



How to Write a Synthesis Essay

Smartphones and Social Media Are Not Destroying a Generation

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Name

Instructor

Course

Date

Smartphones and Social Media Are Not Destroying a Generation

Introduction

An article published by Jean Twenge clearly warns readers that the rise in the use of smartphones in the modern world is ruining teenagers. Furthermore, the author makes a sensational claim that the rise in social media and smartphone usage are creating a metaphorical earthquake, the likes of which have never been previously witnessed in the world. The author provides pieces of evidence from other studies concerning the issue, as well as personal observations—all of which support Twenge's claim. According to Twenge, the main theory for claiming that smartphone and social media usage result in destroying a generation is that increased use of these two platforms results in mental depression and other mental problems. This paper will mainly refute the claims of the author by focusing on the issues raised by the author's work.



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Discussion

Although technology has brought tremendous changes for society, the use of smartphones and social media are not in any way destroying a generation, especially when looking at the reasons portrayed by Twenge. The whole basis of this view is a result of the sources of information that she chose to provide for insights in her article, which further does not paint a clear picture of the effects of these devices on a generation, especially for teenagers. As such, her use of biased information is enough to disprove her claims.

One of the main reasons for not supporting the article and the observations made by the author is the fact that all of the pieces of evidence – found through sources – that were chosen by the author are biased. Twenge only uses reviews and studies that seem to support her views. At the same time she ignores other studies which have been conducted to show that screen time does not have a major impact on depression and other mental health related conditions that affect teenagers. In one claim, the researcher used a study that contends that the more teens used social media like Facebook, the more they became depressed. However, she did not dwell on the issue of depression – the same research revealed that being depressed as a result of using Facebook did not result in more Facebook usage (Twenge). Such findings remove the blame from Facebook, as it clearly shows that unhappiness and Facebook are not entirely correlated—as portrayed by Twenge. Moreover, by not using Facebook more often after the teenagers had



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become unhappy suggests that the use of Facebook has not entirely replaced how teenagers could use social media to find alternative happiness or to come out of their depression.

Bias is also seen in Twenge's article when she claims that the rate of suicide was very high among teenagers in the 1990s, long before smartphones were introduced. She suggests that the current lower rate is due to the introduction of anti-depressants, which lowers the chances of suicide (Twenge). The mere fact that suicide rates were higher before the introduction of smartphones is solid proof that smartphones are not the sole reason for the current predicament of suicide, as other factors also have a role to play.

Another important factor that impacts negatively on the credibility of her article is that all of the studies which she used are correlational. This means that the researchers she reviewed had only observed the association between a specific or few number of variables, which predominantly included the use of smartphones, social media, and depression. The main effect of these correlations leaves readers open to other possibilities. For example, the associations she had concluded could mainly be due to smartphone usage causing depression, depression causing increased smartphone usage, or even extracurricular activities causing a rise or fall in both depression or smartphone usage. In a given research, to be able to actually know whether or not smartphones cause depression amongst teenagers, they have to assign large groups, and also a control group, to study the issue. Ultimately, Twenge notes these kinds of disparities in her



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article by mentioning the correlation of data she had found in some instances. However, in other parts of her essay, she states, "Eighth-graders who are heavy users of social media increase their risk of depression by 27 percent" (Twenge). This statement does not consider the fact that eighth-graders can have other factors that may also play a role in increasing their chances of depression. There is an example of this where millennials who grew up without smartphones are increasingly facing individualistic and self-esteem issues (Stein).

The studies that Twenge uses to support her claims ignore the social contexts of people and how communities and people differ. She instead reports only on the average effects and correlations that exist. A good example of this is in her introduction when she states that the current generation of teenagers has lower rates of early teen pregnancy, smoking, and alcohol use, among other negative factors. This leaves the question of whether having a low teenage pregnancy rate and a low rate of alcohol consumption among teenagers is a sign of a destroyed society or generation (Twenge). Truly, these are signs of a substandard generation, and in fact, they are positives for the generation. One positive impact of social media and smartphones is the fact that it enables teenagers to connect with each other routinely, and this can help them build their adolescent development. They are able to connect with other teenagers in various areas such as fashion and music, which helps them develop together (Chamorro-Premuzic).

Conclusion



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Although Jean Twenge has valid claims on the use of social media and teenagers, there is a lot of bias in her article, which reduces the credibility of her article. She chooses only to focus on one side of the issue and neglects any opposing arguments to the issue—which shows that social media and smartphones could be of great use to teenagers. She also chooses to neglect the negative factors that signified the previous generation, such as teen pregnancy and underage alcohol usage—these factors being some of her indicators of how harmful these devices are to the current generation. All of these issues that affected the previous generation have had a big impact on the future lives of teenagers, and by reducing them, it definitely signifies a better generation, based on morals and values.

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