Public Communication

**Note:** The starting point for this project is **the main source you analyzed in Project 2**. Instead of analyzing the argument or narrative, now you write your own opinion piece based on the same topic.

# Unit 12: Opinion Piece

## Set the Foundations

### Identify Type

State whether you will be writing an Editorial, Op-ed, or Column

Column

### State Issue, Thesis and Key Reasons

State the overarching, debatable question you are answering, your answer to that question (your central argument or thesis), and 2-3 key reasons (the “because” that explains why you believe your thesis is true).

Issue: Does social media ruin relationships?

Thesis: Excessive amounts of social media consumption exceed our natural limit for meaningful relationships, contributes to loneliness and a decline in well-being, and the absence of non-verbal cues when interacting over social media causes relationships to suffer.

Reasons:

Dunbar’s Number theory

Loneliness and reduced well-being

Non-verbal cues during face-to-face interactions

### List Sources

List 1-2 (or more) sources

**Note: These can be drawn from the sources you used for your Research-driven Critique Essay—but you are also free to use new sources.**  
  
Stieger, S., Lewetz, D. & Willinger, D. Face-to-face more important than digital communication for mental health during the pandemic. *Sci Rep* 13, 8022 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-34957-4

## Brainstorm Rhetorical Appeals

List logical, emotional, and ethical appeals you will use in your opinion piece:   
  
Logical:

Statistics on social media use and its effect on mental health

Emotional:

I have experienced social media overconsumption in my past romantic relationship, and it negatively impacted it by setting standards of living and gift-giving higher than that of the average person despite getting below average treatment.

Ethical:

It’s up to each individual to recognize the importance of cultivating relationships face-to-face as the potential individual and societal impacts could change social landscapes

## Write the Opinion Piece

### Outline

Introduction  
Hook:   
  
Millions of people scrolling through social media, commenting without a hint of a smile, liking posts to show their care, and viewing to stay with the latest trend. All to satisfy their need for meaningful connections.

Background information:   
  
In the modern world, social media has changed how we interact daily, offering the ability to instantly connect with people across the world and to reach hundreds, thousands, or millions by the push of a button. While we are fed the belief that social media platforms are to bring us together, it is common for many to experience the opposite. The average person spending hours on social media, the quality of relationships intertwined with social media and the affect they have on individual’s well-being is to be questioned.

Thesis statement  
  
Excessive amounts of social media consumption exceed our natural limit for meaningful relationships, contribute to loneliness and a decline in well-being, and the absence of non-verbal cues when interacting over social media causes relationships to suffer.

Point 1

We can only handle so many meaningful relationships. Anthropologist Robin Dunbar’s research found that we can only manage 148 significant connections, commonly rounded up to 150. For you or me, it could very well be much less. In my life, I find it hard to keep up relationships with a dozen people outside of my immediate family. Ask yourself how many meaningful relationships are you able to uphold?

Point 2

The decline in face-to-face communication has been significant in increased feelings of loneliness and a decline in well-being. A study by S. Stieger, D. Lewetz, and D. Willinger called “Face-to-face more important than digital communication for mental health during the pandemic” has also found that it was absolutely crucial for people’s well-being to have face-to-face interaction.

Point 3

Non-verbal cues can say a lot about what a person is feeling and can add gravity to one’s dialogue. It was found that “face-to-face communication was much more important for lockdown mental health than digital communication” (S. Stieger et al).

Conclusion

While we often find social media to be helpful in keeping up communication, its impact on the quality of relationships should be taken into consideration when going through daily life. I ask that you look at how you are communicating with the ones you care about the most and feel the difference you feel when you are with them in person versus when you are behind a screen.

### Draft

Draft an opinion piece of about 400-500 words.

Millions of people scrolling through social media, commenting without a hint of a smile, liking posts to show their care, and viewing to stay with the latest trend. All to satisfy their need for meaningful connections. In the modern world, social media has changed how we interact daily, offering the ability to instantly connect with people across the world and to reach hundreds, thousands, or millions by the push of a button. While we are fed the belief that social media platforms are to bring us together, it is common for many to experience the opposite. The average person spending hours on social media, the quality of relationships intertwined with social media and the affect they have on individual’s well-being is to be questioned. Excessive amounts of social media consumption exceed our natural limit for meaningful relationships, contribute to loneliness and a decline in well-being, and the absence of non-verbal cues when interacting over social media causes relationships to suffer.

Point 1

We can only handle so many meaningful relationships. Anthropologist Robin Dunbar’s research found that we can only manage 148 significant connections, commonly rounded up to 150. This is known as Dunbar’s number. Dunbar’s number is also just an average for each person. For you or me, it could very well be much less. In my life, I find it hard to keep up relationships with a dozen people outside of my immediate family. Ask yourself how many meaningful relationships are you able to uphold? After this limit, a person can no longer keep up the same quality of relationships anymore. Seeing how social media encourages users to maintain hundreds, if not thousands of online “relationships”, it is clear that social media is not a place for relationships to flourish.

Point 2

The decline in face-to-face communication has been significant in increased feelings of loneliness and a decline in well-being. With the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing people to frequent social media even more than before, it became clear that online relationships were not enough. I have experienced this firsthand as I was in a romantic relationship during the COVID pandemic, forced to stay at home. Social media was the frequent medium of communication which caused us to inevitably fall into a “doom scroll” mode on Instagram as we waited for the other to respond. During this doom scrolling, it was common to see unrealistic beauty, relationship, financial, and social standards. This bled into conversation and created issues between us. I believe social media to be a large reason for that relationship to end. The end of this relationship was a large reason I do not use social media as much anymore. Don’t just listen to me though, a study by S. Stieger, D. Lewetz, and D. Willinger called “Face-to-face more important than digital communication for mental health during the pandemic” has also found that it was absolutely crucial for people’s well-being to have face-to-face interaction.

Point 3

Non-verbal cues can say a lot about what a person is feeling and can add gravity to one’s dialogue. Some of these cues consist of body language, voice pitch, and eye movements. With body language you can tell if someone is relaxed or tense. With voice pitch we can tell if someone is excited or sad. With darting eyes, we can infer that someone is anxious and with solid eye contact, we can infer that someone is serious. When communicating over social media, none of these cues can be seen and so the nature of our conversations is duller and does not provide the same emotional depth as in person interaction. Again, from the studies done in “Face-to-face more important than digital communication for mental health during the pandemic”, it was found that “face-to-face communication was much more important for lockdown mental health than digital communication” (S. Stieger et al). They continue that even video conferencing was hardly helpful with mental health despite those non-verbal cues being present. Mental health strains cause people to act differently towards each other and in turn this causes rifts in relationships. As we are out of the pandemic now, it is important that each of us individually assess if we are cultivating our relationships in the right way. Defaulting to using social media over making time to see people in person could change our societal landscape as we know it.

Conclusion

While we often find social media to be helpful in keeping up communication, its impact on the quality of relationships should be taken into consideration when going through daily life. From exceeding our natural capacity for meaningful connections to increasing feelings of loneliness and the absence of non-verbal cues, social media goes against what human interaction has always been about. The *human* connection. I ask that you look at how you are communicating with the ones you care about the most and feel the difference you feel when you are with them in person versus when you are behind a screen.

## Revise, Edit and Proofread

Copy and paste your draft from above. Leave it in its “rough” form above, and revise and edit the copy below. **This is what will be graded for the opinion piece part**.

Social Media: Limitless Connection at the Cost of Meaningful Relationships

Introduction

Millions of people scrolling through social media, commenting without a hint of a smile, liking posts to show their care, and viewing to stay with the latest trend. All to satisfy their need for meaningful connections. In the modern world, social media has changed how we interact daily, offering the ability to instantly connect with people across the world and to reach hundreds, thousands, or millions by the push of a button. While we are fed the belief that social media platforms are to bring us together, it is common for many to experience the opposite. The average person spends hours on social media. This is justification for the quality of relationships when intertwined with social media and the effect they have on people’s well-being is to be questioned. Excessive amounts of social media consumption exceed our natural limit for meaningful relationships, contribute to loneliness and a decline in well-being, and the absence of non-verbal cues when interacting over social media causes relationships to suffer.

We can only handle so many meaningful relationships. Anthropologist Robin Dunbar’s research found that we can only manage 148 significant connections, commonly rounded up to 150. This is known as Dunbar’s number. It is important to note Dunbar’s number is just an average for each person. For you or me, it could very well be less. In my case, I find it hard to keep up relationships with a dozen people outside of my immediate family. Ask yourself how many meaningful relationships are you able to uphold? After this limit, a person can no longer keep up the same quality of relationships anymore. Seeing how social media encourages users to maintain hundreds, if not thousands of online “relationships”, social media is not a place for relationships to flourish.

The decline in face-to-face communication has been significant in increased feelings of loneliness and a decline in well-being. With the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing people to frequent social media even more than before, it became clear that online relationships were not enough. I have experienced this firsthand as I was in a romantic relationship during the COVID pandemic, forced to stay at home. Social media was the frequent medium of communication which caused us to inevitably fall into a “doom scroll” mode on Instagram as we waited for the other to respond. During this doom scrolling, it was common to see unrealistic beauty, relationship, financial, and social standards. This bled into conversation and created issues between us. I believe social media to be a large reason for that relationship to end. The end of this relationship was a large reason I do not use social media as much anymore as well. Don’t just listen to me though, a study by S. Stieger, D. Lewetz, and D. Willinger called “Face-to-face more important than digital communication for mental health during the pandemic” has also found that it was absolutely crucial for people’s well-being to have face-to-face interaction.

Non-verbal cues can say a lot about what a person is feeling and can add gravity to one’s dialogue. Some of these cues consist of body language, voice pitch, and eye movements. With body language you can tell if someone is relaxed or tense. With voice pitch we can tell if someone is excited or sad. With darting eyes, we can infer that someone is anxious. With solid eye contact, we can infer that someone is serious. When communicating over social media, none of these cues can be observed and so the nature of social media conversations is duller and does not provide the same emotional depth as in person interaction. Again, from the studies done in “Face-to-face more important than digital communication for mental health during the pandemic”, it was found that “face-to-face communication was much more important for lockdown mental health than digital communication” (S. Stieger et al). They continue that even video conferencing was hardly helpful with mental health despite those non-verbal cues being present. Mental health strains cause people to act differently towards each other and in turn this causes rifts in relationships. As we are out of the pandemic now, it is important that each of us individually assess if we are cultivating our relationships in the right way. Defaulting to using social media over making time to see people in person could change our societal landscape as we know it.

Conclusion

While we often find social media to be helpful in keeping up communication, its impact on the quality of relationships should be taken into consideration when going through daily life. From exceeding our natural capacity for meaningful connections to increasing feelings of loneliness and the absence of non-verbal cues, social media goes against what human interaction has always been about. The *human* connection. I ask that you look at how you are communicating with the ones you care about the most and feel the difference when you are with them in person versus when you are behind a screen.

# Unit 13: Digital Presentation

## Analyze a Digital Presentation (see eCentennial for details)

1. Sinha opens with a comparison of negotiation to a dance rather than a battle. This comparison acts as an interesting hook to grab attention. The body of the presentation is separated into three sections: preparation, emotional readiness, and putting others in. Separating the presentation into sections like this allows listeners to easily follow along. She closes the presentation with a concise conclusion and the main takeaway we she wants us to part with.
2. Sinha changes the way she speaks throughout the presentation to build up her points. By variating her tone, increasing and decreasing her pace of speech, and getting louder or softer, she makes her words sound interesting. Her voice does engage me as her inflections are punctual and variating.
3. Sinha uses body language and visuals such as animations to help engage her viewers. I find it effective as it adds emotion to her words apart from her inflections. The animations give some variation in the viewing experience as well. These animations also provided reinforcement for her words.
4. I have learned that I should be concise, keep a baseline pace that variates to accentuate points, and that having clear sections will keep the viewer engaged. I will take this learning to my presentation by making sure I have clear topic sentences to set my points and to accentuate my sentences to keep my presentation engaging.

## Script Your Presentation

Turn your opinion piece you wrote above into a **200-300** word script--pare it down, shorten sentences, make it a “spoken” text. **Tip**: speak it out loud as you write, to make sure it “lifts off the page” well!

Millions of people scroll through social media every day, commenting without a hint of a smile, liking posts to show their care, and viewing to stay with the latest trend. All in attempt to satisy their need for meaningful connections.  
  
Social media has changed how we interact on a daily basis, offering the ability to instantly connect with people across the world and to reach hundreds, thousands, or millions by the push of a button. While we are fed the belief that social media platforms are to bring us together, it is common for many to experience the opposite.  
  
Anthropologist Robin Dunbar’s research, famously known as the Dunbar’s number, has revealed that we can only maintain about 150 significant connections. Yet, when using social media, we are encouraged to push that limit to the hundreds or even thousands of online “relationships”. Ask yourself: How many meaningful connections can you truly maintain? For me, I can hardly handle a dozen. Social media has prioritized quantity over quality which prevents our relationships from flourishing.

The pandemic increased the effects of social media, replacing face-to-face communication with comments, likes, and text messages more than it already had. In a study at the Karl Landsteiner University of Health Sciences in Austria, Stieger, Lewetz, and Willinger found that this had a large negative impact on mental well-being. Now, this depreciation in mental well-being can manifest in many ways, but who are the ones most likely to be affected? Unfortunately, the people who you talk with the most – Your relationships will take a hit if social media consumption is not moderated.

Body language, voice pitch, and where people’s eyes gaze allows for a deeper conversation than simple text, gifs, or likes do. Social media being the latter, strips away the important non-verbal cues and dulls our conversations. Stieger et al have also found that even video conferencing was hardly helpful with mental health despite those non-verbal cues being present. People simply need to be in the same room as each other to have significant interactions with one another.

Social media may make talking with one another an easier task, but social media needs to be a compliment rather than a replacement for in-person connections. Please reflect on how often you interact with your loved ones over social media rather than taking the time to see them in person. And then ask yourself if you are truly creating and maintaining healthy, significant relationships or are you simply pacifying yourself behind a screen.

The script concludes the written part of the unit. You will also build, record and submit the presentation itself, using slideware.

**At the end of Unit 13:**

* Upload this completed file to Assessments/ Assignment/ Public Communication Folder.
* Post your **digital presentation** (mp4 by default) *and* **script** to the Discussion Board for the final Unit 14 peer review