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PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

ASSIGNMENT TITLE:
THE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOWARDS YOUTH CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

CLASS: MC110 5D

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BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Growing concern exists among researchers regarding the effects of the Internet on youth regarding potential risks to safety, well-being, and skill development (Selfhout, Caplan, & Gross delsing,2009) . Social networking is a current phenomenon that consists of both web-based communication with Internet users through websites (Facebook, MySpace, YouTube) and interaction with others via cellular phones. According to Facebook statistics, there were 526 million daily active users on average in March 2012.

Further, the 2010 Media Industry Fact Sheet reported that two-thirds of the population over the age of 13 are connected by cell phones. Social networking has become common today, especially among adolescents and young adults, and continues to grow in popularity. These activities occur among people who already know each other personally as well as those who have never met in person. Increased utilization of computers and cell phones to communicate, tasks that have historically required interpersonal skills and face-to face interaction, may be altering the means in which young people attain and practice skills that are necessary to function in their daily lives. Over the past decade, technological advances have reached all segments of the population across the globe. The 20th century was epitomized by youth staying connected through face-toface interaction or the use of the landline telephones (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Social networks thought of as a set of people in which support is exchanged (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Wellman, 1981) or relationships that are important to an individual (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Kahn & Antonucci, 1981) were typically managed through interpersonal or conventional telephone contact. However, the growth in Internet access and software availability as well as advancements of cell phones, combined with a population of youth who have grown up exposed 2 to this technology, has resulted in social networks being replaced online (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008) and through telecommunications.

The youth of today use technology such as the Internet more than any other method through which to communicate and socialize (Mishna, McLuckie, & Saini, 2009; Kaynay & Yelsma, 2000; Nie & Hillygus, 2002). Recent studies have shown that communication technology is increasing exponentially with each generation and is becoming a mainstay within our society (Mishna et al., 2009). According to statistics gathered by ComScore Networks, 713 million people ages 15 or older, which was 14% of the global population, used the Internet in June 2006, with 153 million being in the United States (Lipsan, 2006).

Further, adolescents use the Internet much more often than children, but the age of first Internet use is rapidly descending (Greenfield & Yan, 2006; Wartella, Vandewater, & Rideout, 2005). In fact, even young children are online and there are numerous social networking sites that cater to this population (Giffords, 2009). As technological advancements are made, the residual impact of social networking on society's young generation is of valuable importance to researchers in the social work field. Left unattended, the lack of skills to effectively communicate and resolve conflicts in person may negatively affect behavior and impair the ability to develop and maintain relationships. Once envisioned as an efficient tool for researchers to share files and access data by remote login, commercialization of the Internet has resulted in the creation of email and the World Wide Web (Giffords, 2009). The enormous technical complexity of the Internet has expanded to include thousands of networks, millions of computers, and billions of users across the world (Greenfield & Yan, 2006). The Web 1.0 experience, which was exemplified by connectivity, Internet entrepreneurs, and the potential of substantial monetary profits has been replaced by Web 2.0, which is detailed by user-generated content, group formation, and social 3 networking (Giffords, 2007; Boutin, 2006; Bradbury, 2007; Israel, 2006; Levy & Stone, 2006; O'Reilly, 2005; Rivlin, 2004).

Combining the tremendous expansion of the Internet and the advances in communication technology has resulted in new capabilities not foreseen by the original developers. Modern conveniences such as using cell phones and the creation of social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter) for interaction have shown a variety of influences in the research. Within the social networking spectrum exists the activities of instant messaging (IMing), texting, blogging, bulletin boards, and posting (comments, status updates, and videos). Greenfield and Yan (2006) use the "Effects Model" to explain the shift from seeing the Internet as doing something to adolescents to an outlook that consists of adolescents taking an active role in co-constructing their own environments. As with any object, the responsibility falls upon the Internet user or social networker as to the purpose of engaging in the activity and what is hoped to be accomplished. However, technological side effects may not always be apparent to the individual user and, combined with millions of other users, may have large-scale implications. Therefore, each participant has a dual role—as an individual who may be affected by the social environment and as a participant who is interacting with others and co-constructing the same environment (Greenfield & Yan, 2006).