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English 240

October 30, 2019

Summary of "Has the Smartphone Destroyed a Generation?" (MLA)

Jean Twenge, a professor of psychology at San Diego State University, asserts in her September 2017 *Atlantic* article "Has the Smartphone Destroyed a Generation?" that the everyday experiences of young people born between 1995 and 2012—a group she labels "iGen"—are "radically different from those of the generation that came of age just a few years before them" (58). She believes this shift—which she describes as "an earthquake of a magnitude we've not seen in a very long time, if ever"—is largely the result of increased use of digital devices, especially smartphones (61). Twenge maintains that the change is mostly for the worse. She argues that smartphone use has contributed to a steep rise in depression, that girls are especially vulnerable to the negative effects of social media use, and that the phones have led to sleep deprivation, which in turn negatively affects physical and mental health.

Twenge is convinced that smartphones are making teenagers unhappy, even depressed and suicidal. She describes iGen as "a lonely, dislocated generation" that is "on the brink of the worst mental-health crisis in decades" (64, 61). Twenge shows that high levels of screen time, especially social media use, are associated with increased unhappiness in teens. Though she acknowledges that the causal relationship between smartphones and depression remains unclear, she cites data suggesting that using Facebook does in fact cause teens to be less happy (64). Furthermore, Twenge provides evidence that screen time is linked to an increase in risk factors for suicide in teens (64). She explains the connection between social media and mental-health

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Commented [MOU2]: Begin by introducing the author, article title, and venue of publication.

Commented [MOU3]: For this paper, your introduction should end with a descriptive thesis like this one. Remember, at this point you are only presenting the authors' ideas to your audience—not evaluating or responding to them.

Commented [MOU4]: Also note here that I have not tried to cover all Twenge's points. Instead, I focus on key points that I will respond to in the Summary and Response Paper.

Commented [MOU5]: Note how the topic sentences of the body paragraphs relate to the thesis (by reflecting one component of it). These topic sentences are perhaps your most important "signposts" for the reader.

problems by noting that, “For all their power to link kids day and night, social media also exacerbate the age-old teenage concern about being left out” (64).

Girls, Twenge asserts, are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of social media.

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She cites evidence that girls use social media more often than boys and are more likely to feel left out and lonely. They seek affirmation through comments and likes on social media platforms (64). For Twenge, these factors help explain why depressive symptoms have increased more than twice as much in girls than in boys from 2012 to 2015 and why three times as many girls killed themselves in 2015 as did in 2007 (64). Twenge points out that cyberbullying affects girls more than boys, which may explain some of the difference in the rates of depression between the genders. Social media, she explains, provide an ideal platform for “the style of aggression [teenage girls] favor, ostracizing and excluding other girls around the clock” (64).

Sleep deprivation is another harm associated with smartphones that Twenge highlights.

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She points out that, according to sleep experts, teens should get around nine hours of sleep and that a young person getting less than seven hours is “significantly sleep deprived” (65). Twenge claims that sleep deprivation among teens has increased dramatically, especially since 2012, and provides evidence showing that use of electronic devices and social media is linked to problems with both the quantity and quality of teens’ sleep (65). Twenge points out that lack of sleep leads to a wide range of physical and mental problems, including depression and anxiety. She recognizes that causation is not entirely clear here, but concludes that “the smartphone, it’s blue light glowing in the dark, is likely playing a nefarious role” (65).

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Works Cited

Twenge, Jean M. “Has the Smartphone Destroyed a Generation?” *The Atlantic*, Sept. 2017, pp.

58-65.

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Summary Assignment Outline Worksheet

INSTRUCTIONS: Create a topic sentence outline for your summary. Write your thesis below. For this assignment, the thesis should be simple and descriptive, identifying the main points from the article that you're going to focus on later in the response section. Then, for each paragraph after the introduction, identify the topic sentence and write it below. You should have three or four topic sentences. I strongly suggest you look at the thesis and topic sentences in the sample summary I provided as a model.

Thesis (in your introduction): _____

Topic Sentence #1: _____

Topic Sentence #2: _____

Topic Sentence #3: _____

Topic Sentence #4: _____
