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Argument Assignment

There are over 500 million people all around the world who use Facebook (Facebook). It is almost unheard of for a teenager to not have a Facebook account in today's world. In addition more of the younger age group as well as the retired generation are starting to get Facebook pages. When it comes to the topic of Facebook, most of us will readily agree that it is a great way to stay connected with friends. Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of whether the positives of Facebook outweigh the negatives. Whereas some are convinced that it is too risky to use, others maintain that it is safe and there is nothing to worry about.

From my experience with Facebook I have always believed it to be fun and an easy way to see what all my friends are up to. Recently, I looked into the debate about Facebook and discovered the dangers hidden in it. I still believe Facebook to be more positive than negative because it has helped me stay connected with family and friends. From research I have done we need to be more careful on how much information we reveal about ourselves.

One dilemma with Facebook is it usually turns into a time waster for me. What feels like 15 minutes on Facebook is really one hour in reality. There are too many distractions, like chatting with friends, responding to friend's posts, looking up pictures, playing games etc, to just be on for 15 min. So how much time do people spend on

Facebook? According to *Facebook Statistic* they say that each month people spend over 700 billion minutes on Facebook. Furthermore they emphasize that more than 250 million users access Facebook through their mobile devices, where they are twice as active on Facebook as the ones who don't access it through their phones (Facebook). These numbers are much larger than I anticipated and it disgusts me that we are really wasting this much time when we can be doing something productive or at least be interacting with our friends in person.

Another negative of Facebook I disagree with is it allows advertisers to receive information that enables them to look up people's profiles. According to Ben Edelman from Harvard Business School he reports that if you are on your profile page and click on an ad, then you are telling the advertiser who you are (Steel). I believe this to be problematic because it makes it so people have no privacy. Just from the click of a button someone knows your real name, age, hometown, job, and interests. From knowing your interests they hound you with pop up after pop up with the same ad that you might not fully be interested in.

Along with advertisers having access to your personal information, I don't think anyone that is not your Facebook friend should be able to view your information. Daniel Lyons is a writer for *Newsweek* and complains that information like where you work, what school you attend, and your interests all get made public by default. He warns us that Facebook is a fun free service but you end up paying for it by giving up your personal information (Lyons). Although I agree with Lyons up to a point, I cannot accept his overall conclusion that getting rid of your Facebook account is the answer. I don't want people I don't know to view my information either, but he made a weak point when

he considered deactivating his account just because by default his information could be viewed. If that is truly what he is concerned about then he should change and hide his information from appearing. Even though I disagree that getting rid of Facebook is unnecessary, I fully endorse that people need to realize that just because you don't have to pay money for Facebook, doesn't mean you're not paying for it in a different way.

I agree that there are negatives to Facebook, but a point that needs emphasizing is that some people believe it is not worth it to have a Facebook profile devaluing the good it does do. First off it connects people all around the world. I have benefited from this because my brother moved to Maryland and now Facebook is where we connect the most. Through Facebook you can instant message people back and forth, let people know what you're up to, send messages out, and share pictures. Many others benefit from this also such as the adopted children that used Facebook to find their birth moms. My cousin found his birth mom through Facebook and spent last Christmas with her. People who go on missions, for example my brothers, use it to find and connect back with past mission companions. Everyone can benefit from finding people through Facebook because you can reconnect with people you went to school with. Just recently my good friend back in 4th grade found me on Facebook and we became friends. You can find any friend you've ever made through Facebook, as long as they have an account. In *Facebook Statistics*, they report that the average Facebook user has 130 Friends (Facebook). With all users averaging 130 friends, it's weird to think we are all bound to have mutual friends with thousands all around the world.

Another thing Facebook offers is the opportunity for teenagers to build and maintain relationships. Melissa Healy, writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, claims the teens

on Facebook are found to be the healthiest psychologically. She says this because it can help teens with emotional bonds, developing identities, and help provide a way to communicate with others (Healy). Here many parents would probably object that this is unhealthy because their children will lose their communication skills. However, Healy observed that the relationship teenagers have with their friends on Facebook resembles their relationships offline (Healy). I agree with Healy in that your relationships with your friends do not change by talking on Facebook or face to face because my experience with my friends confirms it.

Facebook also boosts people's self esteem because they can look at how many friends they have and all the positive comments they have received from their friends. Not only does it help boost confidences but Facebook has also been known to help with depression. People who are depressed post how they are feeling in hope that friends will make them feel better. As the pediatrician at the School of Medicine and Public Health, Dr. Megan Moreno, puts it, "People are getting support from other Facebook users when they display these comments, so it may be used as a mini-support group for depression"(Shrieves). Dr. Megan Moreno's theory on using Facebook as a mini-support group is extremely useful because it sheds insight on the difficult problem of depression and how people could use Facebook for additional support in their lives.

I feel this issue is important because people need to be aware of what they are signing up for and that there are dangers in Facebook. Although it has dangers they can be prevented and I want those concerned to realize you can make it safer and that Facebook can affect your life in more positive ways than negative. What is more important; advertisers being able to access information about you, where just about

anyone can find information on you, or staying connected with family and friends all around the world? My point is Facebook can be great just as long as you use it for the right reasons and protect yourself.

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