**Argument Assembler Activity – Social Media Debate – Reasoning**

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**Rather than chat with strangers, which is what those who think social media is risky presume they do, teenagers spend time on social media almost exclusively with people they know well off-line. This is the conclusion of social science research, not just speculation or generalization from a few isolated instances.**

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**Social media is not just a fun thing for teens to do, it is an important part of their development into adulthood, since it provides them with a new way for them to maintain and strengthen their existing personal relationships.**

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­­­­­­­­­­­­­**Teens have always gotten into fights, and peer pressure has always been a factor in causing fights. What’s different about social media is that the pressure to respond to a provocation is not just coming from a few peers but from thousands of people who view a post or video. Social media provides a global megaphone for the teen voices urging on fights and violence.**

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**Digital ink is permanent. Insults posted on Facebook or Instagram can never be fully removed, and so never get fully forgotten. Social media makes conflicts worse, and fights more likely, just because it makes their causes so long-lasting.**

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**Bullies use social media to torment their victims around the clock, 24/7. The platform of social media has magnified by three or four times (or more) the power of the teen bully, since it removes all limits of time and place around bullying.**

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**Bullying is bad enough, but the rampant racism and homophobia of bullying on social media is especially troubling. Social media clearly is bringing out teens’ dark sides in a way that can be very destructive. It is a technology that is proving that instead of creating more social harmony and togetherness, it in fact is spreading more hate.**

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**What is so interesting about this study is that it means that teens don’t even have to actually be on social media for it to have a negative consequence on personal interactions. Just having a phone nearby that *might*** **be used by one of the persons in a social interaction harms the quality of that interaction. This data – and it is research, not just opinion or conjecture – shows just how far social media has invaded and diminished teens social interactions and relationships.**

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**Historical evidence is significant. The argument that social media trades off with personal interactions is parallel to the arguments that were made before that the latest innovation would interfere with personal relationships. Those historical arguments seem silly now, just as the arguments against social media will soon seem far-fetched.**

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**People can have their own opinions – and most everyone does – about whether social media trades off with in-person interactions between teens, but a study as large and comprehensive as the Flagship study should help resolve the question. For almost all teens, according to the study, social media has replaced personal interaction, and the majority of teens admit being distracted during personal interaction by what may be happening online.**

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**Social media is a major new distraction for teens, preventing them from paying full attention to their homework. Of course teens claim that they can be on-line without any effect on their learning, but when one of the world’s foremost universities produces research data that directly contradicts that belief, it’s clear that learning is negatively affected by social media.**

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**When social media has teens so “emotionally invested” that they can’t even sleep for fear that they will miss a post about them, it is fair to say that social media is making teens mentally ill. If social media is making teens anxious and depressed, it is clearly not making them socially healthier.**

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**Girls are “harming [their] mental health” twice weakly on social media. Social media is imposing on teen girls an unreachable standard and unreasonable demands. It is making girls even less sociable than it’s making boys.**

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**In having a negative impact on the educational lives of teens, social media certainly cannot be said to be good for teens.**

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**The sheer size of the audience for social media helps ensure that it makes teens more social media. Teens can learn about issues around the world and join with other teens to address those problems. Social media not only makes teens more social, it makes them more socially involved.**

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**Social media is doing real, verifiable social good around the world. It is making teens more socially aware and socially active. These attributes are more important than some of the negative ways that social media can be used because they are more difficult to achieve.**

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**Social media provides teens with undeniable “communication benefits,” enabling them to keep friends and family members close regardless of the physical distance separating them. Keeping teens in touch with who they care about most seems like the quintessence of making them more social.**

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**Of course social media is often used as a way for teens to avoid face-to-face interactions, but if it weren’t social media teens would find another excuse “to be left alone.” Social media is not what makes teens less social; human nature is what makes teens less social.**

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**Social media isn’t a crutch for teens, it’s an inspiration to be more socially “inventive.” They don’t depend on social media, they use it as one more way to build their relationships with friends. Friendships, like everything else, has to adapt to changing times and new technologies, which is why social media is so important to teens.**

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**The concern about teens and privacy and endangerment assumes that teens are careless or reckless. The evidence is that they are not. This eliminates one of the main reasons that people falsely think that social media makes teens less social.**

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**The opportunity to publish their work on a large public platform gives students strong motivation to make their writing and school work of a high quality. For this reason, social media is a “powerful” positive influence on teens’ educational lives, which most everyone would consider important to their social lives as well.**

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