

2010

The Influence of Social Networking Participation on Student Academic Performance Across Gender Lines

Kaitlyn Flad

The College at Brockport, kaitlyn.flad@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/edc_theses



Part of the [Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Flad, Kaitlyn, "The Influence of Social Networking Participation on Student Academic Performance Across Gender Lines" (2010).
Counselor Education Master's Theses. 31.

http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/edc_theses/31

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Counselor Education at Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in Counselor Education Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact kmyers@brockport.edu.

**The Influence of Social Networking Participation
On Student Academic Performance Across Gender Lines**

Kaitlyn Flad

The College at Brockport

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Acknowledgments..... | 3 |
| 2. Abstract..... | 4 |
| 3. Introduction..... | 5 |
| 4. Review of the Literature..... | 7 |
| ❖ Social Networking Defined..... | 7 |
| ❖ History of Social Networking Technology..... | 8 |
| ❖ Adolescents and the Internet..... | 14 |
| ❖ Gender Differences and Internet Use..... | 18 |
| ❖ SNS “Drama”..... | 20 |
| ❖ Cyber-Bullying..... | 21 |
| ❖ Peer Pressure..... | 21 |
| ❖ High School Academics..... | 22 |
| ❖ Problems in Schools..... | 24 |
| ❖ Parental Involvement..... | 24 |
| ❖ Benefits of Social Networking..... | 25 |
| ❖ Summary of the Literature..... | 25 |
| 5. Method..... | 26 |
| 6. Results..... | 29 |
| 7. Discussion..... | 34 |
| 8. References..... | 43 |
| 9. Appendices..... | 49 |

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest appreciation for those who have helped me complete this thesis. First and foremost, I am pleased to thank my supervisor, Liz Tabone, for her contributions to this project and guidance throughout the year.

I also wish to thank the Counselor Education department for their continuous support and assistance. A special thanks must be given to my clinical supervisor, Dr. Thomas Hernandez, for providing me with invaluable guidance and unwavering support as I worked on this project.

Thank you to my classmates and friends who have shared in my successes and who have stood by me through the challenges. In particular, to my colleague Jenna Winicki, who has been with me since the beginning. Thank you for the endless support, millions of phone conversations, and lifelong memories.

The data analysis of this project would not have been completed without the help of Dave Rigolo, who acted as my math genius and left side of the brain throughout this experience. The time and energy you have spent helping me will never go unappreciated...Thank you.

To my sister Jennifer, who is not only my best friend but also my role model. Thank you for your support, encouragement, and for always being confident in my abilities.

Finally, to my mother, whose kindness and compassion for others has been my inspiration for entering the field of counseling. Thank you for all you have done to make my life easier as I worked through this project. I couldn't have done it without you!

"Social media is not a media. The key is to listen, engage, and build relationships."

David Alston

Abstract

Participation with technology for social purposes has become the mainstream communication method for many people in the past several years. In particular, adolescents in high school have adopted these forms of communication as the paramount way to keep in touch with family and friends. Social Networking websites, such as Facebook and MySpace are the most popular places for these students to spend their time, and are the primary focus of this study. The researcher examined the impact of social networking participation among a sample of high school students to determine how this involvement affects academic performance, future plans, and overall attitude towards school. Differences between male and female students regarding academic achievement, performance, and social networking use will also be identified and discussed. Recommendations for school counselors and further studies will be offered.

The Influence of Social Networking Participation On Student Academic Performance Across Gender Lines

The increased use of Social Networking Websites has become an international phenomenon in the past several years. What started out as a hobby for some computer-literate people has become a social norm and way of life for people from all over the world (Boyd, 2007). Teenagers and young adults have especially embraced these sites as a way to connect with their peers, share information, reinvent their personalities, and showcase their social lives (Boyd, 2007).

I became interested in focusing on social networking sites after meeting with several eleventh grade students and listening to their stories about things that had happened on Facebook. The focus in our counseling sessions seemed to revolve around this website and what the students described as “Facebook drama.” This drama included stories about friends posting upsetting messages, posting pictures that were not supposed to be seen by everyone, and students not being invited to join a “group” or party that everyone else seemed to be invited to.

What is fascinating to me is the fact that an Internet invention has become such an important thing for these students, especially because I did not have Internet access back when I was in high school. In those days, my friends and I would write notes to each other and hope that we could find a time to meet during the day just to pass them. Now, communication is instant. Teens own cell phones that enable them to access social networking sites throughout the day.

Being a counseling intern, I would meet with students weekly and hear about what was said on-line. So much chaos was occurring for these teens, even though none of them were face to face for any of it. In my mind I wondered, "What is it like to have a virtual argument with someone?" or, "What is it like for everyone to *know* I am having an argument because it is posted all over a website?" It was easy for me to see how this site did create "drama" for students and also how these social networking sites can affect their mental health and well being. Students would miss class, and access counseling services because of events that occurred the night before while on Facebook or another social networking site. When I really thought about it, I wondered how many students were missing classes, staying home from school, or avoiding school work in order to participate on social networking websites. In the end, all of these things would negatively impact their overall academic performance.

In the past five years, much research has been done on the emotional consequences of social networking site participation, but not much has been studied on the academic outcomes. I chose to do this research study because I think attention must be placed on high school students and the relationship between social networking involvement and their academic performance. I also wanted to understand how gender impacted this study, since male and female students may have different reasons for participating in social networking, and may have different academic practices.

Since most recent research on social networking websites has been done on college students, the review of literature is divided into several parts. First, I will discuss social networking sites; What they are and how important they have become in

our society. The history of social networking will be explored, as well as how these websites have become a staple of mainstream society. Then I will review the research on adolescents, their Internet usage, and how these sites may affect them socially and emotionally. The following part will examine high school students and how their communication may differ through direct and technological communication based on gender. The following three sections will discuss some of the problems associated with social networking sites, including social networking “drama”, the rise of cyber-bullying and adolescent peer pressure. The next section examines the academic struggles that high school students are currently facing and how communication technologies like social networking sites play a part in schools. The final three sections will focus on parental involvement, the benefits of social networking in the lives of teenagers, and the summary of the literature. At the end of this research project, I hope to tie all of these parts together to discuss adolescent social networking site participation and how this may affect academic achievement in male and female high school students.

Review of the Literature

Social Networking Defined

The idea of “Social Networking” has existed for several decades as a way for people to communicate in society and build relationships with others (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008). With the increase of technology used for communicating with others and the popularity of the Internet, “Social Networking” has become an activity that is done primarily on the Internet, with sites like MySpace, Facebook, Bebo, Friendster, and Xanga (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008). Social networking sites (SNS) may be defined as:

Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, 1).

History of Social Networking Technology

In the early 1990's, online communication technologies were introduced to the public in forms such as email and chat rooms (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009). Many authors, such as Dr. Norman Nie of Stanford University, predicted that these forms of technology would negatively impact adolescent social lives, and reduce their sense of well-being (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009). At that time, many child and adolescent researchers thought that on-line relationships would be superficial or meaningless. It was also predicted that these teenagers would use the Internet for purposes of meeting strangers instead of building on established relationships (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009). It was also assumed by some professionals that adolescents would spend too much time on computers, and this would negatively affect their "real-life" friendships and relationships with others (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009).

While several authors during the early 2000's hypothesized that children and teenagers would become less social with on-line participation, proving this was difficult, as many homes still did not have Internet access. In 1995, it was estimated that only 11% of American teenagers were actively participating on social networking websites (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009).

Since the early years of social networking popularity, research has been done in order to find out how this technology was affecting youth (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006). Though the early trend was to believe that these sites would negatively affect adolescent communication, other researchers believed that technological communication would benefit many teenagers who had trouble expressing their thoughts and feelings face-to-face (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006). Though the argument continues to be studied and analyzed, it is still a question that many researchers want answered. By looking at the most popular social networking devices, several conclusions can be made as to why these social tools are popular with young adults.

AOL Instant Messenger

The introduction of America On-line (AOL) Instant Messaging (shortened to "AIM") in 1997 greatly increased the number of adolescent on-line participation (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009). AIM was one of the first on-line communication technologies that encouraged users to communicate with existing friends in "real-time." In order to have an on-line conversation with another person, a user would have to send an "add invitation" to another user, which would then have to be accepted by that person, acknowledging that he or she was an existing friend (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009). Each user creates his or her own "screen name" which, for most, was either the user's first name followed by numbers or a fictional name or word. When using AIM, each user

has his or her own “buddy list” which displays the current screen names of the people he or she knows and is able to “chat” with (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009).

In the early stages of AIM’s popularity, users would have to use a phone line in order to use the program, as this was the only means of gaining Internet access. Once the Internet was able to be accessed through cable and broadband connections, users would be able to keep the Internet running as long as they wanted, which allowed them to send and receive messages throughout the day (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009). This acted as a way to communicate with others even when a friend or family member was not currently sitting at their computer. “Away Messages” were created to inform others of what a user is doing when not currently online. If a user tried to send an instant message to a friend, these away messages would be sent back to that user, alerting him or her that the message was received, but that user is away from the computer at the moment (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009).

AIM was one of the first on-line programs that introduced adolescents to the world of cyber-communication. Researchers have found that AIM became a household name by the late 1990’s, and was used by over 50% of American teenagers (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009). By 2007, this number rose to approximately 84%, as more and more families have Internet access in their homes (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009).

In a study completed in 2006, researchers investigated adolescent interest in AIM and the primary reasons for using this system rather than speaking face-to-face with others (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006). This study found that 92% of

teens reported using AIM to connect with friends and make plans. Other reasons for using this program included playing games with instant messaging software, asking someone out, and breaking up with someone (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006). Alongside these responses were also an alarming number of negative explanations such as “playing on a trick on someone” (60%), and “Writing something I wouldn’t say in person” (42%), which gave researchers insight as to the possible social consequences of using this system (Byrant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006).

AOL Instant Messaging paved the way for what is now the way that method used by most adolescents in order to communicate with others. Instead of face-to-face interactions, adolescents use websites and other forms of social technology to “chat” and send messages to people they know, and to network with others to meet new people (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009). Following AIM’s popularity with children, teens, and adults alike, social networking websites were created that offered people more ways to communicate and stay in touch.

Social Networking Sites

Social Networking Sites (SNS) have been popular since the year 2002 and have attracted and fascinated tens of millions of Internet users (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Though only a few have gained worldwide publicity and attention, the Federal Bureau of Investigation estimated that there are over 200 different sites that are used for social networking (Duven & Timm, 2008). Most people who are members of these sites, such as Facebook (over 400 million users) and MySpace (over 100 million users) participate

in them on a daily basis (Duven & Timm, 2008). Each person who becomes a member of a SNS has the opportunity to create his or her own webpage or “profile” which is supposed to be seen as a reflection of that person’s personality (Tufekci, 2008). By using this personal profile, one can build an entire social network based on his or her own personal preferences (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

The idea behind most of this phenomenon, as with many websites, is to help people feel socially connected and part of a community, even though they may be sitting home alone at their computer (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008). Participants may connect with other people they know through school, work, or an organization, or they may meet complete strangers from all over the world (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008). They do this by searching for people and adding them as “friends” so that they may share information with them and other networks that those people may be a part of (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Being “friends” in the SNS world simply means that two profiles have been linked together (Tufekci, 2008). This, in turn, expands a person’s network greatly, so that they may meet and share information with even more members (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008).

In addition, being “friends” with someone on a SNS allows a person to communicate in a variety of ways such as sending private and public messages, participating in on-line games, commenting on photos that have been posted, sharing music or movie preferences, responding to journal entries, and much more (Livingstone, 2008). In one author’s opinion, “Creating and networking online content is

becoming an integral means of managing one's identity, lifestyle and social relations" (Livingstone, 2008, 394).

A click of a button may mean the loss or gain of a friendship, and a friendship on a SNS may be with someone who is not a friend in "real life" (Livingstone, 2008).

Though there are several options for "privacy" on these sites, research has shown that the public aspect of sharing information is what draws many to join and participate (Duven & Timm, 2008). Privacy has a new definition when referring to Social networking sites, since just becoming a member requires a person to give certain personal information (Duven & Timm, 2008). Some sites, like Facebook, started as a way for college students to connect and having an "edu" email address was required for signing up (Tufekci, 2008). Now, this site is open for all users, which also increases the amount of people who may have two accounts: One for private use, and one for business or school use (Tufekci, 2008).

When conceptualizing why these sites appeal to so many people, it is significant to note that each SNS focuses on the presentation of self and social status (Tufekci, 2008). Each person who joins a SNS must choose a picture to post on their personal profile, which is the picture that will be used as a representation of themselves (Barker, 2009). Some people use a recent picture of their face or a photo of a group of friends, while others choose a different image that they want to represent them or their values (Barker, 2009). Either way, this picture is significant when looking at a SNS because it shows how each individual would like to be seen by others (Barker, 2009).

Social status is also a very important part of SNSs because it plays a role in how each individual is viewed on their profile by others (Tufecki, 2008). Most SNSs will show how many “friends” a person has, as well as how many people have written to that person lately (Tufecki, 2008). Because of this, many SNS members will seek out people to connect with, even though they may not personally want to be linked with specific people (Tufecki, 2008). Adolescents and college-aged individuals are especially interested in having a lot of friends, because many worry what others will think if they do not have as many friends as their peers (Barker, 2009).

Not only does joining a SNS help gain and preserve popularity, but selecting the perfect pictures to post are also very important aspects of the experience (Siibak, 2009). According to a recent study done on visual impression management and social networking sites, approximately 60% of adolescents will spend more time selecting which pictures to post on their profile than actually communicating with others (Siibak, 2009). This shows that these SNSs are not just for keeping in touch with classmates and meeting new people, they are used to build adolescent identities (Siibak, 2009). Because social networking sites are used primarily by adolescents and young adults, the next section will discuss this group of individuals and their Internet use.

Adolescents and the Internet

In the beginning years of personal computers and Internet access, websites were used primarily for information gathering and research (Alexander & Salas, 2008). In the past several years, the Internet has become the center of communication between

people, as well as being their prime source of entertainment (Alexander & Salas, 2008). It has also become the tool used for almost every project or paper that a student will write in high school, and in their later years in college (Alexander & Salas, 2008). In recent studies, adolescents have shown to be the greatest consumers of the Internet, particularly for social interactions (Lin & Subrahmanyam, 2007). Social networking sites, as well as email, instant messaging, blogging, and online journals have completely changed the way that adolescents interact and gather information (Raacke & Raacke, 2008).

Adolescents have become accustomed to this lifestyle much more than older generations have in recent years, as this way of living is all they know (Lewis, 2008). Teenagers now use the Internet for the majority their daily activities and information gathering, as opposed to older generations who used resources like the television or newspaper (Lewis, 2008). A recent survey showed that approximately ninety percent of teens in the United States have Internet access, and about seventy-five percent of these teens use the Internet more than once per day (Kist, 2008). This study also showed that approximately half of all teens who have Internet access are also members of social networking sites, and use the Internet to make plans and socialize with friends (Kist, 2008). As one researcher stated, "Teens use [the Internet] as an extension of their personality, to show their friends-and the world- who they are, what they care about, and to build connections with other like-minded people" (Goodman, 2007, 84). It is

estimated that the vast majority of teenagers in the United States visit at least one social networking site approximately twenty times each day (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009).

There is often controversy as to whether or not adolescents should be able to freely use the Internet for communicating with others (Tynes, 2009). Parents in particular are strongly cautioned by the media and school officials about online predators and the influence of certain websites on teenagers (Tynes, 2009). They may use Internet services such as CyberNanny to block certain websites and keep records of what their children may be looking at on the Internet (Tynes, 2009). Other parents make house rules about when the Internet may be used or insist that the computer be located in a central area of the house so that they may monitor what is being looked at by their teen (Tynes, 2009).

Social networking sites have also been in the center of concern for many parents because of safety concerns and/or risks (Tynes, 2009). Other parents just simply do not want their children staring at the computer too long. The risks and dangers of teen Internet usage are constantly flooding television shows, newscasts, and magazines, always warning parents to educate parents on teen Internet behaviors (Tynes, 2009).

Sharing inappropriate information or disclosing “too much information” is another concern that many adults have about teens that participate in social networking online (DeSouza & Dick, 2008). In a recent study done on teens and their MySpace participation, it was estimated that at least 65% of teens who had a MySpace account had very personal information on their profile pages (DeSouza & Dick, 2008). This

personal information included where they live, their phone number and email addresses, where they attend school, where they work, and a number of things that they enjoy doing in their spare time (DeSouza & Dick, 2008). Also, many teens, especially females, posted information about their sexual behavior and their alcohol and substance use (DeSouza & Dick, 2008).

On the other side of the issue, there are other adults and many professionals, including teachers and school faculty, who encourage the use of social networking sites like Facebook because they allow students to connect with one another and discuss school related issues (Alexander & Salas, 2008). Teens can form online communities in order to plan for a project, have group discussions about class material, or use the SNS as a way to keep in contact when a student has been absent and needs to be updated on current academic information (Alexander & Salas, 2008).

In response to the question of how much time that adolescents are spending on social network websites, is significant to note that there other parents who are in favor of these sites (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006). Some parents are concerned about their teen's social lives and are grateful that they may have an outlet for their potential depression and loneliness (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006). In a study completed in 2006, almost 35% of parents of adolescents reported that they feel that communication with others, in any form, is better than having no communication at all, and therefore are fully supportive of their child's Internet use (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006).

Gender Differences and Internet Use

When reviewing the literature related to gender and adolescents, results are mixed as to which group spends more time on the Internet (Lin & Subrahmanyam, 2007). Studies have shown that boys have been online more than girls in previous decades because of earlier forms of technology such as video or computer games (Lin & Subrahmanyam, 2007). Girls have reported that they use the Internet for things like chatting and downloading music (Giles & Price, 2008). Because of this, one may hypothesize that girls will be more likely to be attracted to social networking sites and other online social groups (Giles & Price, 2008). According to most research done on the topic, the amount of teenage girls and boys who are communication on these social networks are equally divided (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2008).

Research has shown that though girls and boys are both likely to have a SNS account, the reasons for the accounts may vary based on gender (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2008). For girls, social networking sites are primarily places to reinforce pre-existing friendships; for boys, the networks also provide opportunities for flirting and making new friends (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2008). Girls are also more likely than boys to post sexually explicit pictures of themselves, and to talk about sexual activity in public forums (Rafferty, 2009). However, boys are more likely to create an account simply because they are trying to meet a significant other, or because they are already in a relationship with someone who has requested them to join (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2008).

Adolescent girls are also more likely than boys to share personal information about their daily lives (Merten & Williams, 2009). Results of a recent study involving Facebook, MySpace, and Xanga showed that though most teenagers aged 13-17 used these sites for fun and positive reasons, 55% of girls shared personal stories about depression, anxiety, and relationship problems (Merten & Williams, 2009). Only 15% of boys shared any personal information besides their hobbies, interests, and friendships (Merten & Williams, 2009). This study also showed that adolescents use SNSs when dealing with a death of a peer, and use forums and member profiles to help their grieving process (Merten & Williams, 2009).

In a recent study, it was shown that adolescent boys seem to benefit more from Internet use and communication technology than girls do (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009). This was hypothesized because boys tend to have more difficulty expressing their thoughts and emotions face-to face with others than girls do (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009). As previously mentioned, the early stages of social networking included web technology such as AIM, which helped many adolescents “chat” with others on the computer instead of in person (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009). The amount of teenagers, both male and female, participating on social networking on SNSs is staggering, and this may explain why certain problems arise from these sites that have become a major problem in today’s society.

SNS “Drama”

The lack of privacy on SNSs can cause many problems in an adolescent’s life. Among the networks of people who are linked together on these sites, there is little that is not shared (DeSouza & Dick, 2008). Anything written on the site can be viewed by others, and this can often cause conflict (DeSouza & Dick, 2008). For example, if a teen is browsing through some of her classmates’ profile pages and notices that they all went to a party the night before and she was not invited. Though this could happen even without SNSs, it makes it much easier to find out what other people are doing just by the click of a button (DeSouza & Dick, 2008).

Another common problem that this lack of privacy creates is the posting of relationships on individual profiles (Karl & Peluchette, 2008). Imagine an adolescent girl has just been broken up with by her boyfriend, and then reads on his profile page that he has a new girlfriend that same day. Again, this could happen regardless of an Internet site, but SNSs make everyone’s personal business very public and easy to find (Livingstone, 2008). What is also interesting about SNSs is that even though the majority of members understand that they are public spaces, they still think that they are safe from unwanted people looking at their information (Karl & Peluchette, 2008). Just like anything else on the Internet, these types of sites are not always secure, and information has a way of being sent from one person to another without prior warning (Karl & Peluchette, 2008).

Cyber-Bullying

Participating in online social networks also increases the likelihood of being victimized online, or, cyber-bullied (Mesch, 2009). Cyber-bullying is the use of communication technology, such as SNSs, to harm or “bully” others (Mesch, 2009). Forms of cyber-bullying include harassing emails, web pages, hateful instant messages, text messages, and cruel posts on social networking sites (Mesch, 2009). The result of being a victim of cyber-bullying can be embarrassment, feelings of belittlement, low self esteem, and even suicide (Mesch, 2009).

Because the Internet allows teens to remain anonymous on websites or create false profiles, cyber-bullying has become a serious issue (Mesch, 2009). One national poll showed that over 13 million children between the ages of 6 and 17 have reported victims of cyber-bullying (Mesch, 2009). Research has also shown that an adolescent is more likely to harass or harm another student if they are not face to face, which also can make a SNS a perfect place to trouble to manifest (Mesch, 2009). However, there is no current legislation that protects students from this type of harassment, even though there are laws for more traditional types of bullying (Geach & Haralambous, 2009).

Peer Pressure

According to recent research about social networking sites and Internet usage by adolescents, social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace have become so popular that many high school students will get an account even if they do not want to

(Peter, Schouten, & Valkenburg, 2006). This shows that joining a SNS signifies more than just going on a website; it is way of “fitting in” with peers, just like many other types of groups in high school (Peter, Schouten, & Valkenburg, 2006). In fact, SNSs may be predictors of self esteem and well-being in adolescence, and they have become a fundamental role in adolescent life (Peter, Schouten, & Valkenburg, 2006). As one teen stated in a research study by Dr. Danah Boyd at Berkeley University: “If you’re not on MySpace, you don’t exist” (Boyd, 2007, 1)

High School Academics

Though there have been many social, economic, and environmental factors that have added to the pressure of high school students in the past ten years, the drop-out rate for students is still a major national problem (Bowen, 2008). Current statistics show that high school students in the United States are under increased pressure due to higher academic standards in many parts of the country, and it has become more important than ever for educators to encourage graduation and further education (Bowen, 2008). However, with more and more adolescents being preoccupied with social networking sites and technological social lives, how will this affect their studies? It is estimated that even those students who do graduate high school, one out of three does not have possess the knowledge and skills that would lead him or her to the next level, such as college or an advanced trade school (Bowen, 2008).

The top academic areas that many school professionals are concerned about are English (ELA) and advanced literacy (Williams, 2008). The current generation of teens live in a fast-paced technological world with many different types of communication happening all at the same time. For example, he or she may be on the computer on a SNS, while also talking on the phone, sending instant messages to a friend, and emailing someone else all at the same time (Williams, 2008). While there may be some advantages to this, such as the teen learning how to type faster and multi-task many things at once, there may also be a breakdown in much of that communication (Williams, 2008).

Literacy has also taken a dive in the past decade, which has caused many educators to question what can be done to help students improve their reading, writing, speaking, and thinking- all of the most basic skills for a successful future (Wise, 2009). As one researcher stated, "Literacy is, in reality, the cornerstone of student achievement, for any student, in any grade" (Wise, 2009, 373). The question that many school professionals have with regards to communication is whether or not a high school student is able to follow school curriculum in subjects like English or Language Arts (Williams, 2008). Also, will it be possible to teach them without the use of multi-tasking and using new forms of technology?

Problems in Schools

Social networking sites, as well as other new forms of communication technology, are also a concern to many school professionals because of the level of distraction they create within the school (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2008). Even though many schools have created many strict rules that forbid the use of handheld technology during school or that block certain social networking websites, many adolescents are still able to connect during school hours as they please (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2008). This has caused distractions during instruction time and has had a negative impact on the learning environment.

Parental Involvement

Parent- child conflicts have also become more of an issue since the sudden escalation of online social networking (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2008). Research has shown that children who have a strong sense of communication and closeness with one (or more) parent or guardian have a better chance at academic success (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2008). With adolescents hooked on the Internet and other forms of technology and their language changing with new acronyms and code words that can only be learned through this technology, the gap between parents and children has gotten larger (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2008). Many parents do not understand their teenagers, and cannot find a way to relate to their virtual worlds. This, in turn, causes distress in the household and may ultimately lead to a barrier between parent,

child, and communication about school work and grades (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2008).

Benefits of Social Networking

Though many arguments can be made about the possible risks of adolescent social networking, it is important to point out the benefits of these websites as well. Many schools have started to use these sites to promote education, keep students up to date with assignments, and offer help to those in need (Boyd, 2007). In general, the Internet and social networking sites can be a positive influence on adolescents. Social networking sites provide an outlet for teens to express themselves in their own unique ways (Boyd, 2007). In addition, they serve both as a meeting place for teens to interact with other like-minded people and as showplaces for a teen's artistic and musical abilities (Boyd, 2007). Finally, high school students use these sites as tools to obtain information and resources for graduation preparation and future planning. For example, students applying for college visit profiles of that college's students to view pictures and read blogs of past students to determine whether the college would be a good fit (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Summary of the Literature

There are many issues concerning high school students and social networking site participation. On one hand, there may be benefits for students who use these sites properly and appropriately. Other research suggests that there are clear risks involved

when adolescents become too consumed with the Internet and social networking websites. For the purposes of this research project, I will examine the reasons that high students use these sites, how often they use them, and how this is affecting their academic studies. A comparison will also be made between male students and female students, since much research has shown a difference in SNS participation based on gender. At the conclusion of this research project, a better understanding will be had regarding high school students and whether or not they are able balance a life of social networking and academic performance.

Method

Overview

This research project was created to measure and assess the amount of time the average high school student would spend on social networking websites, whether or not these activities were impacting their grades and school work, and how important social networking was to them in comparison to their academics. Because of this, the researcher needed students to be the primary source of information. This section will describe the participants selected to participate in the study, the procedure used to measure and evaluate participants, and the course of action taken by the researcher to ensure confidentiality.

Participant Characteristics

This project was completed at a suburban high school in the northeast United States. This school is comprised of tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades and has a student body of approximately 1500. The gender breakdown of this school is 50.7% female and 49.3% male. Because the researcher was responsible for the eleventh grade class, only eleventh graders were selected to participate in this study. These students were aged 16-17, and were all expected to graduate in the year 2011. Students were not asked about their race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or family history. However, the racial breakdown of the school consists of 74.8% Caucasian, 14.6% African American, 6% Asian, 3.7% Hispanic, and .9% American Indian students. All students in this study were enrolled in general education courses and were not receiving special education assistance.

Materials Used

A survey was created by the researcher that was composed of 14 questions. The survey was formatted with “yes” or “no” questions, multiple choice questions, and questions using a Likert-type scale for answering. The survey was expected to take five to seven minutes to complete.

Procedures

Students were selected randomly from the school database by the researcher and an eleventh grade school counselor. These students were all under the age of 18, and therefore required a parental consent form sent to their parent(s) or legal guardian(s). These forms required parents or guardians to sign and return the form if they did not want their child to participate. Once forms were returned to the researcher, student consent forms were given to students who had permission from their parent or guardian to participate in the study. Students who signed the consent forms were given the survey by their study hall teacher at the end of the school day, and these teachers returned the consent forms and surveys to the researcher the following morning. There were approximately 63 students who received parental permission to take part in the study and who were asked to take this survey and 41 of these students did participate.

Protection of Rights

Anonymity was essential in this process in order to ensure confidentiality for all participants. Though the researcher was aware of which students were given permission by a parent or guardian to participate in the study, she at no time was informed of which students chose to take the survey. Students were also reminded on the survey not to write their names, and that their responses were completely voluntary. After the researcher received the completed surveys, she did not share this

information with any other person, and kept them in her possession at all times. The data from these surveys were destroyed after completion of data entry.

Results

There were 41 students who chose to participate in this research study. Of those 41 participants, 54% were female and 46% were male. When looking at student grade point averages (GPA), which only gives an idea of student academic performance, the highest number of students (34%) reported their GPA to be in the 3.0-3.4 range. Twenty-nine percent reported their GPA to be in the 3.5-4.0 range, 12% reported a GPA between 2.5 and 2.9, 5% reported a GPA between 2.0 and 2.4, and 20% did not know their GPA or did not know how to calculate their GPA. While comparing grade point averages to gender, 75% of the students with the highest GPA (3.5-4.0) were female and 25% were male. Of all female participants, 73% had a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and 53% of male participants had a GA of 3.0 or higher.

Another measure of academic performance on this survey was the amount of students in honors and advanced placement (AP) classes. Of the total participants, 73% had taken or is currently taking an honors level class. Eighty six percent of female students and 58% of male students had taken at least one honors class. On the other end of the spectrum, 32% of females and 5% of males have taken five or more honors level classes. The amount of advanced placement classes that students have taken was also measured. Of the total participants, 54% have taken at least one AP class. When

comparing these numbers across gender lines, 64% of these students were female and 36% were male.

Since all of these students were expected to graduate in the year 2011, the type of diploma they expect to receive was another question that helped to measure academic achievement between students based on gender. Of the total participants, 70% expect to be on track for a Regents with Advanced Designation diploma. Of the students who expect to receive this diploma, 62% were female, 38% were male. Twenty percent of students expect to receive a Regents Diploma (50% female, 50% male), and 10% expect to receive a local diploma. The only students on track for a local diploma were male.

In response to the question of post -secondary plans, 88% total participants answered that they plan to go to college after completion of high school. Only one student (male) responded that he did not plan to go to college. Ten percent of participants did not know.

The next questions were intended to gather information on social networking and the amount of time students spend on these websites. In response to the question of how many social networking sites a student is a member of, 39% of participants admitted to having membership to one SNS, 49% had memberships on two SNSs, and 12% responded to having three or more SNS memberships. In addition to using the computer to access their SNS memberships, 61% use their cell phone for SNS purposes. Among these students, 60% were female and 40% were male. Of the total participants,

63% also access their SNS memberships through their email account. When comparing these numbers with gender, 65% were female and 35% were male.

Table 1

Number of Social Networks versus Student Gender

| Networks | <u>Gender</u> | | Total |
|----------|---------------|------|-------|
| | Female | Male | |
| 1 | 9 | 7 | 16 |
| 2 | 9 | 11 | 20 |
| 3 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 22 | 19 | 41 |

Frequency of social networking was also measured by use of a Likert-type scale ranging from never visiting a SNS to accessing a SNS more than five times each day. Of the total student participants, 56% reported to visiting their SNS "At least once per day", 29% answered that they visit a SNS "More than five times per day", seven percent admitted to visiting a SNS "At least once per day," and the remaining students reported to visiting s SNS "At least once per month." When looking at differences in answered based on gender, the most significant finding was that 66% of females reported to visiting a SNS "More than five times per day" versus 33% of males.

The next two questions asked students how often their time spent on a SNS interfered with their ability to hand in a homework assignment on time, and their ability to study. Of the total participants, 32% reported “Yes” to the question of spending time on a SNS instead of doing homework, and 68% answered “No.” Of these students who answered, “Yes,” 69% were female and 31% were male. When answering the question of spending time on a SNS instead of studying, 34 of all participants answered that they have spent time on a SNS “Several times” instead of studying, 22% answered, “More than one time,” 12% answered “One time,” and 34% reported to “Never” spending time on a SNS instead of studying. Of the students who answered “Several times” to this question, 77% were female and 23% were male. Eighty-six percent of the students who responded “Never” to this question were male, and 14% were female.

The next question was in True or False format and asked the participants, “What I learn on a social networking website is more important than most of the things I learn at school.” Seventeen percent of all students responded “True,” and 83% answered, “False.” Of the students who responded with “True,” 86% were female and 14% were male.

The final question asked students to rate the importance of their social networking membership(s) from “Not important” to “Very important”. Ten percent of the total participants responded “Very important,” 17% answered “Important,” 34% responded “Somewhat important,” and 39% rated their SNS membership(s) as “Not

important.” One hundred percent of students who reported their SNS membership to be “Very important” were female. Forty-five percent of females reported that their SNS membership(s) were important/very important (vs. 5% of males). In total 61% of all participants view their SNS membership(s) as at least “Somewhat important.”

When comparing student GPA and the students who answered “Yes” to the question regarding learning more on social networking websites than in school, it is significant to note that 18% of these students do not know their GPA. As expected, 88% of the students who have a GPA of 3.0 or higher responded “False” to this question.

Another significant correlation was made between student frequency of time spent visiting a SNS and the amount of times that they have spent time on a SNS instead of studying or completing assignments. Of the students who responded that they visit a SNS more than five times per day, 50% have also reported that they have spent time on a SNS “More than one time” or “Several times” instead of studying or completing assignments.

Seventeen percent of students who answered “True” to the question, “What I learn on a social networking website is more important than most of the things I learn at school.” Of these students, 57% also reported that their membership to a SNS was not important. Twenty-nine percent of these students answered that their SNS memberships were “Important” or “Very Important.”

The results to the survey were analyzed using correlations between academic attitudes and performance, gender, and social networking frequency, opinions, and importance. The next section will explore the meanings behind these results and will discuss the significant findings of the data reported by participants.

Table 2

Social Networking Importance versus Gender

| Importance | <u>Gender</u> | | Total |
|--------------------|---------------|------|-------|
| | Female | Male | |
| Not Important | 7 | 9 | 16 |
| Somewhat Important | 5 | 9 | 14 |
| Important | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| Very Important | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Total | 22 | 19 | 41 |

Discussion

Overview

The results of the survey show a variety of different themes relating to adolescent use of social networking websites, academic practices and attitudes, and the differences between male and female respondents. The review of literature highlighted areas of interest to the researcher that will be reflected upon when interpreting the data. The finding that social networking is of great importance to adolescents is consistent

with the literature, as is the idea that there are differences between male and female students regarding academics and social networking.

This section will interpret these results and discuss the relationship between this study and previous academic research. Limitations of this study will be identified and discussed, as well as recommendations for school counselors and other professionals who wish to explore this topic in the future.

Interpretation of Findings

Academics

Research on high school graduation requirements has shown that students are under increased pressure to excel academically (Bowen, 2008). Of the students who participated in this study, only two students (approximately 5%) reported the expectation of a local diploma. All other students expect a Regents or Regents with Advanced Designation diploma. When interpreting these data, it is apparent that the students in this study were performing at average or above average academic standards compared to the school as a whole. The participants had an average GPA between 3.0 and 3.4, and were all expected to graduate on time with their class.

When comparing academic performance between genders, the students with the highest GPA's were female, and the students with the lowest GPA's were male. The vast majority (88%) also reported to wanting to go to college after graduation. The only student who reported not wanting to go to college was male. A higher percentage of

female students were also enrolled in Honors and AP classes than males. This difference between male and female students is consistent with the literature reviewed for this project. In a study of national graduation rates in 2006, one researcher found that females were performing better than males in all core areas of high school curricula (Greene & Winters, 2006). This study also showed that 72% of female students completed high school that year compared to 65% of male students (Greene & Winters, 2006). These findings may explain why another researcher stated that it has become commonplace in this country that more females than males are attending college (Williams, 2008). It was hypothesized in this study that males tend to choose careers that require less education than females do, and therefore do not have as much motivation for higher education (Williams, 2008).

Though some research has shown that the gap between male and female high school achievement has widened, another researcher found that female and male students may simply be different in their learning styles (Bowen, 2008). In a study completed in 2008, this researcher found that males and females may be more successful in different classes or areas of study, but their grades are still comparable (Bowen, 2008). Statistics on high school achievement and performance vary by state, and are therefore difficult to generalize to the entire population (Bowen, 2008).

Social Networking Participation

All students who completed the survey admitted to having a membership on one or more social networking websites. This is consistent with the literature regarding SNS

popularity. Research has shown that there are now more than 500 million people with Facebook memberships, and most of these people are members of other sites as well (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The results of the survey also show that students visit these sites at least once per day.

In addition to using the computer to visit sites like Facebook and MySpace, 61% of students answered "yes" to accessing their SNS memberships through their email or cell phone. This implies a strong interest in keeping in touch with people through social networking. However, when students were asked the true or false question, "What I learn on a social networking website is more important than most of the things I learn at school," only 17% answered "True." This means that though most students spend a lot of time on these websites, they still realize that what they learn in school is important for their future goals.

Importance of social networking in the lives of adolescents was a major part of this project, and the survey questions were created to measure this. However, many students who reported to having multiple SNS accounts, using them regularly through computer, email, and cell phone, still reported that their SNS were "Not Important." This is interesting, given the fact that students seem to spend a lot of time on these sites. Only ten percent of all participants rated their SNS membership(s), "Very Important," and these students were all female.

According to the literature, females are more likely than males to engage in social networking (Giles & Price, 2008). Though males and females may both have access to

these websites in various forms, females invest more time in maintaining their accounts (Giles & Price, 2008). This is consistent with the results of this thesis, since females reported to having more SNS accounts, visiting them more than once per day, and admitting that their memberships often get in the way of school work. As one researcher stated, adolescent females use their SNS accounts to maintain friendships and keep in touch with classmates, and males tend to browse for females (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2008). Other research suggests that many males have SNS accounts simply because their girlfriends insisted upon it (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2008).

Impact of SNS on Academics

The relationship between students who are actively involved in social networking and their academic performance is inconclusive. Females were more likely than males to participate in social networking, but were also more likely to have higher grades and take more rigorous classes. This study has shown that social networking can have a negative impact on study habits and completion of homework assignments, but there was not a drastic difference between students who spend a lot of time on these sites and those who do not. Thirty-four percent of students admitted that they have spent time on a SNS "Several Times" instead of studying. Thirty-two percent also reported that time spent on a SNS has prevented them from completing homework assignments. Though these numbers are substantial, there is not a causal relationship between SNS participation and doing poorly in school.

Limitations

This study is limited with regards to how much information can be generalized to all high school students. Out of a school with a student body of 1500, only 41 students were able to participate, making it unlikely that all students in the school were represented from the sample. Eleventh grade students were the only students asked to participate, which also limited the study to the age group of 16-17. It is important to note that these students may have differences in academic and social networking practices than adolescence who are younger or older.

The ratio between male and female students was also not a reflection of the school's male/female ratio. More female students were surveyed than males, which provided a limited view of male students.

The survey itself also limited the answers that students could give, as it did not include any open-ended questions. Students were forced to answer questions based on the provided answers given in the survey. Self-report bias is also a limitation, as many students had to answer questions about their own personal practices and opinions.

Recommendations for School Counselors

The results of this project have shown that more attention needs to be placed on understanding social networking sites and their impact on adolescents. School counselors need to not only be aware of what sites students are participating on, but also the significant role that these sites have in the lives of students. Though these sites

have the potential to distract students from studying, homework, or other academic requirements, they can also benefit students if used properly and appropriately.

Social networking sites, such as Facebook, are not only gaining popularity each year, they are becoming the primary form of communication between high school students when they are at home. Knowing this, school counselors should explore these sites to find out what attracts students to this type of communication. As the literature has shown, some adolescents depend on these sites to connect with others and build friendships (Peter, Schouten, & Valkenburg, 2006). Other research suggests that joining a SNS is not always an option for adolescents, as many students join simply because of peer influence (Boyd, 2007).

Advising a student to stop participating in these sites would not be recommended. As previous studies have shown, these sites are important to adolescent identity-forming and communication (Tufekci, 2008). School counselors should build upon the positive attributes that these sites have, such as the ability for students to join student groups or meet others from school. One way to do this would be to give classroom presentations on the risks and benefits of social networking, highlighting the problematic behaviors associated with these sites but also educating students on how these sites can improve their lives socially and academically.

School counselors should also communicate with parents about their children and Internet use in the home. Research has shown that there are many parents who are split between wanting their child to have friends and healthy social lives, and not

wanting their child spending all their time online (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2008). School counselors should hold meetings to educate parents on the issues that occur online, such as cyber-bullying, and how to monitor their child's Internet use. Since many schools ban the use of social networking during school hours, it is at home that most of these incidents occur (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2008). Parents also need to be aware that there are times when their child's social networking participation is interfering with homework and studying. School counselors can help parents set boundaries for their children when appropriate and teach them how to talk to their children about Internet safety.

Recommendations for Future Research

The number of limitations in this study suggests that further research needs to be done on the influence of social networking participation on student academic performance and/or attitudes. This research should be done with a large amount of students and encompass many different grade levels.

In addition to surveying students about how this technology is impact their academics, much more importance should be focused on how these sites impact their relationships with other students. Social networking causes more social and behavioral problems than academic problems and should be addressed. Though adolescents tend to spend a lot of time on these sites, what is more important than this is what types of behaviors these teens are engaging in. Qualitative research should be done to find out how this communication is affecting teens and their relationships with peers.

Summary

Since their introduction, social networking sites have attracted millions of users, many of whom who have integrated these sites into their daily lives. Adolescents have especially embraced this new way of communicating with classmates and keeping in touch with friends. Though there may be benefits to keeping connected with others by use of these sites, there is also the danger that they may negatively affect high school academics and achievement. This study has shown that although many students find their SNS memberships to be important in their lives, they are also aware of the benefits of education and completion of high school. Though some admit to spending a lot of time on these sites, the issue remains to be how they are participating and how this is affecting their relationships with other students. Communication is rapidly changing, and more emphasis must be placed on how educators can help students enjoy the benefits of social networking while also recognizing the problems they may create.

References

- Alexander, J. and Salas, G. 2008. Technology for institutional enrollment, communication, and student success. *New Directions for Student Services*, 124, 103-116. doi: 10.1002/ss.298
- Atwan, G. and Lushing, E. (2008). *The facebook book: A satirical companion*. New York: Abrams Image Publishing.
- Barker, V. (2009). Older adolescents' motivations for social network site use: The influence of gender, group identity, and collective self-esteem. *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 12, 209-213. doi: 10.1089/cpb.2008.0228
- Bonds-Raacke, J. and Raacke, J. 2008. MySpace and facebook: Applying the uses and gratifications theory to exploring friend-networking sites. *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 11, 169-174. doi: 10.1089/cpb.2007.0056
- Bowen, G. (2008). Preventing school dropout: The eco-interactional developmental model of school success. *The Prevention Researcher*, 16, 3-8. Retrieved from <http://www.TPRonline.org>
- Boyd, D. 2007. Why youth (heart) social network sites: The role of networked publics in

teenage social life. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Learning-Youth, Identity, and Digital Media Volume. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 1-26.

Boyd, D. and Ellison, N. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1),1-11. Retrieved from <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html>

Bryant, J.A., Sanders-Jackson, A., and Smallwood, A. (2006). IMing, text messaging, and adolescent social networks. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11, 10. Retrieved from: <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol11/issue2/Bryant.html>.

Coyle, C. and Vaughn, H. (2008). Social networking: Communication revolution or evolution? *Bell Labs Journal*, 13, 13-17. doi: 10.1002/bltj.20298

De Souza, Z. and Dick, G. (2008). Information disclosure on myspace- the what, the why and the implications. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 26, 143-157
doi: 10.1080/02643940802246427

Duven, C. and Timm, D. (2008). Privacy and social networking sites: New directions for student services. 124. 89-100. doi: 10.1002/ss.297

Geach, N. and Haralambous, N. (2009). Regulating harassment: Is the law fit for the social networking age? *The Journal of Criminal Law*, 73, 241-257

doi: 1350/jcla.2009.73.3.571

Giles, G. and Price, R. (2008). Adolescent computer use: Approach, avoidance, and parental control. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 60, 63-71

doi: 10.1080/00049530701829896

Goodman, J. (2008) Click first, ask questions later: Understanding teen online behavior.

Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services, 20(2), 84-85. Retrieved From:

<http://www.search.informit.com.au>

Greene, J. and Winters, M. (2006). Leaving boys behind: Public high school graduation

rates. *Civic Report*, 48, 1-26. Manhattan Institute for Policy Research.

Retrieved from: <http://www.manhattan-institute.org>

Greenfield, P. and Subrahmanyam, K. (2008). Online communication and adolescent

relationships. *The Future of Children*, 18, 119-140. Retrieved from:

<http://www.futureofchildren.org>

Karl, K. and Peluchette, J. (2008). Social networking profiles: An examination of student

attitudes regarding use and appropriateness of content. *CyberPsychology and*

Behavior, 11, 95-97. doi: 10.1089/cpb.2007.9927

Kist, W. (2008). "I gave up myspace for lent": New teachers and social networking sites.

- Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 52, 245-286. doi: 10.1598/JAAL.52.3.7
- Lewis, S. (2008). Where young adults intend to get news in five years. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 29(4), 36-52. Retrieved from:
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3677/is_200810/ai_n39229321/
- Lin, G. and Subrahmanyam, K. (2007). Adolescents and the net: Internet use and well-being. *Adolescence*, 42(168), 659-675. Retrieved from:
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2248/is_168_42/ai_n27483301/
- Livingstone, S. (2008). Taking risky opportunities in youthful content creation: Teenagers' use of social networking sites for intimacy, privacy and self expression. *New Media Society*, 10, 393-411. doi: 10.1177/1461444808089415
- Merten, M. and Williams, A. (2009). Adolescents' online social networking following the death of a peer. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 24, 67-90.
doi:10.1177/0743558408328440
- Mesch, G. (2009). Parental mediation, online activities, and cyberbullying. *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 12, 387-392. doi: 10.1089/cpb.2009.0068
- Nie, N. H. (2001). Sociability, interpersonal relations and the internet: Reconciling conflicting findings. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45. 420-435.

Peter, J. and Valkenburg, P. (2009). Social consequences of the internet for adolescents:

A decade of research. *Psychological Science*, 18(1), 1-4. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8721.2009.01595.

Peter, J., Schouten, A., and Valkenburg, P. (2006). Friend networking sites and their

relationship to adolescents' well being and social self esteem. *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 9, 584-590. doi: 10.1089/cpb.2006.9.584

Rafferty, F. (2009). Boys should be boys-is it that simple? *Education Journal*, 116, 32-33.

Rapacki, S. (2007). Social networking sites: Why teens need places like myspace. *Young*

Adult Library Services. 28-30.

Siibak, A. (2009). Constructing the self through the photo selection- Visual impression

management on social networking websites. *Journal of Psychological Research on Cyberspace*, 3(1) 1-6. Retrieved from:

<http://www.cyberpsychology.eu/view.php?cisloclanku=2009061501&article=1>

Tufekci, Z. (2008). Grooming, gossip, facebook and myspace: What can we learn from

those who won't assimilate? *Information, Communication, and Society*, 11, 544-563.

doi: 10.1080/13691180801999050

Tynes, B. (2007). Internet safety gone wild? Sacrificing the educational and psychosocial

benefits of online social environments. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 22, 575-584.

doi: 10.1177/0743558407303979

Williams, B. (2008). Tomorrow will not be like today: Literacy and identity in a world of multiliteracies. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 51, 682-686.

doi:10.1598/JAAL.51.8.7

Wise, B. (2009). Adolescent literacy: The cornerstone of student success. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 52, 369-375. doi: 10.1598/JAAL.52.5.1

Appendix 1: Data Correlations

Table 3.1

Pearson Correlations Between Survey Questions

| | Gender | GPA | H_classes | AP_classes | College | Networks | Cell |
|------------|---------|--------|-----------|------------|---------|----------|--------|
| Gender | 1 | -.070 | -.301 | -.166 | -.260 | -.110 | -.159 |
| GPA | -.070 | 1 | .538** | .206 | .383* | -.056 | -.204 |
| H classes | -.301 | .538** | 1 | .404** | .335* | -.240 | -.215 |
| AP_classes | -.166 | .206 | .404** | 1 | .081 | -.163 | .060 |
| College | -.260 | .383* | .335* | .081 | 1 | -.023 | -.281 |
| Networks | -.110 | -.056 | -.240 | -.163 | -.023 | 1 | .276 |
| Cell | -.159 | -.204 | -.215 | .060 | -.281 | .276 | 1 |
| Email | -.310* | .518** | .533** | .290 | .098 | -.018 | .015 |
| Freq | -.242 | .107 | .103 | .072 | -.058 | .089 | .395* |
| Late | -.213 | -.111 | -.171 | .287 | -.138 | -.009 | .223 |
| Study | -.497** | .042 | .227 | .373* | -.043 | .015 | .487** |
| Opinion | .292 | .254 | .116 | .186 | -.004 | -.282 | -.230 |
| Importance | -.378* | .366* | .221 | -.075 | .111 | .086 | .339* |

Note. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3.2

Pearson Correlations Between Survey Questions

| | Email | Freq | Late | Study | Opinion | Importance |
|------------|--------|-------|--------|---------|---------|------------|
| Gender | -.310* | -.242 | -.213 | -.497** | .292 | -.378* |
| GPA | .518** | .107 | -.111 | .042 | .254 | .366* |
| H_classes | .533** | .103 | -.171 | .227 | .116 | .221 |
| AP_classes | .290 | .072 | .287 | .373* | .186 | -.075 |
| College | .098 | -.058 | -.138 | -.043 | -.004 | .111 |
| Networks | -.018 | .089 | -.009 | .015 | -.282 | .086 |
| Cell | .015 | .395* | .223 | .487** | -.230 | .339* |
| Email | 1 | .350* | .191 | .351* | .194 | .448** |
| Freq | .350* | 1 | .000 | .347* | -.128 | .395* |
| Late | .191 | .000 | 1 | .433** | -.109 | .340* |
| Study | .351* | .347* | .433** | 1 | -.177 | .370* |
| Opinion | .194 | -.128 | -.109 | -.177 | 1 | -.011 |
| Importance | .448** | .395* | .340* | .370* | -.011 | 1 |

Note. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Appendix 2: STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT FOR MINORS

This form describes a research study being conducted with eleventh grade students about their participation on social networking sites and how this influences their academic achievement. The purpose of this research is to understand how involvement on websites such as Facebook, MySpace, or Twitter may affect student academic practices, habits, and/or attitudes towards their performance in school studies. The person conducting the research is a graduate student at the College at Brockport, and is an intern at the Rush Henrietta Senior High School counseling center. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire about your involvement on social networking sites and your academic practices and performance.

The possible benefit from being in this study could be a more in depth understanding of the affects of social networking participation on academic performance. This may provide school counselors with the information needed to advise future students on the risks and/or benefits of involvement on social networking websites.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your grades or class standing will not be affected whether you chose to participate or not. You are also free to change your mind or stop being in the study at any time.

I understand that:

1. My participation is voluntary and I have the right to refuse to answer any questions. I will have a chance to discuss any questions I have about the study with the researcher after completing the questionnaire.
2. My confidentiality is guaranteed. My name will not be written on the survey. There will be no way to connect me to the written survey. If any publication results from this research, I would not be identified by name. Results will be given anonymously and in group form only, so that neither the participants nor their schools can be identified.
3. There will be no anticipated personal risks or benefits because of participation in this project.
4. My participation involves reading a written survey of 15 questions and answering those questions in writing. It is estimated that it will take 5-8 minutes to complete the survey.
5. Approximately 50 students will take part in this study. The results will be used for the completion of a research project by the primary researcher.
6. Data and consent forms will be kept separately in sole possession of the investigator and will be destroyed by shredding when the research has been completed

You are being asked whether or not you want to participate in this study. If you wish to participate, and you agree with the statement below, please sign in the space provided. Remember, you may change your mind at any point and withdraw from the study. You

can refuse to participate even if your parent/guardian gives permission for you to participate.

If you have any questions you may contact:

| | |
|--|---|
| <u>Primary researcher</u> | <u>Faculty Advisor</u> |
| Name: Ms. Kaitlyn Flad | Name: Dr. Thomas Hernandez |
| Phone Number: (585) 359-7801 | Department of Counselor Education (585) 359-2258 |
| Email address: kfla1104@brockport.edu | thernandez@brockport.edu |

I understand the information provided in this form and agree to participate in this project.

Signature of participant /Date

Birth date of participant

Appendix 3: Letter from the School Principal

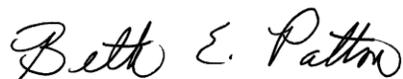
Dear parents and guardians,

This letter is to inform you that a graduate student from SUNY Brockport will be conducting a brief research study in school about social networking sites and how they influence academic achievement and performance. Ms. Kaitlyn Flad is a school counseling intern and is working in the counseling center this school year under Ms. Elizabeth Tabone's supervision. The study will require you and your child's consent in order to participate in an anonymous survey that will aid in her overall research project.

Though this project will be conducted in the high school and with the participation of students, please note this it is in no way affiliated with the School District or any of its faculty members. This project has been approved by the SUNY Brockport Institutional Review Board and is strictly under its supervision as the project unfolds.

Please read over the following details with your child and note that this project is voluntary and will not affect your child's academic standing in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beth E. Patton".

Beth E. Patton

Principal

Appendix 4: STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARENTS

This form describes a research study being conducted with eleventh grade students about their participation on social networking sites and how this influences their academic achievement. This purpose of this research is to understand how involvement on websites such as Facebook, MySpace, or Twitter may affect student academic practices, habits, and/or attitudes towards their performance in school studies. The person conducting the research is a graduate student at the SUNY College at Brockport, and is an intern at the Rush Henrietta Senior High School counseling center. If you agree to have your child participate in this study, s/he will be asked to complete a questionnaire about her/his involvement on social networking sites and her/his academic practices and performance.

The possible benefit from being in this study could be a more in depth understanding of the affects of social networking participation on academic performance. This may provide school counselors with the information needed to advise future students on the risks and/or benefits of involvement on social networking websites.

Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. His/her grades or class standing will not be affected with or without participation. S/he is also free to change her/his mind or stop being in the study at any time.

I understand that:

1. My child's participation is voluntary and s/he has the right to refuse to answer any questions. S/he will have a chance to discuss any questions s/he has about the study with the researcher after completing the questionnaire.
2. My child's confidentiality is guaranteed. Her/his name will not be written on the survey. There will be no way to connect my child to the written survey. If any publication results from this research, s/he would not be identified by name. Results will be given anonymously and in group form only, so that neither the participants nor their schools can be identified. Participation will have no effect on grade status.
3. There will be no anticipated personal risks or benefits because of participation in this project.
4. My child's participation involves reading a written survey of 14 questions and answering those questions in writing. It is estimated that it will take 5-7 minutes to complete the survey.

5. Approximately 50 students will take part in this study. The results will be used for the completion of a research project by the primary researcher.
6. Data and consent forms will be kept separately in sole possession of the investigator and will be destroyed by shredding when the research has been completed.

If you do NOT wish to give permission for your child to participate in this study, please sign in the space provided below and mail this form back to Ms. Tabone at the counseling center.

If you have any questions you may contact:

| <u>Primary researcher</u> | <u>Faculty Advisor</u> |
|--|--|
| Name: Ms. Kaitlyn Flad | Name: Dr. Thomas Hernandez |
| Email address: kfla1104@brockport.edu | Department of Counselor Education (585) 359-2258 |
| Phone Number: (585) 359-7801 | Email address: thernandez@brockport.edu |
| | |

Signature of Parent /Date

Child's name _____

Appendix 5: Social Networking Survey for Students

Directions: This survey is anonymous. DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS SURVEY.
Please answer each question as honestly as possible and to the best of your knowledge.

1. Please indicate your gender

Male _____ Female _____

2. What is your current GPA (Grade Point Average)?

3.5-4.0 _____ 2.0-2.4 _____
3.0-3.4 _____ Below 2.0 _____
2.5-2.9 _____ I don't know _____

3. How many honors level classes have you taken since 9th grade? (circle)

0 1 2 3 4 5 more than 5

4. How many AP (Advanced Placement) classes have you taken since 9th grade?

0 1 2 3 4 5 more than 5

5. What type of diploma do you plan to receive at graduation?

Local _____ Regents _____

Regents with Advanced Designation _____

6. After graduation, do you plan to go to college?

Yes _____ No _____

I don't know _____

7. Which social networking websites are you currently a member of?

Facebook _____ MySpace _____

Twitter _____ Xanga _____

Other: _____

None _____

8. Have you ever accessed a social networking website on your cell phone?
Yes _____ No _____
9. Do you have any settings activated so that information from a social networking website can contact you through your email address?
Yes _____ No _____
10. How often do you *typically* visit a social networking website? (Please select one)
More than 5 times each day _____
At least once each day _____
At least once each week _____
At least once each month _____
Less than once each month _____
Never _____
11. Have you ever been late handing in an assignment because you spent time on a social networking site instead of doing homework?
Yes _____ No _____
12. How often has spending time on a social networking website interfered with your ability to study or complete assignments?
Several times _____ More than one time _____
One time _____ Never _____
13. True or False: What I learn on a social networking website is more important than most of the things I learn at school.
True _____ False _____
14. How important to you is your membership(s) on social networking website(s)?
Very Important _____ Important _____
Somewhat Important _____ Not Important _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.