e.g., face “tuning,” photoshopping and a curated reality)





# The Virtual Mirror: Mrs. and Mrs. Everywhere

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John Brunner, in his 1968 science fiction novel “Stand on Zanzibar,” foreshadows the virtual mirror when he imagined an “advanced TV” which would allow people to insert themselves into the frame and go on various adventures around the world as “**Mr. & Mrs. Everywhere.**”





# Virtual Mirror

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**“Mr. & Mrs. Everywhere”** - and Over the Top Lives

- ❖ Exaggerated posing, pointing; duck faces or huge smiles or shouts; exposed apps, breasts, etc.
- ❖ Exotic locales, expensive food, jets, designer clothes/bags/shoes, etc.
- ❖ Designed to present the “best life ever” - evoke jealousy and envy in the viewer (like portraits of old) - *“invidious comparison”*





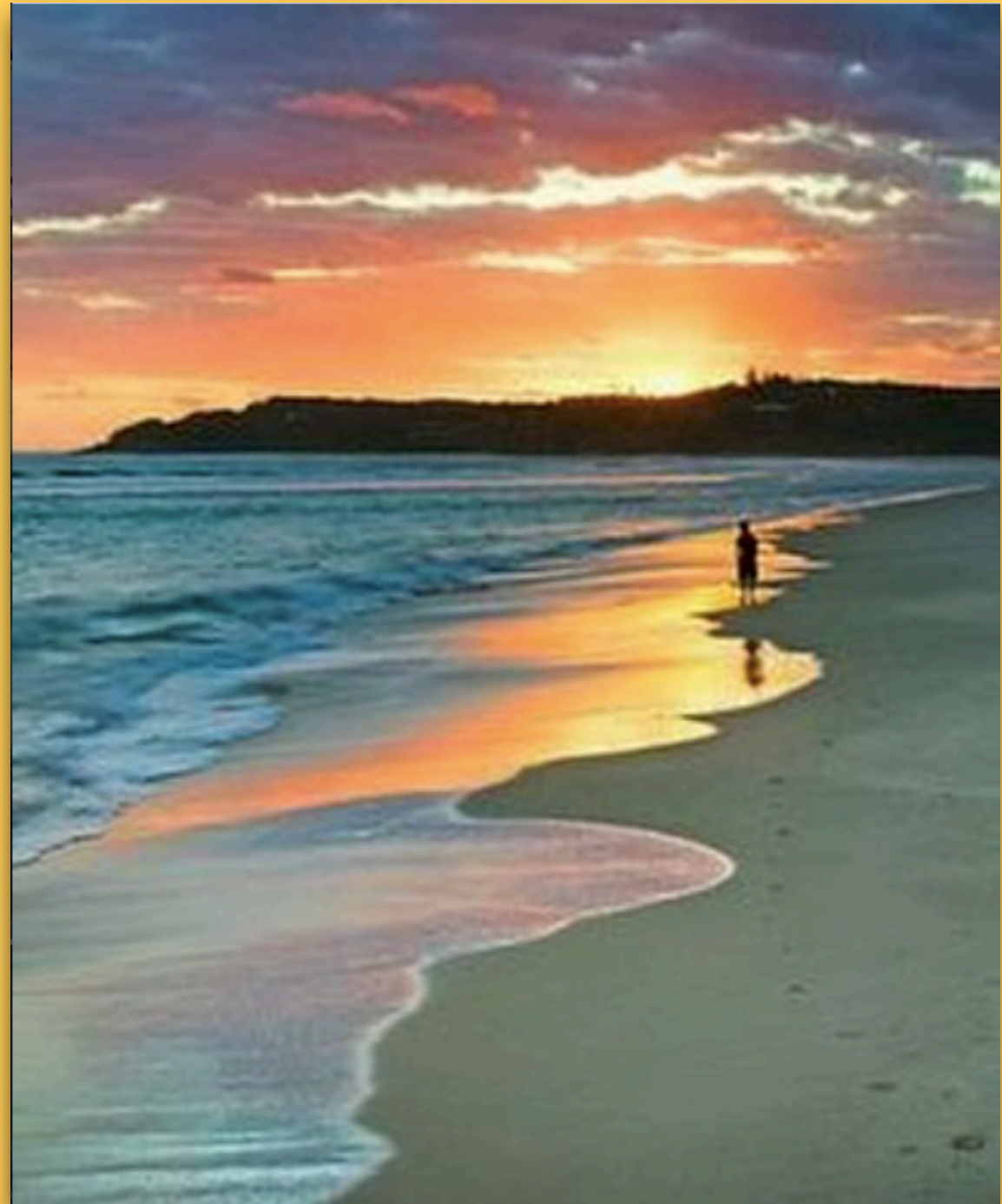
# SO WHAT CAN WE DO? LET'S BRING THE BODY AND SACRED SPACES BACK INTO LIFE...

Employees are people too, and need more balance between devices and time offline.

With the increasing **virtualization of everything** - we need to make a conscious choice about how we *balance our digital connectivity with connection to others around us, with our body, Nature/ and the sublime* - things bigger than ourselves...

## **Establish of “sacred spaces”- offline, to reconnect**

- Family dinners
- Work on the art of conversation over meals with friends or romantic partners
- Uninterrupted sleep - charge the phone elsewhere (away from your bed)
- Exercise





***Thank you!***

Julie M. Albright, PhD  
[www.drjuliealbright.com](http://www.drjuliealbright.com)

Email: [jalbrig@calstatela.edu](mailto:jalbrig@calstatela.edu)

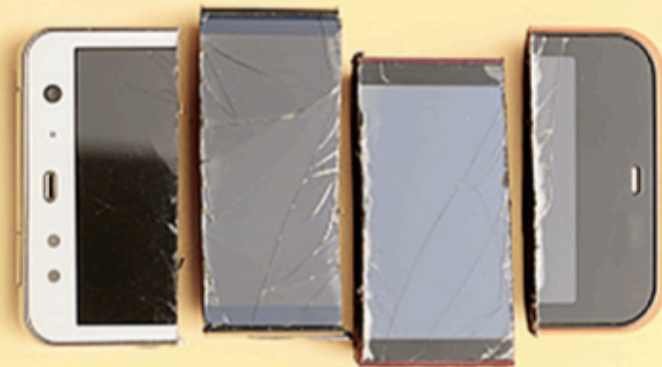
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**LeftToTheirOwnDevices****

# LEFT TO THEIR OWN DEVICES

*How Digital Natives are  
Reshaping the **American Dream***



JULIE M. ALBRIGHT