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Effects of Electronic Communication on Face-to-Fare Communication

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In the past 20 years, electronic communication fundamentally changed how people communicate. Though there has been much speculation about the effects of using this type of communication, little formal research has been done. This study expands upon previous research asking, "Does more frequent use of electronic communication correlate with a lower reported level of comfort in dealing with face-to-face confrontation?" For this study, the researchers created an electronic survey targeting individuals ages 18-25. The survey consisted of three sections: first, a brief demographic section; next, a frequency checklist measuring how often participants used various types of electronic communication; and finally, the survey presents a series of conflict situations, asking the participants to determine, with a Likert scale, how comfortable they would be handling each situation face-to-face. Each scenario is followed by a list of communication tools from which the participant chose which type of communication they would prefer to use to address each scenario. In a society that is increasingly reliant on electronic communication, the question posed in this study is significant. If the study suggests that the proposed hypothesis is true, then further study must be conducted to address the possible effects of a decline in levels of social self-efficacy.

Information about the Authors:

All of the researchers are junior social work majors interested in the way that communication is changing within society. None of the researchers have previous experience pertaining directly to the problem. Colleen Bulow and Amy Wise are leading a group at the Boys and Girls Club with the goal of teaching effective communication skills to children. Bethany Garling recently returned to campus from a semester earning an urban studies minor in Chicago.

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