In the article “On the New Literacy”, Thompson (2009) argues technology isn’t killing people’s ability to write but instead is reviving it by enabling people to know whom they are writing for and why they are writing. To support his argument, Thompson mainly uses a data collection and subsequent analysis based on the work of a Stanford writing professor who reviewed data collected from a number of Stanford student writing samples. Thompson’s contestations ultimately lack validity because he relies solely on a single population type data that both lacks comparison and exclusivity. Hence, while Thompson’s attempts to argue that students’ writing ability is augmented by the amount of writing done on social media, his reasoning in fabricating his opinion does not seem logically valid or persuasive.

One of the overarching issues Thompson faces is generalizing his supposition from a population consisting of only Stanford students. As the article specifically mentions in the beginning “Lunsford organized a mammoth project called the Stanford Study of Writing and collected 14672 student writing samples” which indicates that the data is only using Standard student as its population base. The rest of the paragraph then focuses on the analysis and interpretations from the data. However, the problem is that the author later uses his interpretive results from this small and biased population to extrapolate generalizations about a larger student population, thus making his inference unreliable. For example in paragraph 4, the author makes a
statement about how young people nowadays write far more than the previous generation because of social media. Yet, right after he makes the statement, the supporting evidence he uses is how 38 percent of the writing from those Stanford students happens outside of the classroom. This supportive evidence appears invalid on a number of fronts: Firstly, as Lunsford notes most young people are writing far more than prior generations. However, the data references only speak to Stanford students; not all young people go to Stanford and not all young people are students. Secondly, when making the argument, Thompson did not provide a comparison of how much young people write in the past by referencing any survey or data. Young people in the past also have written communications such as mail, letters or dairies, and the author cannot promote the conclusion that today’s youth write more just because of social media tools, when prior writing tool existed yet might not have been as well-documented as they are today. Without a comparison of how much young people write with each of these tools, it is not accurate to make such a conclusion. Thus, without a strong comparative foundation, the author’s argument about how excessive social media postings equates to better wiring lacks validity when unable to compare to past results from unwired generations.

Another facet of Thompson’s deductions that are questionable is the issue of exclusivity. His article states that today’s youth write far more than others because of chat and discussion from online socializing. He then goes on to reference Lunsford who attributes the ability to write for specific audiences as something akin to Greek civilization’s kairos which is knowing an audience and adapting text and tone to account for that. It might be true that young people assess their audience and try to get their points across while doing online texting. But something the author fails to point out is the exclusiveness of this observation: focusing on audience and try to
deliver a clear message is also what people do in writing; and regardless of the emergence of the internet, people from different timelines as well as ages all do the same when it comes to conversation: we always try to assess our specific audience and adapt our tone as well as technique to best get our points across. In other words, this observation is not unique to online texting. Therefore, the argument of young people making a literacy revolution like Greek civilization does not stand because the Internet or the social media is merely just another form of showing these behaviors but not a producer of it.

One of the goals in this article is to make the point that social media writing not only helps young people, but also is not something toxic. However, throughout the article, the author only talks about the positive outcomes using Lunsford’s data collection without making a comparison to show that the influences of social media actually helps young people more than it harms them. Yet, there is no contradictory information spared in the article to mention the negative facets that social media writing has on young people of today. Without the ability to present a balanced argument the reader is left to be influenced by a certain bias which in this case is a positive kind. While the majority believes social media is harmful to writing, there is a reason this presumption exists. When young people spend most of their time using scant words texting each other, they are not reading books and writing in a way that improves their grammar or language usage. Most of the time they are just wasting their time, chatting for no clear purpose and not having real conversation. In addition, when young people choose to text on their phones, they lose a great amount of time looking through their websites and short videos from Snapchats that are not beneficial for any type of learning but merely just self-entertainment. Without the
existence in this article of the counter-argument, Thompson’s declarations seem heavily biased
and one-sided, compromising its persuasive validity.

In conclusion, the main idea this article wants to convey is that with the use of social
media, young people are improving their writing through focusing on knowing whom they are
writing for and why they are wiring. However, several malignant weaknesses make the article’s
argument invalid and not applicable. Namely the flaws in the article are that people have cared
about writing to an audience regardless of medium; there is no comparative data and the article
generalizes conclusion from only Stanford student. It might be true that online texting help
young people in a way access their audience and “write” more frequently, but does that
necessarily means their wiring skill is improved? How is online social media unconsciously
affecting the young generation’s wiring habits? These are important questions but yet to be
answered.
References

Thesis statement:

Thompson’s contestations ultimately lack validity because he relies solely on a single population type data that both lacks comparison and exclusivity. Hence, while Thompson’s attempts to argue that students’ writing ability is augmented by the amount of writing done on social media, his reasoning in fabricating his opinion does not seem logically valid or persuasive.

Topic sentence 1:

One of the overarching issues Thompson faces is generalizing his supposition from a population consisting of limited data population.

Support 1:

Only Stanford student but refer to all young people.

Support 2:

Make statement about how young people write more today with social media without considering how much young people write in the past.

Topic sentence 2:

Another facet of Thompson’s deductions that are questionable is the issue of exclusivity. Support Support 1:
Focusing on audience and try to delivery a clear message is also what people do in wiring.

Support 2:

Regardless of the emergence of the internet, people from different timelines as well as ages all do the same when it comes to conversation.

Topic sentence 3:

One of the goals in this article is to make the point that social media writing not only helps young people, but also is not something toxic. However, throughout the article, the author only talks about the positive outcomes using without making a comparison to show that the influences of social media actually helps young people more than it harms them.

Support 1:

When texting, young people are not reading books and improving grammar or language use.

Support 2:

Chatting for no clear purpose and not having real conversation.

Support 3:

Wasting a lot of time doing merely self-entertainment but not learning.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the main idea this article wants to convey is that with the use of social media, young people are improving their writing through focusing on knowing whom
they are writing for and why they are wiring. However, several malignant weaknesses make the article’s argument invalid and not applicable.