Jonny Schreiber

Persuasive Speech Outline

**Introduction**

Attention Getting Device: Hello everyone, to start off my speech today I’d like to… \*phone buzzes\* … Oh, looks like I just got a snapchat, I should probably check that real quick. \*Looks down\* Awe it’s a picture of her face! \*Awkwardly “takes picture” in front of class\* \*Pause\*

So that was weird, right? I was about to start giving a speech and couldn’t seem to break away from social media. Obviously, I exaggerated the situation to make a point, but as technology continues to grow situations like this are becoming more and more common, and as social media seeps into our lives more and more we are becoming more blind to its dangers.

Credibility: For those of you who are curious, no I did not actually just check my snapchat in front of you all, as a matter of fact, I no longer have a snapchat. I decided to delete it from my phone a couple months before coming here because it was negatively impacting my mental health. I felt like I was only using it to look at stories or to see what my friends were up to on Snapmap. I ended up just constantly feeling like I was missing out on fun things and feeling inadequate about my own life. I soon realized that if I was experiencing something cool or fun, instead of actually experiencing it the people with me would just try and “capture” the moment, missing out on actually experiencing it. Although I am not an expert, and although deleting snapchat hasn’t solved all of my mental health problems, I have been able to cut out a lot of stress and anxiety and focus on living in the moment.

Thesis: There is a direct correlation between social media use and depression, meaning that cutting back on social media can improve mental health.

Preview: Once I prove that social media can lead to depression, I’m hoping that you will see that the solution is a lot easier than you may think.

**Problem**

Before I lay out the problem, I have a short disclaimer about this issue. It is not at all black and white; obviously there are many other factors besides social media usage that factor into mental health. In addition, social media affects each person differently. Keeping both of these in mind, along with the fact that social media is relatively new and there is not very much research that has gone into its effects on mental health, there is a lot of controversy around whether social media has negative or positive effects on mental health (ncbi.nih.gov: ‘Online Social Networking and Mental Health’). However, in the past couple years there have been several studies showing correlation between social media usage and mental health. The first of these surveyed almost 2000 adults ages 19-32, asking questions about their social media use and mental health. They found that the participants in the quadrant with the most social media use had the highest risk of depression, whereas those in the quadrant of lowest social media use had the lowest risk of depression. This study also found that the number of social media sites used had a direct correlation with depression, with the people who use more sites feeling more depressed. (onlinelibrary.wiley.com “ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND DEPRESSION AMONG US YOUNG ADULTS”) Another study researched how social media, sleep quality, and depression are related. They studied 268 adolescents and found that high social media use was associated with poor sleep quality, depression, low self esteem, and anxiety. They could not find any information on the direction of the relationship between social media and well being. The direction of the relationship refers to whether depressed people are more likely to go on social media or whether social media causes depression. (sciencedirect.com “#sleepyteens”) The final study that I will discuss today surveyed about 1500 people ages 14-24 in the UK. Overall, their results were inconclusive, seeing positive and negative results based on the person and the social media platform. The two big takeaways from the study were that there is not enough research yet to definitively know the impact of social media on mental health, so users should proceed with caution. The second big takeaway found that Instagram and Snapchat were the two most detrimental social media platforms for mental health. (rsph.org.uk ‘Instagram ranked worst for young people’s mental health’) Two other sources also found Instagram and Snapchat to be the worst for teens. (now.tufts.edu ‘Snapchat Depression’ and projectheping.org ‘Social Media + its Affect on Teen Mental Health’) This is because they are image oriented, pictures can be edited to make people appear different than they actually do in reality. This promotes self-comparison and low self-esteem. All of these studies show that there is a correlation between social media and low mental health, however none of them are definite proof; their findings can still be disputed. What cannot be disputed, however, is the fact that 90% of teens are on social media. (NorthShore University HealthSystem) In addition, suicide rates saw a 20% increase from 2010 to 2015. (now.tufts.edu ‘Snapchat Depression’) Obviously it would be a fallacy to claim that this increase is because of social media. However, these numbers cannot be ignored either. Clearly, mental health is an issue that is becoming more and more prominent. In addition, it is not a black and white issue that cannot be solved by simply changing social media habits. However, given that there is a correlation between the two, overuse of social media is one of the factors contributing to the mental health crisis.

**Solution**

Ultimately, a law that bans or limits social media use is not only implausible but unconstitutional. Additionally, with social media continuing to trend more and more, especially among young people, it seems that the issue will only get worse before it gets better. So is there a solution to this problem? Some students from my high school saw a correlation between social media and depression as well, and decided to start a movement called “Offline October” in response to the rising suicide rates in my hometown. The basic idea was to get as many people as possible to “pledge” not to use social media for the entire month of October, hoping that it would get people to live in the moment more. There were some great things about Offline October. It did a great job of spreading awareness that social media may not be amazing for mental health. As a matter of fact, the founders actually were featured on the today show earlier this year. Ultimately, however, the movement has not changed much. Suicide rates are still higher than they have ever been, and social media usage is still out of control. This is because the solution was only temporary. What I mean by this is that come November 1, it was as if the month off social media never happened; if anything people were on their phones more than before the cleanse to make up for all the missed posts. In addition, during the actual month people could “act” like they were a part of it by signing the pledge, but given that they saw no problem with social media in the first place they made absolutely no changes to their social media usage.

**Call to Action**

Ultimately, we are all free individuals, and we can only make decisions for ourselves. So therefore, the solution can’t be some mandated program or temporary group effort, it must come from within; you have to recognize that social media is negatively impacting your life and want to make a change. This may mean that the solution looks different for each person in this room, and that’s perfectly alright. The easiest solution and the one I would recommend the most is to simply delete the app (or apps) that are causing stress. Trust me, I know it sounds scary and impossible. It took me weeks to finally bring myself to delete snapchat, but once I did I have not looked back, as it has only made me see more and more that the app was a waste of time for me. Your solution may look different; maybe you can start setting aside certain times of the day to use social media. Instagram actually has a feature that shows you how much time you spent on the app for the past week. To be honest, even if you don’t make any changes to your social media use (which is what I expect from most of you), I at the very least implore you to be cognizant about how much you are using social media, and of how it is affecting the mental health of you and those around you. So, the next time you feel the need to pull out your phone to take a picture and post it on your story, ask yourself if it is really worth it, because chances are you will appreciate the moment more if you put your phone down.

Works Cited

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