

Public Abstract

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Title: A study of Internet use and its impact on individual level social capital indicators and motivation to volunteer

This paper explores the relationship between Internet use among college students and the production of individual level social capital. As such, this paper applied the uses and gratifications theory to motivations for using the Internet among college students, in an effort to observe the relationship between time spent online in an average day, motivations for using the Internet, and the production of individual level social capital. Individual level indicators of social capital—life contentment, interpersonal trust, and volunteerism—are discussed in detail. Each social capital variable was regressed on the five gratification variables in a multiple regression analysis, which revealed that while total time online was not a predictor of the overall life contentment and volunteer behavior, it is predictive of interpersonal trust. Findings also showed that only the information gratification is related to interpersonal trust, but none of the other gratifications were predictive of individual level social capital. The predictive power of Internet use is then analyzed relative to key demographic characteristics. Additional research on social capital and new media is suggested. Implications of study findings are also discussed.