Generation Z: Technology’s Potential Impact in Social Interest of Contemporary Youth

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Faculty of the Adler Graduate School

_________________________

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree of Masters of Arts In

Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy

_________________________

Anthony Robert Turner

2013
Abstract

Social interest, stated as “community feeling” in Adler’s English publications, is a principle that is timeless and applicable now as well as for generations to come. In reference to the current surge of technological advancements, in particular the proficient use of social media and other devices of contemporary youth, this paper will discuss the way contemporary youth use these technologies, and how this use affects social interest. A review of the Adlerian principle of social interest will be considered and applied to current youth and technology use. Potential deterrents to the development of social interest will also be investigated. Definition of contemporary youth (or Generation Z), along with the denotations of previous generations will be explored to further detail common shared occurrences, values, and perspectives associated with American youth. Parent involvement, child rearing, and the parenting concepts of pampering, neglect, and entitlement will also be considered in order to identify social interest (or lack thereof) of current contemporary parents and youth. Finally, recommendations for parents, teachers and clinicians will be discussed in order to provide possible guidance that may help contemporary youth develop social interest, by increasing understanding, promoting encouragement and developing of confidence.
Generation Z: Technology’s Potential Impact in Social Interest of Contemporary Youth

As technological advances further convenience and opportunity for many in American society, the issue of electronics is a far-reaching topic of discussion. The topic of electronics and technology in general is expansive, with great breadth. Therefore, the purpose of this particular peer-review study is orientated towards a focus that is directed towards a much more specific topic. Advancement of technology and how widespread growth of electronic use may create potential impacts on the world views of contemporary youth will be the primary point of emphasis for this particular peer-review study. The intent of the author is to examine the potential role that technology plays in shaping the social interest of contemporary youth. Using generational social constructs, the author intends to define and elaborate on cohorts, based by age and shared experience, in American culture. Furthermore, the author intends to investigate and explore potential behavioral patterns associated with technology and its use from a contemporary youth, or generation Z as this cohort will be defined in this particular peer-review study, perspective.

Once the social constructs of generations and analysis of previous generations have become more clearly defined, and technology use further of these youth analyzed, the author intends to discuss the manner in which technology use may determine potential patterns of behavior that impact social interest.

Finally, parent, teacher and clinical recommendations will be considered. The focus of these recommendations will attempt to address ideas for parents, teachers and clinician that aid in observing, assessing and aligning with potential contemporary youth behaviors and perspectives. In order to highlight the impacts of social interest in contemporary youth, however, it is important to first define the Adlerian principle of social interest. In doing so, the author intends to discuss concepts in relation to social interests such as; private logic, common sense,
and hindrances of social interest, while reviewing an Adlerian based assessment technique that is helpful in evaluating levels of social interest.

**Social Interest: An Adlerian Principle**

One of Alfred Adler’s most distinct concept in regards to individual psychology, social interest (or gemeinschaftsgefühl), is the most difficult principle, as well as the one that has least caught on in general psychology (Ansbacher, 1991). Stated as, “community feeling”, in Adler’s English publications, the concept is one that is timeless and applicable now as well as for generations to come (Ansbacher, 1991, p. 28). Adler emphasized understanding the social interest of clients, particularly because it was the most important part of education, treatment and recovery (Adler, 2011). Adler (1979) cautioned against viewing social interest as simply “community”, nor as a private circle or a larger group which an individual should join, but describes social interest as “…feeling with the whole” (p. 34). Social interest is movement towards a form of community, which is everlasting. The goal of being in a constant state of community is the ideal or optimal outcome of humankind, and is never fully achieved. Adler describes social interest as belonging to the advancement of humankind, and, according to his theory, the development of humankind thus far is only possible due to the need to belong in a community (1979). With each individual as one part working for the whole of the species, the goal is to advance towards continued preservations of the individual. The theory states that social interest is innate within humans, as it is a necessary foundation which promotes development of an individual, while advancing the evolution of humans (Adler, 1979). In short, the theory postulates that humans are hardwired to want connection with one another.

Social interest can come to life only in the social context, and how children subjectively understand social context resides in the creative power of the child. The theory behind creative
power of individual’s means that humans consciously shape the personalities and destinies they live. Creative power is influence by the observations of environment, education, experiences, and appraisal of self-image (Adler, 1979). Adler further develops the theory of social interest by stating, “The growing, irresistible evolutionary advance of social interest warrants the assumption that the existence of humanity is inseparably bound up with ‘goodness’. Anything that appears to contradict this must be considered as a failure in evolution…” (Adler, 1998, p. 42). In other words, humans are inherently “good”, and when behaviors exists that deviate from this spirit, they are operating in a way that hinders advancement and connections of the human race. Therefore, this deviation is a demonstration of lacking social interest.

Theorizing that the strongest tendency of humankind has been to form groups, in order to live as a member of society, not as an isolated individual, Adler (2011) argues that social life has been a great help to humankind’s efforts to overcome feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. Social interest allows for continued survival of humankind, and Adler reminds readers that humans, as a weaker species, need to live in groups in order to sustain existence. Adler (2011) states, “The beginning of social interest lies in the weakness of the individual” (p. 60). In short, humans are dependent on one another for survival. Social interest is expressed as a sense of belonging, with impediments to cooperation when it is lacking (Dreikurs, 1967). When an individual doesn’t feel as though they belong, they will struggle to cooperate within the whole.

**Social Interest: Identification, Empathy, and Connection**

With the basic framework behind the theory of social interest explored, the next point of emphasis surrounds ways that social interest can be determined. Social interest can be equated with identification and empathy (Adler, 1979). When defining empathy, Adler (1979) describes ways humans may work to join one another. The intention of relating to one another’s frame of
reference is possible when an individual is able to, “To see with the eyes of another, to hear with the ears of another, and to feel with the heart of another” (Adler, 1979, p. 42). This description may best encapsulate Adler’s thoughts in regards to the definition of social feeling (Adler, 1979).

Identification further expands the definition of social interest. Adler (1979) likens a child who is striving to become like his father, to see with the eyes of his father, while working to understand him, towards a useful goal before his eyes, as an example that illustrates the concept of identification. We can understand only if we identify with others. In short, identity provides an avenue that encourages common sense, while empathy may provide the opportunity to distinguish the private logic of another. The ability to empathize and identify with others foster’s understanding and movement towards cooperation.

**Common Sense and Private Logic**

The ability to identify is something that must be trained, and can only happen when an individual grows up connecting with others, feeling a part of a whole. Fellowship is an added component to social interest. These factors allow for individuals to behave and act in a way that humans designate as reasonable or “common sense”. Thus, humankind’s ability to identify may lay the foundation which establishes a set of social norms. It is the content of all behavior that advances the community on the useful side of life. Common sense is continuously morphing, changing and transforming, as the sum of psychological movements that are in accordance with reason, and are connected with the advancement of culture in mind (Adler, 1979). Common sense provides a societal roadmap to what a group or cohort mutually agrees to in regards to what is acceptable, reasonable or appropriate. It is through common sense that an individual may be able to identify and empathize with others.
Intelligence, or private logic, is a connected to common sense. This is because private logic is a thought held by an individual that may seem out of the norm of common sense. When a child takes a look at his or her environment, they make decisions about how he or she can find a way to belong, or fit in. While children are very observant, they are not fully adept at interpretation, which can cause faulty assumptions (Dinter, 2000). These assumptions form the roots of private logic. Private logic is the deviation from common sense, to a manifestation of distressed behaviors (Adler, 1979). Any person can justify their behaviors through the lens of private logic.

Adler provides examples of justification in the mind of a criminal who uses private logic that disrupts functioning. As an example, Adler (1979) discusses the possible rationalization that happens when private logic takes place, stating, “He had a nice suit, I had none, and so I robbed and killed him to get it” (p. 45). An alcoholic with the goal of overcoming adversity and obstacles can use private logic to justify getting drunk. The rationalization of overconsumption of alcohol is private logic. Avoiding stressors through drinking are justified in the alcoholics mind (“I’ll never be able to handle the stress in my life, so I drink.”). Common sense would suggest that managing stressors is possible without the need to use a substance. On a smaller scale, a perfectionist may express private logic by feeling as though they must always do everything right, or never make a mistake. However, common sense would say that it is impossible to do everything right. All individuals understand common sense, yet private logic resides within all humans, due to the fact that individuals are unique, and shaped by the creative self at an early age (Adler, 1979). Safeguarding is a mechanism of patterns that preserves what little self-esteem is left within an individual (Jones-Smith, 2012). Social interest is deterred when private logic causes safeguarding. Other hindrances of social interest in childhood that contribute
to safeguarding and private logic of individuals as adults must also be explore to further expand the frame of reference for the concept of social interest.

**Three Hindrances of Social Interest in Childhood**

Adler (1998) reveals factors that inhibit growth as it relates to children and social interest. Pampering, neglect, and organ inferiority are identified as handicaps, and success in regards to overcoming these hindrances will demonstrate usefulness through social interest (Adler, 1998). When an individual feels inadequate or inferior to others, then the individual will doubt his/her place in the group, moving towards safeguarding and away from participation (Dreikurs, 1967). Pampering trains a child in non-cooperation, because they are robbed of their initiative (Adler, 1998, p. 13). Neglect, whether perceived or actual, can be defined by the development of feelings of inferiority, which enable children to strive to overcome unfavorable situations in a manner that harms social interest. Children with organ inferiority, depending on their perception of physical, behavioral or emotional, use their creative power to overcome this condition to go from a felt minus to perceived plus. However, how a parent guides the creative power of a child will contribute to the child’s ability to overcome struggles, participate, contribute and develop positively in a way that is socially cooperative (Adler, 1998).

**Pampering.** The concept of pampering is one that is extensive and not precise. Therefore, some authors after Adler have suggested that the term is encompassed by four types of parent-child interactions (Capron, 2004). Capron (2004), links narcissism to pampering in his peer reviewed article, titles “Types of Pampering and the Personality Trait”. The article is a study surrounding to the concept of pampering, and defines four types of pampering; overindulgence, overpermissiveness, overdomineering, and overprotectiveness. Each one of these forms of pampering sends children messages that can create disruptions in their ability to
form socially interested behaviors as children and adults. Each form also presents an example of emotional neglect, as the child is not afforded the opportunity to learn developmental skills needed to cope as adults. For example, a child who is overindulged, or in other words, is taking without giving, may learn to become egotistical, exploitive and entitled. Overindulgence may lead to a child growing up as an adult who potentially exhibits behaviors that are tyrannical, materialist and manipulative. Thus, the overindulged child may be neglected of the opportunity to develop the skills associated with sharing and contributing in a socially interested way. A parent who may be exhibiting an overpermissive parenting style, by allowing a child to do as they please with little regard for how these actions affect others, may cause their child to learn behaviors which hinder their capacity to follow the rules or the rights of others as adults. A parent who is overpermissive may be neglecting the child’s need for structure and consistency in this case. Parents that are overdomineering, or making all the decisions for the child, may struggle to find confidence in their own abilities. Children who are raised by overdomineering parents could develop over dependence on others, rebellion, or fear of taking risks as adults. Finally, overprotection, which may occur when a parent is constantly pointing out or exaggerating life dangers, teaches a child that the world is a scary place, and can manifest as anxiety and isolation as adults (Capron, 2004). The child who experiences overprotection and overdomineering could be neglected of the opportunity to learn the life skills of risk-taking, overcoming fears, and self-reliance.

Parents can promote the necessary skills that develop a capacity to overcome obstacles in life, which help children learn how to be courageous. Adler cites that pampering of children causes adverse effects to development of social interest (Adler, 1979). When a child who is pampered is outside the pampering circle, they feel constantly threatened and act as if they are in
hostile territory. The child has learned to find it unnecessary to cooperate, and begin to form mistaken beliefs that people will do everything for them. Overindulgence of a parent to a child who is being pampered will enable a child to refuse to extend social interest to others (Adler, 1998).

A pampered child doesn’t like to follow any instance which isn’t catering to their wishes, and when something does not go the way they would like it to, they appear resistant. The resistance can appear as active resistance or passive resistance (Adler, 1998). Dreikurs (1964) cautioned parents about the impact of pampering, stating, “We can not protect our children from life. Nor should we want to” (p. 188). Protecting a child from harm is innate in parents, but it can cause discouraging effects. Active parenting is helpful and encouraging. Pampering parenting styles, however, is discouraging in that it sends the message that a child may be incompetent. For example, a democratic parenting style is one in which a child is held to standards of consequences. When a child is held accountable for his/her actions, a parent provides a structure in which they must experience a consequence, and most important of all, follow through with the established consequence. A parent who pampers may not set a limit whatsoever, which is confusing to a child, and sends discouraging messages to the child. A parent, who pampers, may set a limit. However, without follow through, a parent runs the risk of conveying a message which communicates that rules are not important. Worse yet, a parent who pampers could quite possibly send a message which communicates that the child is not significant enough to place limits on. Pampered children feel helpless and dependent, and the potential exists for the child to feel completely discouraged and insignificant (Dreikurs, 1964).

Neglect. Physical abuse or neglect, which can be characterized by parents who use violence towards a child, has the potential to teach children that physical abuse is “normal” and
creates a lifestyle which is then passed down from generation to generation. A child may
experience emotional abuse when they are ignored and living in an environment that does not
value empathy. A child who is abused may experience developmental delays, learn inadequate
coping skills, and are reared in an environment that does not meet their emotional needs. Thus,
the child takes on a message which states that the abuse is deserved, because the child is not
afforded the opportunity to understand ways in which they can exert control assertively with
others or the environment. Children who are physically abused are not afforded the opportunity
to face conditions that are crucial for self-development. Without the opportunity to develop
skills needed for self-development, the ability to develop social interest and empathy for others
will become disrupted. As these abused children become adults, the lack of development in these
crucial areas of healthy life skills lead to feeling inferior. Inferiority promotes compensation in
the form of a fictional goal in which exertion of power is perceived as a necessity. Children
reared in neglectful families may have learned abusive behaviors that reinforce unsafe family
values. These unsafe rules and values may proliferate in the style of parenting of abused children
when they become adults and have children of their own (Hitchcock, 1987).

Neglect affects social interest, as the child may become preoccupied by fears of facing
their own danger and welfare, instead of focusing on living together. Neglect deprives children
of preparation needed later in life, and when they view better conditions in which other people
live, their social feeling is distorted. The neglected child may live in circumstances without ever
being taught how to progress as a human on this earth, as their needs are passed over. How can a
child learn to overcome obstacles independently if they are never noticed, encouraged or
supported? Neglect is a feeling that can be subjective, as an individual who has experienced
pampering as a child may grow up to perceive feelings of neglect (Adler, 1979). An example of
this may relate to a teen that does not have a curfew. The parents may think they are allowing
their child to have freedoms. Meanwhile, the child may interpret the lack of structure as neglect.
The child has the potential to feel that they are neither cared for, nor important. Dreikurs (1967),
when speaking about parenting styles that vacillate between overindulgence and neglect states
about neglect, “They either neglect the respect for the child by belittling him, by nagging,
skolding and punishing, or they disregard the necessary respect for themselves by yielding, by
permitting the child to impose his whims upon them and to put them into his service” (Dreikurs,
1967). In sum, the parent is showing a lack for self and child when the needs of a child are
neglect or overindulged.

When a child’s need to belong and be noticed is not being met, or when respect of a child is compromised by punishing behaviors of parents, social interest can be impacted. In order
to take part in cooperation, a child must be asked to participate in the first place. If they are not
given the opportunity, via neglect, they may feel “owed” by society. Feeling “owed” may cause a
reaction in which the individual will only focus on their own needs, instead of living together,
which radically affects relationships, provides space for safeguarding, and impacts overall social
interest.

Organ inferiority. Children, when first born, are weak and in need of others to take care
of them. People who take care of the child are compensating for the inherent weakness of a new
born child. Therefore, the world perspective in which an individual lives cannot be understood
without reference to those who look after the individual as a child. Social life draws its
beginnings in the weakness of the individual. When a child is young, weak, and still developing,
he/she is lead through development by a family group. This development is parallel to
humankind, as humans are driven to live in society to compensate for individual weakness
Although all individuals experience organ inferiority due to physical and cognitive development, the term also applies to children who experience physical disability or disease (S. Trail, personal communication, October 23rd, 2013). When a child has a physical impairment, such as a club foot, the opposite foot must compensate, in order to continue movement. The organ deficiency is not the focus however, it is the way that a person reacts or lives with the deficiencies. Organ inferiority exists in all humans, and at some point in time, everyone feels inadequate in certain situations (Adler, 2011). The personality is not dependent on the inferiority, but instead, how the individual reacts to the inferiority (Dreikurs, 1967).

Neglect, pampering and organ inferiority are influences that affect social interest. When working to identify the level of which a child is socially interested, clinicians will need to investigate assessment tools that will reveal how social interest is affecting functioning. Although there are a plethora of options which assess functioning, the Adlerian assessment tool of life tasks is a useful and helpful tool that can help a clinician gain better understanding of a client’s level of functioning.

**Life Tasks: Assessment of Functioning**

The life tasks are social constructs that Adler believed tied all humans together, as they accounted for interactions that all humans will experience. How an individual reacts and operates within these tasks constitutes the lifestyle that makes the individual distinct and unique Adler discussed these common human circumstances in three categories, school/work, communal life and love (Mansanger & Gold, 2011). They are problems which confronts all humans since in their early existence (Adler, 1998). Humans need communal relationship in order to subsist and develop on this Earth, by the provisions of livelihood, and by caring for offspring (Adler, 1998). Finding solutions for these tasks constitutes the way humans live their lives. Dreikurs and Mosak
expanded the life tasks to five, by adding two more dimensions that tie humans: sense of self, and spirituality (Mansanger & Gold, 2001). The life tasks can be a valuable tool that provides insight into a client’s level of functioning. It is also a tool that can be used on any client, of any generation.

Now that social interest has been defined, and the hindrances of social interest present during childhood which are pampering, neglect and organ inferiority, explained, it is the intent of the author to further explore the potential manifestations of these concepts in contemporary youth. Before social interest in contemporary youth can be explored, however, it is the intent of the author to discuss and define the construct of generations. Media and technology consumption of contemporary youth will be further expanded upon in this peer-review study. Recommendations for parents, teachers and clinicians will also be discussed in this going forward.

**Defining “Generations”**

This is peer-review study will attempt to discuss the theoretical construct of generations, by looking at potential behaviors, values, convictions, and experiences of contemporary youth, and how current youth may experience the world through their unique technological perspective. The purpose is intended to potentially enhance understanding a client or parent’s frame of reference. To begin, it is important to first define generations. It must also be noted that there are limitations and considerations when reviewing the theoretical construct of generations. The purpose of investigating generations is not to imply that these constructs serve as the sole, quintessential factor of analysis when working with clients. Instead, the purpose of discussing generational view points is to demonstrate ways that it may serve as a vehicle which could
enhance care, by attempting to understand and expand upon a potential frame of reference in regards to societal and environmental considerations of a given person within American society.

**Generations, Cohorts and Period Effects**

A generation is defined by Parry and Urwin (2011), as, “A set of historical events and related phenomena that creates a distinct generational gap. The identification of generation requires some form of social ‘proximity’ to shared events or cultural phenomenon (p. 84)”. Parry and Urwin go on to define the term cohort by describing a group of individuals who are presumed to be similar as a result of shared experiences (2011). Cohort implies that the shared experiences of a group of individuals is presumed, and therefore does not assume that these individuals share or react to experiences in a similar manner, but reports possible conjectures that are potentially present for individuals in a similar age group. Period effects are defined by Parry and Urwin (2011), as “The impact of environment on factors based on values, behaviors, and attitudes that one must take into account when attempting to identify generational, cohort or age-related impacts” (p. 84). Period effects tend to encapsulate the relevant intentions of this particular peer-review study. The intention of the author’s study is to evaluate potential similarities of experiences shared by contemporary youth that could be taken into consideration when working to better understand a particular individual’s potential reactions, behaviors, values, frame of references, or environmental perspectives they may possess. However, it is NOT intended to predict the future, better understand marketing strategies, or pre-judge behaviors of current youth and parents.

**Limitations of Generational Analysis**

There are several limitations when discussing theoretical generational cohort constructs. Empirical evidence of actual generational differences is currently mixed at. Generational cohort
theoretical constructs are often measured and defined by a range of years, yet it is important to remember that the ranges are not based in absolutes, but in estimates. Some authors place the dawning of the baby boomer generational cohort beginning in 1943, others say, 1946, while another may define this group as beginning in 1940 (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Considering that there is no exact date and year to form these measures, it is reasonable to believe that an individual born at the end of a generational cohort’s range may take on potential characteristics or values as the generational cohort labeled ahead of them. This is also true of an individual who was born early into an estimated range of a generational cohort, as they may experience significant events differently than their younger peers.

It is also imperative to underscore that the generational analysis of this particular peer-review study is most often related to American society, and does not necessarily correlate to shared experiences of individuals who have similar birthing dates (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Instead the intention is to focus on generations who were born and/or raised within a different country, or cultural background than individual raised in the United States. Even within the United States, an individual experiencing a “significant event” within a pre-defined age cohort, particularly an individual who is a child while being exposed to such an event, may understand, interpret, respond, feel, or relate to any significant situation differently, due to any number of extenuating circumstances, including; race, birth order, socioeconomic position, religion, cultural background, parental influences, convictions, private logic and as mentioned, personality of the child. Therefore, Parry and Urwin, in their article *Generational Differences in Work Values: A Review of Theory and Evidence* (2011) state, “Future academic research should search to disentangle the affects of age, career stage, cohort, and period, while also recognizing that generational analyses may be more appropriately applied to specific groups within cohorts, such
as women and ethnic minorities, and within national cultures” (p. 93). Parry and Urwin (2011) also emphasize other dimensions of differences, and consider the use of the term “generation” in reference to or conjunction with additional characteristics. For example, it is recommended to use certain cohorts in a way that more deeply defines a particular group. Using the term “generation” as a descriptor, such as describing a “generation of women” or “first/second generation immigrants”, is a way to decrease the study of heterogeneous groups, and tighten the focus to groups that are socially close to events (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

As an Adlerian educated pupil, the author is of the belief that every person is unique and distinct. Every individual lives a style of life, in which an individual moves and organizes feelings and activity around a guiding line or common goal which is purposeful. This guiding line regulates emotions and behavioral responses in accordance with the individual’s convictions (Slavik, 1995). With that in mind, according to Adlerian principles, no one person lives the same style of life. This construct of Adlerian psychology must be adhered to and recognized throughout the analysis in this study, and the author emphasizes that generational analysis does not entirely account for style of life of any particular individual, in any way whatsoever. However, investigating generations may allow for a deeper level of understanding of an individual’s lifestyle. The common experiences shared by a generation or cohort may provide a clearer definition of an individual’s perspective in regards to the Adlerian concept of common sense.

Thus, the author attempts to discuss generational cohorts as a factor that could be considered when working with clients, not as an answer or predicator that defines any one individual. Understanding a client’s potential generational cohort is a factor that may help a clinician, teacher or parent gain better understanding of a client, student or child. The
generational factor is a consideration that can help a clinician, teacher or parent gain deeper understanding of the potential common sense present in a client, student or child reared in a different time in society. A clinician may be encouraged to better understand a client’s culture, one that differs from their own, in order to provide respectful and considerate care. For example, a clinician, who identifies as an atheist, and will be working with a client who identifies strongly with their background of Islam, might work to better understand Islamic beliefs in order to gain better cultural understanding of his/her client, while developing a clearer picture of the client’s frame of reference. Therefore, this study serves to provide a perspective that explores the way contemporary American youth interact through technology, as this may provide one of many factors to consider when working to see the world through the lens of a client, student or child.

The Five Living Generations of America

Before the use of media and technology is examined, it is first important to discuss the generational cohort that is at the focus of this peer review. In advance of investigating the generation of contemporary youth, however, the author intends to first discuss the generations that have lead up to current times. In American culture currently, there are, as defined by a recent Pew Research study (2011), four generations that are identified as legal adults. The four adult generations include, the Silent generation (Traditionalists or the Greatest Generation), or those born between 1922 and 1945. The next generation have been labeled as the Baby Boomers. Baby Boomers are broken up into two sections; older Baby Boomers (1946-1954) and younger Baby Boomers (1955-1964). Generation X is the label denoted to individuals born in 1965-1977 in American society. Millennial’s are adults born from around 1977 to 1993, and make up the youngest cohort of adults in American society (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). The focus of this peer review project, however, will surround Generation Z, or those born after 1993-2005. The oldest
of Generation Z are reaching young adulthood, with the majority of this group at the age of 18 and younger.

**Traditionalist Generation**

The Traditionalist generation has been coined by some as the “greatest”, due to the changes associated with significant shifts in political dynamics of the world during World War II. Describing adults born from 1928 through 1945, the “silent” generation label refers to their civic and conformist instincts. This is also the generation that endured the hardships of poverty during the great depression (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). The New Deal, a domestic program of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s presidential administration, provided relief to poverty stricken citizens in the labor force, helped usher in community based approaches, such as Social Security, FDIC, labor regulations, and strengthened Unions, with the intention of fortifying the position of the “forgotten man” (New Deal, 2013). Due to these major events in American history, the greatest generation was not afforded the same opportunities of youth associated with future generations, because Traditionalists were cast off to war abroad or placed in positions of great responsibility due to severe financial hardships at home (O’Donnell, 2005).

With these factors in mind, the duty of these young adults to serve their country in World War II, as well as the social responsibilities that were necessary for survival during the great depression, caused this generation to potentially center their value systems around duty, personal responsibility, honor, faith, belief in sacrifice for the common good, and a common sense of purpose. Along with these values exists the potential value of a strong labor ethic and the necessity to overcome adversity, through hard work, honesty and community (O’Donnell, 2005). Traditionalists persevered through the worst economic downturn in American history, heroically fought and won World War II, which led to growth and economic prosperity, advancement in

It is, however, important to note that race relations continued to fit the old guard of previous American generations, as segregation in the south was still prominent. Although many African-Americans fought for the United States in World War II, many were not given the same opportunities upon returning home. While the GI Bill allowed fortuities of housing, college and jobs for Caucasian soldiers, many African-American veterans were not afforded similar freedoms. According to Hatcher (2007), “Although VA loans made housing assistance available to African-American World War II veterans, the federal government supported FHA insurance policies that made it nearly impossible for VA loans to be insured for African-Americans” (p. 18). Although this generation is known to have valued community, all were not provided the opportunity to reap the benefits of hard work and duty to county. The civil unrest of race relations would eventually lead to social upheaval when the Traditionalist’s children (Baby Boomers) came of age. Looking at the perspective of African-American and other oppressed groups within the Traditionalist cohort resides the potential for values of community, an honest day’s work, and opportunity, shared by majority groups in this generation, to be replaced by feelings of distrust, lack of inclusion, and discouragement.

When asked if their generation was more unique when compared to other generations in a Pew Research study (2010), respondents cited that they believed they were in fact more distinct than other generations (at a rate of 66%, which was the highest percentage in comparison to other respondents from differing generations). Traditionalists cited the Great Depression/World War II, being smarter, being honest, work ethic, and values/morals as distinguishing factors that
separated the greatest generation from the other current adult generations (Taylor & Keeter, 2010).

**The Baby Boom Generation**

Baby Boomers were denoted with this label due to the massive spike in fertility that began in 1946, after World War II veterans returned at the end of the war (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). The end of the generation, 1964, coincidentally occurred around the time that the birth control pill went on the market and became attainable to mainstream public (p. 4). Baby Boomers were reared in homes that consisted of a nuclear family, with a breadwinning parent, and a stay at home parent (Smith, 2009). The societal impact of the baby boom generation can be attributed to the sheer size, some 75 million, of the population alone (Baby Boomers, 2013). During the baby boom period, the growth of families led to a great migration from cities to suburbs, which in turn prompted a building boom in housing, schools, and shopping malls. This expansion allowed for Baby Boomers to enjoy a higher level of education than any generation before them, with high school graduation rates reaching nearly 90% (Baby Boomers, 2013).

Baby boom youth had more spending power than any teen population in American history, which caused a massive increase in marketing geared towards this group (MacUnovic, 2002). The marketing towards the baby boom generation reached great proportions due to the technological innovation known as the television, which was now replacing the radio in the living rooms of homes all across America. This new medium platform catered to the large cohort of baby boomer youth, who represented the first generation to be reared in a home with a television, and spawned the beginnings of rock n roll as a major influence on pop culture phenomenon (Puente, 2011). Terms such as “hippy” “yuppy” and “pop group” were coined during this cohort’s teen year, and the high consumption, low-savings lifestyle of the baby boom
generations was a stark contrast to the Traditionalists fiscally modest, conservative ways, as they valued saving and appreciation for what one already have (MacUnovich, 2002).

As the “boomers” reached young adulthood in the 1960s and ’70s, they continued to rebel against the values of the Traditionalists’. The stark difference is illuminated by the boomers’ tastes in music, style of hair, and fashion which greatly influenced American culture at that time (Baby Boomers, 2013). The political activism present during the baby boom generation was another significant factor that distinguished the Baby Boomers from the values of their parental counterparts, the Traditionalists, who preached country, honor, faith, and personal responsibility. The 1960’s, in particular, was a transformative era in American history in which diversity, volatility, and shifting attitudes against war and towards acceptance were evident. The rebelliousness of many of the Baby Boomers appeared through their civic unrest via sit-ins, protests, marches, free love, a rapid increase in drug use and questioning of authority (MacUnovich, 2002). School integration, the civil rights act, and women’s liberation were captured on television sets across the nation, as the country viewed African-American’s in the south being sprayed with hoses, churches and college campuses being bombed, thousands of people descending to Washington DC to march for civil rights, and the protests in opposition to the Vietnam War. The baby boom generation ushered in social change, which is evident from historical law decisions that instituted integration of public schools in the landmark decisions of Brown vs. the Board of education, as well as the civil rights acts of 1964. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, for example, was implemented as a law with the intent of ending racial discrimination in employment, education and other spheres of life (Civil Rights Act of 1964, 2005). The assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., Medger Evers and Malcolm X marked significant traumatic events of the baby boom youth that were all reported
via the medium of the television (Danielsen, 2011). The Baby Boomers tuned into significant events, such as the moon landing, with record numbers of over one billion viewers across the globe witnessing history live (Toomey, 2009). To reiterate, all of these events were reported, televised and viewed simultaneously by baby boomer youth from coast to coast, placing further emphasis on the importance of the television as a technological innovation which connected Baby Boomers to one another.

When asked in the same Pew Research Survey if the baby boom generation viewed their cohort as unique, nearly 58% identified that they viewed their generation as distinct and unique, and they identified values of work ethic, respectfulness, morals, being Baby Boomers, and being smarter as distinguishing factors that placed them as unique among their generational counterparts (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). The values that were important to Baby Boomers differed from the preferred values of Traditionalists. In regards to social interest, when analyzing the Pew research study, the Traditionalists connected social interest as being a good citizen and doing what is asked for the greater good of the country. Baby Boomers, however, may connect social interest to equality and social justice, as they believed power constructs in society, which provided privilege to some and oppression to others, must be challenged (S. Trail, personal communication, October 23rd, 2013).

**Generation X**

Generation X is a descriptor that some have assigned to individuals born from 1965 to 1977, which was a label that eventually overtook the original name assigned to this generation, the baby bust (Taylor, & Keeter, 2011). The members of Generation X, also known as “slackers” due to their willingness to embrace cynicism, along with a portrayal by some as lazy, are products of the intellectual atmosphere in which they were raised, as they are the first
generation reared in the age of postmodernism (Isaksen, 2008). The insinuation of Generation X as “ slackers” who are twenty-something’s unwilling to grow up is a popular belief among many from different generations. To further illustrate the fickle position of Generation X, the “X” of Generation Xer’s has been a connotation in reference to the perception that they are the “lost” generation; not as impactful or influential as the Baby Boomers, and not as innovative or new when compared to the Millennials. The characterization of Generation X as “lost” or not as influential is akin to a sibling construct of birth order where the Gen Xer’s are viewed as the middle child; never as big or highly regarded as the first born “golden child” Baby Boomers, and never noticed or appreciated like the youngest or “babies”, the Millennial’s (Goyer, 2013). However, with the perspective of Generation X’s postmodern values come multiple world-views based on subjective experiences. Generation Xer’s broaden their frame of reference, in comparison to modernists who revere classical art and literature, by including pop-culture productions such as music videos, as well as animation (Isaksen, 2008). With the context of postmodernism as a backdrop, it is no wonder that Generation X is the cohort who launched MTV and birthed the music video to mainstream America (Goyer, 2013). Generation X also provided the critical innovation of the personal home computer (Smith, 2009).

With the civil unrest of the late 60s, and early 70’s, in conjunction with the overconsumption of the 1980’s, the Generation Xer’s have a reputation for viewing government, education, corporations and the media with a critical eye. As young adults in the 1990s, Generation Xer’s lived within a background of social upheaval, including: widespread homelessness, corrupt politics, the AIDS epidemic, degradation of the environment, violent crimes, widening of the socioeconomic gap, sharp increases in suicide rates, as well as teen pregnancies. The family unit of Generation X individuals began to see dramatic shifts from
previous generations, due in large part to the family makeup consisting of dual-working parents, and single parent households. This shift could be attributed skyrocketing rates of divorce never before seen in previous generational cohorts (Isaksen, 2008). The term “latch-key kids” is often associated with Generation X’ers for this reason, and often, they value the balance of work and family time as adults (Danielsen, 2011). The persona of “latch-key kids” may be a precursor to their value of individualism, and provides an explanation as to why they are perceived as haughty. The reason being that Generation X individuals often needed to learn to become self-sufficient and independent, without the support or constant attention of parents (Goyer, 2012). The work ethic associated with this generation is apparent when their self-starting and innovative attitude is brought to the forefront. Entertainment and accessibility distinguished Generation X from other cohorts, as the explosion of 24-hour tabloid and media coverage, along with new, innovative ways to access information (cable, digital, and satellite), marked a significant shift in society. News, sports, and even cooking were now happening instantly. Fast-food/drive thru restaurants, access to a wide range of television programming, the invention of the microwave, and the advent of the cellphone took place during this generation’s ascension from youth to adulthood, and surely shaped the common sense of Generation Xer’s (Smith, 2009).

The perception of the “middle” generation is apparent in regards to how Generation Xer’s view their own generation’s unique and distinct influence compared to other generations. When asked if they viewed their generation to be unique, they reported the lowest percentage compared to their generational counterparts at 49%. When asked what characteristics made Generation X most unique when compared to other generations, these individuals cited technology, work ethic, being conservative/traditional, being smarter, and being more respectful as key distinctions of their generation in (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). Positive portrayals of Generation Xer’s often
revolve around their individualism, independence, high levels of education, and proficiencies in technology (Goyer, 2013).

**The Millennial Generation**

The Millennial Generation, those born between the years of 1980 through 1993, refers to the cohort that came of age at the turn of the new millennium (Taylor, & Keeter, 2010). The Millennials are bigger in population size than Generation Xer’s, at 70 million, yet slightly smaller than the baby boom Generation (Smith, 2009). The laissez-faire approach to parenting, more prominent in the 1960’s, began to dissolve during the onset of the Millennial’s in the 1980’s (Smith, 2009). The adult centered approach of parenting present for Generation Xer’s led to the development of a latch-key generation for some, where as Millennials were reared in an environment that appeared more child-centered (AMP & Cone Inc, 2006). Abortion rates declined, while infertility and prenatal care were fast growing industries of this generation. Divorce rates also began to slowly subside, while expansion of the economy, and the beginnings of education institutions were beginning to be held more accountable in society (Smith, 2009). This cohort attended more post-secondary school than any of their generational predecessors (with over 50% having some type of college education) (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). Parents strived to give the Millennials the “perfect life”, and often stressed engagement in multiple activities, using academic daycares, sports, and music as ways to further develop social and cognitive learning in their children. Thus, Millennials were raised in a highly communicative and participation-orientated environment (Smith, 2009). In comparison, the Traditionalists stayed quiet and did what was asked of them, the Baby Boomers screamed and fought for what they wanted, while Generation X never felt heard in the first place. The Millennial generation, unlike their counterparts, grew up in an age in the decade of the 90’s in America that was economically
prosperous, peaceful (most Millennials were not old enough to recall Operation Desert Storm), and culturally tolerant. The terrorist attacks of 9/11, as well as an uptick in school shootings, however, hindered the reality of peace for the Millennials (Smith, 2009). The dot com bubble burst in the 90’s, along with the mortgage crisis in 2007, served as significant factors that contributed to sobering expectations for Millennial youth (Havemann, 2009). However, these events also contributed to this generation’s strong value of volunteering, via social and civic involvement, on a global scale. The Millennials’ attended college more than any cohort before (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). Yet, the Millennials’ also amass more debt, due to soaring tuition cost (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). The shift in tuition costs has caused many Millennial students to delay completion of college as a result (Taylor & Keeter, 2010).

With innovations and wide accessibility of smaller, powerful portable technology (cellular phones, tablets, laptops and gaming consoles), the Millennials are the first generation to be in constant connection through the information superhighway known as the internet. The cellular phone also became widely accessible to Americans during this generation’s time in society as youth. With the massive expansion of the internet and cell phone, the world is literally one click away for the Millennial Generation. Globalization is a norm for these individuals, as they are able to easily access any answer, factoid, video, song, film, or News channel at a moment’s notice (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). The capabilities to access news and information across continents results in an instillation of far-reaching, social global consciousness (Amp Agency & Cone Inc., 2006). Eighty percent of respondents in an Amp/Cone research study identifying characteristics of Millennials reported to volunteer (2006). Respondents of the survey rarely articulated what motivated them to volunteer, however, the mere fact that they are able to actively engage in these activities demonstrates a desire to make an impact and positively affect
change, which is a pro-social stance in and of itself (Amp Agency & Cone Inc., 2006). The social media phenomenon (MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) has allowed this generation to keep in constant contact with friends, families and peers via the internet (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). The result is a strong social conscience, only amplified by technology (Amp Agency & Cone Inc., 2006).

Multi-tasking is not just a skill; it is a way of life for Millennials, as they often treat their portable hand held technological gadgets as a body part (Amp Agency and Cone Inc., 2006). Nearly eight in ten respondents involved in a generational Pew Research survey (2009) report to sleep with their cell phone by their side. Cellular phones, or smart phones as they are called, combine multiple Medias into one platform. Convenience is not only appreciated, it is viewed as a necessity in the minds of active, multi-tasking Millennials. The convenience is so palpable that nearly two-thirds of respondents in the same study admitted to texting while driving (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). Millennials are known to have an insatiable appetite for immediacy, or instant gratification, which can be attributed to the environment they were reared within (Smith, 2009). Anything can be bought and sold online without having to leave the confines of the home. Wireless capabilities and “blazing” fast internet speeds make navigating the web an efficient and quick experience, which allows for multi-tasking on levels never before seen. Multitasking does not strictly apply to technology in Millennial youth, as they also have been known to embrace multiple means of expression. Three-fourths of Millennials have a personal social media page, one in five Millennials have posted videos online, and nearly 40% have at least one tattoo (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). The same tolerance of openness is true of sexual orientation, with the passage of marriage equality legislation during this generation’s time in adulthood (13 states currently are operating with marital equality for all) (Marriage Equality USA, 2013). Gay
marriage is either strongly favored (21%) or favored (29%, 50% in total), with 36% opposed, marking Millennials as the only living generation with a majority in favor of marriage equality (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). Barack Obama’s election as the first African-American president was due in part to overwhelming support of Millennials. Millennials are the most diverse racially and ethnically when compared to previous generations. Only six in ten Millennials identify as non-white Hispanics (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). A large influx of Latino immigrants, globalization due to internet accessibility, along with increased tolerance for unconventional families and biracial relationships have changed the landscape of the America remembered by Traditionalists. Ninety-three percent of Millennial respondents of the previously mentioned Pew Survey (2010) reported to accept interracial marriage, and identified to have interracial friendships as well. Thus, common sense in these youth may be that they value expression of self, tolerance of the uniqueness of others, and global connectedness.

Respondents in the same Pew Research study asked if Millennials believe they are distinct from other generations, and they answered “yes” 61% of the time, which is closely tied to rates when Baby Boomers and Traditionalists were asked the same question. When asked what characteristics make them unique, Millennials identified technology use (24%), music/pop culture (11%), liberal/tolerant attitude (6%) and clothes (5%) as factors that distinguish them from other generations (Taylor, & Keeter, 2010). Millennials are the only generation when surveyed that did not cite work ethic as a distinctive value (Taylor & Keeter, 2010).

The Next Generation: Generation Z

Thus far, this study has attempted to further compare and contrast generations in America who are currently of adult age. In order to compare and contrast, factors such as population, significant events in history, parenting/nuclear home make up, critical innovations, and values
were taken into account. To better understand why each generation values the things they do, work they way they do, and interacts the way they do, it is important to better understand what environment they were raised in as children. However, the majority of the next generation of contemporary youth has yet to reach adulthood. Yet, it is possible to discuss the current environment of this generation, the way they interact, as well as significant societal events which may have the potential to affect the way they view the world as adults.

**Generation Z: Digital Natives**

Marc Prensky coined the term “digital natives” in 2001, and describes this generation of youth, who were born from the mid-90’s to the present, as being native speakers to the digital language of the internet, computers, video games, and multimedia platforms. He also describes those who were not born into the digital world, yet take part in it as digital immigrants. A digital immigrant may adapt and learn, but as with any other language, a digital native will always retain their past roots, an accent, if you will. Examples that Prensky cites of a digital immigrant’s exposed accent may be printing an e-mail and then reading it to highlight information, asking a friend to look at a website on their screen, instead of sending a URL link, or calling someone to ask if they “received the e-mail” (Prensky, 2001). With the backdrop of the Prensky’s language theory, digital natives are fluent and native speakers in a world where everyone else is an immigrant (Although Generation Xer’s and Millenials, as the founding fathers of the technology explosion may be closest to having their “accent” understood by digital natives). C. Brown Czerniewicz, in his article “Debunking the digital native: Beyond digital apartheid, towards digital democracy” (2010), disputes Prensky’s claim that the next generation should be called digital natives, and cites that labeling can have destructive consequences. Czerniewics also claims that age alone does not determine proficiency of technology, but cites experience as a
variable to consider when discussing proficiency in technology (2010). The author of this peer-review study is also in agreement with Czerniewics stance that labeling is not always useful, however, for the purposes of studying the environment that digital natives are living within; it is valuable to understand that no other generation before them has lived in an age where technology has been so readily accessible at such a young age. Therefore, it can be determined that there is value to what Prensky discusses, but it is also important to consider that not being born a digital native does not equate to inefficiency or lack of proficiency when discussing technology.

**Generation Z: Diversity and Globalization**

So what type of racial, cultural and ethnic environment are the Generation youth currently reared within? Since they are still being born, there are no exact numbers as to their population currently. However, what can be determined is the type of environment that these natives are living within. Digital natives, or Generation Z youth as they are often called in American society, are brought up in a world where diversity is championed. It is a tangible diversity, such as the ability to see a president of bi-racial descent. As was touched on earlier in this study, interracial couples are widely accepted now more than any other time in history, which in turn, has allowed for an increase of diversity, in regards to the race of Generation Z children. Bi-racial and multi-racial children are the fastest growing segments in the United States, with over 200 million reportedly having parents of differing races. Interracial marriages between African-Americans and Caucasians have increased over 400% in the last 30 years, and nearly a 1,000% between Asians and Caucasians. Nearly 47% of white teens, 60% of black teens, and 90% of Hispanic teens said they have dated someone of another race (AACAP, 2011). According to the 2010 census, nearly 115,000 same-sex couples’s households reported to have a child, which is about 20% of all same-sex couples (Lofquist, 2011). Due to the social unrest in
previous generations, GLBQT community has evolved, and the secrecy surrounding homosexuality is not nearly as prominent, as say for Traditionalists. Marriage equality is becoming more and more frequent in the United States with each piece of legislation passed. There are now 13 states that have legalized marriage equality in the United States.

Generation Z youth are living in a globalized society, as is apparent from their proficiency in social media and other media platforms. However, it is not only the internet that is shaping the world view of these children. Although this peer review intends to delve deeper in regards to Generation Z’s use of technology, it is important to uncover environmental and societal issues that are present in this generation’s world. In 2008, the world reached an invisible but momentous milestone, in that, for the first time in history, more than half of the human population, 3.3 billion people, live in urban areas. This is not just a global phenomenon, but it is also occurring in the United States, as the nation's urban population increased by 12.1 percent from 2000 to 2010, outpacing the nation's overall growth rate of 9.7 percent for the same period (Tacoli, 2012). With the United States’ growth in-terms of racial diversity, acceptance of GLBTQ rights, and child rearing taking place in urban areas, the opportunity for Generation Z to be exposed to these diverse variables provides an opportunity where a nation will continue to be more open minded and tolerant of others who are different.

**Generation Z and Income Inequality**

With economic growth stagnating, Generation Z youth have been reared in an environment with a widening gap of income inequality, with income in the middle and lower class income brackets slowing significantly, and income distribution of the top rising to levels that have not been seen since the “Roaring 20’s”. Viewing the landscape of Traditionalist as adults after World War II, as well as Baby Boomers as children and young adults, a stark
contrast of the income gap disparities appears when compared to present day. Broadly shared
growth and income equality two years after the WWII, all the way up through the 1970’s,
illuminates a picture of comparison. Incomes grew rapidly and at roughly the same rate vertically
up and down the income ladder. From the late 1940s to the early 1970s, the income gap between
those high up the income ladder and those on the middle and lower rungs, although substantial,
experienced little change during this period (Stone, Trisi, & Sherman, 2012). Now, nearly twenty
percent of the richest working families are taking home almost half of the income (48%), with
those in the bottom 20% taking home only 5% of the total income (Roberts, Povich, & Mather,
2012). Thus, the balance of income in the United States has shifted, as the majority of income
lies in the hands of the richest families. This has caused a stark difference in regards to class, as
the shrinking middle class is left with less than the Traditionalists and Baby Boomers.

The financial crisis of 2008, which began in 2007 when highly inflated home mortgage
prices sharply turned downward, led to a massive global recession (Havemann, 2013). When the
subprime mortgage bubble burst, record defaults and foreclosure (nearly 2.8 million foreclosures
in 2010 alone) caused seismic waves of uncertainty on the United States economy. Predatory
lending practices, along with idealistic consumers, inflated prices so high that almost anyone
could by a home with little to no verification of qualifications needed in the early 2000’s
(Feinstein, 2010). Unemployment skyrocketed, from 4.5 percent in 2006 to almost 10 percent in
2009 (Bureau of Labor Statistic, 2013). These economic uncertainties raised stress levels at
home which can affect parenting. When reviewing Lee, Brooks-Gunn, McLanahan, Notterman,
and Garfinkle (2013) in their journal article, “The Great Recession, genetic sensitivity, and
maternal, harsh parenting”, a correlation was discovered in regards to potential economic
stressors and harsher parenting practices, which they describe, stating, “Actual reductions in
income between interviews did result in greater harsh parenting” (p. 4). Having an understanding of their parents stress level, along with their rearing during the stressors associated with the financial crisis has caused this generation to become more aware of fiscal responsibility. It is important to also consider the effects income inequality has on technology inequality. With the rapid increase of technology based learning in schools, rural and poor Generation Z students are potentially facing even more of a disadvantage if they are unable to keep up with shifting technological needs. A student who lives in an area where internet coverage is unaffordable or unattainable may face difficulties in regards to preparing for opportunities as adults (Trail, Personal Communication, Oct. 23rd, 2013).

Overall, Generation Z youth are highly conscious of the importance of money. A survey of a 1,000 Generation Z youth conducted by TD Ameritrade (2012) asked the open ended question of what they would do with $500. Fifty-five percent reported that they would save it, and nearly 11% reported that they would use it towards college tuition, while only 32% said they would spend it, further emphasizing the fact that the environment in which these generations live in as children can shape the values, behaviors and practices as adults (TD Ameritrade, 2012).

**Generation Z: Global Conflicts**

Last, but not least, Generation Z youth have been reared in a time of war. The oldest individuals of Generation Z were approximately 10 years old in the year 2011 during the terrorist’s attacks of September 11th (Tulgan, 2012). This attack eventually led to the war in Afghanistan which continues to persist to this day. The Iraq war also took place during the turn of the 21st century, starting in 2003. While the Millennials were reared during a comparatively peaceful time in regards US military conflicts globally, Generation Z youth have been raised in an environment where the reality of terrorism and war has remained a prominent issue for much
of their lives. Thousands of Generation Z children of military parents have experienced the consequences of these two wars, as parents have been injured or killed in the line of duty. Many youth of military families in this generation have had parents come back from the war with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries. Nearly 30% of the over 800,000 veterans treated at the Department of Veteran Affairs hospitals since 9/11 have been diagnosed with PTSD (Epidemiology Program, Post Deployment Health Group, Office of Public Health, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, 2012). The wars of Iraq and Afghanistan, whether directly or indirectly, have played an influential role on the way that Generation Z youth view the world. In short, as a group that has been raised in an environment that has been at war for their entire lives, the reality that the world is not safe may be a value that is present.

To summarize, Generation Z youth have been reared in an environment that is more tolerant of diversity than ever before. Generation Z witnessed terrorism as young children, and have been raised in a country that has been at War for the majority of their lives. Yet, there exists a global-orientated awareness as a result. These contemporary youth live in households where parents are continuing to manage stress associated with the financial collapses of 2008, with uncertainty in an economically stagnate workforce. The income gap continues to widen, and Generation Z youth with educated parents are dealing with increasing tuition prices, causing these children to witness strain associated with managing debt. As a result, parents of Generation Z face anxieties associated with high unemployment and a sluggish work force. These events have resulted in a generation that could potentially value fiscal responsibility, tolerance of others, education, flexibility of employment, and networking abilities. However, the most significant factor to consider about Generation Z digital natives lies in their names: technology use. No
Generation has demonstrated a level of proficiency or comfortably with technology at such an early age than Generation Z. To get a better understanding of the perspective of Generation Z and the way they interact, the amount of interaction and use of portable technological devices must be further explored.

**Generation Z-Media Use**

Generation Z youth are considered the first truly mobile mavens (Palley, 2012). Growing up with a wide range of electronic devices at hand, the phone is a key device in the lives of Generation Z (Palley, 2012). According to a Kaiser Family Foundation study (2010), the level of media use of 8-18 year old has reached epic proportions. Over the past five years, contemporary youth have increased the amount of time they spend consuming and interacting with media by over an hour and seven minutes (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). When the study was conducted in 2010, it was reported that contemporary youth pack an astounding $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours of media use a day (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). When accounting for total media exposure, generation Z youth cram in an over 11 hours of media per day on average (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). This average is up from eight hours of total media exposure in the 2004, and over eight hours a day on media in 1999, when the study first began (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). What, then, is causing such an expansion of media usage in contemporary youth? The Kaiser study attributes the explosion of usage to the increase of mobile and online media (2010). This online and mobile media revolution is due, in large part, to the transformation of the cell phone platform that delivers multimedia content (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010).

**The “Smartphone”**

An individual may no longer need to watch or interact in media one device at a time. For example, 10 years ago, or even 5 years ago, an individual could watch a television show on their
television, listen to music via computer or mp3 player (or cd player), and play a video game on a console. Now, these formats are all accessible in one handheld device that is portable and small enough to fit in a pant pocket. Much of this can be attributed to the advent of the Smartphone. The Smartphone, according to PCmag Encyclopedia is defined as, “A cellular telephone with built-in applications and Internet access. In addition to digital voice service, modern Smartphone’s provide text messaging, e-mail, Web browsing, still and video cameras, MP3 player and video playback and calling. In addition to their built-in functions, Smartphone’s run myriad free and paid applications, turning the once single-minded cell phone into a mobile personal computer” (nd.). Not only do these transformative devises provide calling and texting capabilities, they also allow for access to web browsing, music listening and accessibility, e-mail, and electronic applications functionality. Contemporary youth who own Smartphone’s have the world in their hands. For Generation Z youth, the Smartphone works as an “everything” hub of entertainment (Palley, 2012).

**Technology Use: Demographic Considerations**

The amount of phone use of Generation Z is not limited to rich children with “all-inclusive” data plans. Eighty-seven percent of teen’s surveyed in the Kaiser Research study living in a household where the family income is over $75,000 reported to own phones. The Kaiser survey also revealed that 73% of youth reared in households earning between $50,000 and $75,000 own cell phones, while 76% of teens in households earning between $30,000 and $50,000 reported to possess a cellular device. However, an interesting consideration of the study reports almost 60% of Generation Z teen respondents who live in household where parents earn a median income of less than $30,000 a year own a cell phone, which highlights the fact that the issue of cell phone use of Generation Z youth is not necessarily exclusive to the “haves”, as the
majority of “have nots” are gaining access to this technology as well (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010).

Another interesting demographical note from the study shows that Latino and African-American Generation Z youth are connected to their technology at a higher rate than Caucasian youth, consuming nearly 4½ more media hours daily than Caucasian youth (13 hours of total media exposure for Hispanics and Blacks, versus 8½ hours for Whites). The largest difference between Caucasian and minority youth can be found in television viewing (African-American youth spend over two hours more per day with the TV than Caucasian youth). Minority youth also spend more time listening to music (over an hour more), than Caucasian youth, and over 30 minutes more on video game devices. Minority Generation Z youth are living in homes more likely to have the TV left on most of the time, even if no one is watching, and report higher instances of the TV being on during meals than what Caucasian youth participants reported in the study (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). The Kaiser study (2010) does not provide a possible explanation for these dramatic differences, however, a connection of income inequality, race and school district resources (or lack thereof) may explain the discrepancy. With less federal dollars available, many schools in poor districts, with the majority of students are from low-income, minority families, have been hurt most by cuts in the art departments (art, music, and sports) (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2008). Many schools in these districts are closing all together. Thus, in order to fill the void left by the cuts to these art programs in poorer school districts, a purpose to fill this time with media use may be a factor to consider in regards to the discrepancy of race and media use in Generation Z youth. When taking into account the higher numbers of minorities who are raised in single parent house-holds (nearly 67% of African-American of children are in single-parent families, compared to 25% of single-parent Caucasian families) an overall lack of
time for minority parents to monitor media use may also exist (The Annie E. Case Foundation, 2013).

**Generation Z’s Attachment to Devices**

Five years ago, the number of teens who owned cell phones reached to nearly 39%, however in 2010, that number increased to 66% cell phone ownership of Generation Z youth ages 8-18 (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). Generation Z has formed such a bond to their digital connections that they identify feeling emotionally attached, with over 90% of participants citing that they would be upset about having to give up an internet connection according to a survey of 13-17 year old Generation Z youth conducted by marketing agency JWTintelligence (2012). Participants reported that they would feel nearly as upset if they were forced to give up cell phones or texting friends, which trumped materialistic items such as allowance money or buying new videos games. Offline activities, such as going to the movies, attending a sports event, or going out to eat, ranked significantly lower in comparison (Palley, 2012).

**Migration of Technology Use at Home**

Parents of Generation Z play a large role in the boom of technology within the households of these children, as a typical home of Generation Z youth who participated in the Kaiser Research survey reported that their household contains almost four televisions, three DVD players, one digital video recorder, two CD players, over two radios, two computers, and at least two video game consoles on average. However, where media consumption takes place is migrating. Gone are the days of children who are relegated to listening to radio or television in the family room. According to the Kaiser research, 71% of participants reported to have televisions in their own room, with half of the teens surveyed accessing video game counsels and cable/satellite in their rooms. This adds nearly an hour more per day to the average participant’s
TV consumption. Over a third of respondents have a personal computer and internet access available in their rooms as well. Not only are Generation Z youth able to capitalize on hours and hours of media time, they do not have to set foot in any other area of their home to do so according to the Kaiser report (2010). When they are not in their room, nearly half of Generation Z participants report living in a home where the television is left on most of the time, whether anyone is watching it or not, and 64% of respondents reported that the TV is on during household meals. Even the vehicles of parents of Generation Z participants have high numbers of entertainment capability, with nearly four in ten parents owning a family car with a built-in portable TV or DVD player. While at home, Generation Z youth spend, on average, four and half hours a day watching television, according to the Kaiser Research finding (2010). However, unlike previous generations, they no longer need a television to watch programming, as outlets such as YouTube and computer applications such as NetFlix and Hulu are accessible from phones and computers. In fact, Generation Z participants have the luxury of watching television whenever they want. No longer needing to abide by “live” rules, time-shifted television, such as On Demand programming, and digital video recording capabilities allow for even more choice than before, and provides televised programming in a way that is convenient and on their time (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010).

**Content and Time Limits of Media Use at Home**

Rules placed on media exposure at home are also important to discuss, as they frame the limits that the children in Generation Z are allowed to operate within. Generation Z youth respondents who reported to live in “TV-Orientated” homes, as touched on earlier, spend a greater amount of time watching live TV than their peers, over an hour more of exposure in fact. For participants of the Kaiser survey (2010) who lives in a home where the TV is left on “most
of the time”, respondents reported to average over three hours a day watching television, compared to youth who live in a home environment where they say that the TV is left on “some of the time”. These participants reported to average nearly an hour less of TV time, viewing, on average, two and a half hours of television. Teen participants in homes where the TV is left on only a little or none of the time average about an hour and half of average television viewing time. Overall, the majority of Generation Z participants report that they do not have any rules about the type of media content they can use or the amount of time they can spend using a particular medium (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010).

**Technology at Home: Limit Setting and Regulation**

The most regulated medium in Generation Z homes today is the computer, where 52% of Generation Z youth report some regulation. Television is the next regulated medium, with 46% reporting that they have rules about what they are allowed to watch (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). Video games and music are the least regulated forms of entertainment media (The Kaiser study does not take into account cell phone/texting regulations in this portion of their study) (p. 35). There is even less regulation reported by Generation Z youth regarding *time* spent on their media at home, as 36% report they have rules regarding how much time they can spend on the computer, 28% report restrictions on time spent watching television, 30% report time constraints aimed at limiting video game play, and 10% report limits regarding time spent listening to music (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). It is apparent by the numbers are reported that Generation Z’s parents are more concerned with limiting the content on the types of media their children use, as opposed to time spent on these devices. The limits that parents place on their children does impact the amount of time spent engaged in media use by Kaiser Reasearch respondents, as those who report to have limits on the content and usage time of their children are exposed to
almost three hours less of content per day than youth who report to have little to no restrictions. Approximately one in four Generation Z youth participants report having at least some media rules with parents who enforce these limits most of the time, but the largest group of youth, approximately 40%, report having rules that are not enforced by parents (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). The lack of limits in regards to amount of time spent on devices, as well as monitoring what type of activity a child is engaging in could be viewed as concerning. The author intends to discuss options for parents who may want to limit or monitor potentially unsafe technology practices.

**Generations Z’s Footprint: Social Media**

Investigating environmental conditions, media usage and the platform in which information is transferred in the daily lives of Generation Z is important to better understand the perspective of contemporary youth. However, perhaps the most significant area in the lives of Generation Z youth may relate to how they use social media. Parents, teachers and others in the helping profession may find benefit in working to gain a deeper understanding of these youth while looking at how Generation Z students, clients and children operate in relation to social network sites.

Social Network Sites (SNS) provide three functions. SNS allow individuals to construct a public profile, within a bounded system, articulate a list of other peer users with whom they share a connection, and allows for users to view and browse their list of connections, as well as connections made by others within the system. When viewing the word “networking”, it would be safe to assume that SNS emphasize initiation of contact to strangers. However, although the function of SNS may be to initiate contact of strangers in some Generation Z youth, (along with its use by some users as a way to enhance networking skills), the primary use of SNS is to allow
users to articulate and illuminate their social networks. Thus, the basis of SNS is to communicate with those other users who are already a part of their social network offline. The backbone of SNS consists of a visible profile page that displays a list of the user’s friends, who are also users within the SNS system (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Once a user initially joins SNS, they are asked to fill out a field of descriptors, generating names, age, location, interests and other items that may describe the user, while also encouraging the users to upload a picture.

The first recognizable SNS launched in 1997. Between 1998 and 2001, culturally specific dating, professional and social network sites, including BlackPlanet, MiGente, and AsianAvenue provided community tools where users could add other users as “friends”, and at this time, no permission was needed to add “friends”. These websites, along with Ryze.com, Tribe.net, LinkedIn, and Match.com, were all SNS systems that did not always sustain success, but helped lay the foundation for what is now known as social networks sites (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

By 2003, social network sites began sprouting up all over the internet. MySpace.com, founded by Tom Andersen in Santa Monica California, was created initially with the intent of attracting estranged users of fee-based SNS options. MySpace.com did not place restrictions on features that users could use, and this allowed individuals on this SNS to add personalized pages that were distinct and unique to their preferences. Soon, in 2004, teenagers began to join MySpace by the millions, as developers of this SNS changed restrictions to allowed minors and underage users access to the website (Boyd & Ellison, 2011). MySpace, like its predecessors, created the framework for one of Generation Z’s most prominent forms of communication: Facebook.
Facebook

Designed to support Harvard student social networks, Facebook was initially created in 2004 and only allowed users with a harvard.edu e-mail addresses to join. This requirement kept the site relatively closed and contributed to user perceptions as an intimate, private network (Boyd & Ellison, 2011). It was co-founded by Mark Zuckerberg and his Harvard friend Eduardo Saverin, and although it was intended solely for Harvard user, it quickly spread to students of other elite universities, such as Stanford, Yale and Columbia. Not long after, Facebook expanded to hundreds of colleges across the nation, which demonstrates the viral nature of the World Wide Web, especially social network sites. By 2005, Facebook opened its virtual doors to high school students, and by 2006, it welcomed a rapidly expanded number of adults. Operating as a system of interconnected personal profiles, Facebook allows user to customize personal homepages. Like MySpace, users add profile pictures (or any other pictures that a user may want to upload), along with space where they may share their “status updates”, a diary-style self-reflection, to their network. Facebook provided space for users to comment on each other’s photos, or click “Like” icons of a particular photo, comment or webpage; essentially sending a virtual “thumbs up” of approval to fellow peer content (Steyer, 2012).

Facebook: Generation Z Use

Now that the history of social media has been explored, it is the intent of the author to discuss potential patterns of Facebook.com use by Generation Z youth. According to a Pew Research Study (2013) that surveyed 802 Generation Z youth, teens are sharing more and more about their personal life via Facebook. Nearly 91% post photos of themselves (up from 75% in 2004), 71% post their school name (up from 49%), 71% report to post the city or town in which they live (up from 61%), 53% post their email address (up from 29%) and 20% post their cell
phone number (up from 2%) (Madden, et al., 2013). According to a Consumer Report study, 7.5 million Generation Z youth, twelve years old and younger, have signed up for Facebook accounts (Steyer, 2012). Over 65% of teens, according to the previously mentioned JWT Intelligence survey, report to have active accounts on Facebook, with 85% of participants reporting to be between the ages of 12-18. Generation Z youth are constantly connected, and 75% of teens ages 13-18 years old report that they have visited Facebook at least once in the past few weeks with friends. Around 60% of Generation Z participants reported that real social life begins online, and 50% reported to feel more comfortable talking to people online than in real life, while 70% also reported that it is more convenient to talk with friends online than in real life (Palley, 2012). Looking at these statistics, it is plausible to assert that Generation Z teens are fluent in social networking settings, and it is a platform for peer to peer communication in which their generational counterparts have not experienced at such an early age. After reviewing of these findings, Generation Z teens have the potential to prefer online communication over face-to-face communication, as it is more convenient and comfortable.

**Social Interest: Generation Z**

Knowing that there is potential for teens in Generation Z, youth born approximately between the years of 1993 and 2005, to prefer interactions online to interactions in person, it is the intent of the author to discuss social interest, and the potential considerations surrounding how Generation Z youth define “common sense” in regards to technology use. Impacts associated with rapid technological advances that Generation Z youth are exposed to will also be considered. Assessment of teen social interest (or lack thereof), through investigation of the content users explore, amount of time spent, and examination of potential harmful social interactions online will be also be discussed. With the previous reference to social interest and its
definitions, along with the hindrances of social interest, pampering, neglect and organ inferiority present during childhood explained, it is the intent of the author to further explore the way that these concepts could potentially manifest in Generation Z youth.

**Technology Use: Social Interest**

Earlier in this study, the viewing habits, usage rates, and statistic related to time and content in regards to technology use was explored in detail. As mentioned earlier, the number of youth who participate in technology based media is substantial. Does use of social media websites, video games, cell phones, television, and other avenues of entertainment and communication describe the social interest of teens? There is no direct, clear answer for this question. However, it is a question that must be answered in context of the definitions and theoretical discussions of social interest. Perhaps, when a parent, clinician, teacher or researcher works to investigate the social feelings related to Generation Z youth, the question may not be answered simply by stating “yes” or “no”, but “How much time is spent?”, “What content is being viewed?”, and “How does the way they use technology represent engagement of social interest?” Once these factors are considered, the ultimate question to be asked is “How is functioning affected?” These questions, as simple as they may seem, will provide much in the way of understanding how a Generation Z youth relates socially, and if their social interest is operating from a useful standpoint.

As mentioned earlier in the study, nearly all Generation Z teens are engaged in some type of social media, and have, at the least, opened up accounts and profiles on several social media platforms. Some have posted pictures, interests, and hobbies; others share feelings, comments, or observations. A young individual simply participating in technology does not necessarily hamper or facilitate social interest. As digital natives, Generation Z youth may have the potential to be
wired to communicate through technology. Lack of social interest is apparent via maladjustment, when an individual is focused solely on themselves, instead of the enhancement of humankind. Since humans continue to evolve, with the goal of survival, then common sense must be investigated to better understand appropriate use.

**Common Sense of Generation Z**

Common sense can be equated to the ideals and values of those to whom an individual feels that they belong. Where one group of people may view the social behavior as perfectly acceptable, another may view the behavior as anti-social (Dreikurs, 1964). This is apparent when comparing the common sense of a Traditionalist, who may not have the same type of ability to communicate through the internet as an individual Generation Z youth. The technologically driven environment of the Generation Z teen may allow for proficiency in this type of communication when compared to a Traditionalist. For example, when considering time spent on devices, social media, television or other technological forms of communication and entertainment, how much time a contemporary youth spends engaged in an activity may seem inappropriate in the eyes of a Traditionalist, since they are not accustomed to such interactions. The average Generation Z youth spends approximately an hour a day playing video games (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). An individual who is of the Baby Boomer generational cohort may view an hour of gaming time as outrageous, while an individual who is within Generation Z cohort may view it as average, or reasonable. It is important to consider biases related to what a generation or cohort deems appropriate, because what may seem like common sense to one cohort could seem odd to another group raised in a differing time, environment or life circumstance.
Time of Use in Relation to Functioning

Since children are taken care of by parents from infancy, parental actions and behaviors contribute to the way a child lives out their life. As was discussed previously in regards to surveys of technology use in Generation Z youth, the research shows that now, more than ever before, parents provide an environment stimulated by television, gaming devices, and internet access right at home, sometimes, all within a child’s bedroom. Thus, the common sense of how humans interact has been developed by the social standards that the parents provide for a child. However, as we see from the numbers, a Generation Z youth only spends so much time on technology, and has the potential to enjoy interacting in person with others. When a Generation Z child is isolated completely from school, parents, friends, etc., and completely immersed into a virtual world, for hours and hours on end one could conduct that this behavior could demonstrate a potential lack of social interest. A maladjusted Generation Z youth, however, would spend substantially more time engaged in video games if they are discouraged and unwilling to participate in the continuing evolution of society. The practice of playing videos games may not contribute to social discouragement, however, time spent obsessively playing would be an indicator of a child displaying social disinterest compared to common sense of his/her social group. An individual who is playing video games excessively may gain fulfillment from achievements in the virtual world, however, the potential assessment of such a behavior may be that an individual is gaining meaning via a self-focused. Generation Z youth who avoid struggles in their “offline” life, teens who have cognitive differences, or adolescents who do not feel as though they belong or “fit in” with peers may also explain high frequency use (S. Trail, personal communication, October 23rd, 2013). Studies have shown that dopamine release levels have been compared to levels released in users of amphetamines, monetary rewards, and food motivation in
neuron limbic reward centers of the brain. Excessive amounts of time spent on these video games have also been attributed to an inability to manage frustration, fear and uneasiness (Weinstein, 2010). This reveals a possible lack of social interest, as a child experiencing these symptoms may not be learning ways to navigate difficult situations. Instead a child may turn to reward centers and numbing to alleviate any feelings related to discomfort.

Referencing back to Adler’s life tasks, a child who is compulsively playing video games can suffer in all areas of the life. Excessive amounts of video game play, to continue with the example presented earlier, can be disruptive to functioning in school, family relationships and in communal ties (Van Rooij, Meerkerk, Schoenmakers, Griffiths, & Van De Mheen, 2010). The Kaiser Research (2010) survey unveiled statistics in which a decline in grades correlated to time spent on technology at home, as children who are heavy media users were reportedly more likely to earn fair or poor grades (mostly C’s or lower), than other children. Thus, the potential exists in which spending too much time online can deter social and educational development.

Content

Another mode of assessment that may be useful to consider, as it may help develop understanding of Generation Z youth and their level of maladjustment, is the content that they are viewing while engaging in technology. Content can be painted with a very wide brush, however, there does exist harmful content that can reveal lacking social interest. The internet is so expansive; there is always something new to do. Since the internet is so vast, there are sites for any and every question, research topic, discussion, hobby, and game. A child participating in a socially interested way may view the news, browse sports topics, check Facebook statuses of friends, or partake in blog discussions. However, there exists an unsafe element on internet sites that parents may not always consider when allowing their children to access content from the
World Wide Web. Convenient, unfiltered access provides limitless browsing capabilities. Now, more than ever, a child can search out anything they want online. Access to pornography, sites that promote self-harming, and sites that teach people how to make bombs are easily accessible to youth, especially youth who do not have parental controls. Even with filters, it is possible, with the use of handheld smart phone devices, for children to view any content that they’d like.

In relation to self-harming sites, a pro anorexia (also known as “pro-ana”) sites give young women advice on how to starve and torture themselves. Users are able to post pictures, titled “thinspiration”, that display disturbingly frail and thinning bodies, particularly body of thin celebrities (Menkedick, 2011). The groups in pro-ana sites advocate the idea that anorexia is a lifestyle choice, not a disorder. In these communities, the social norm or common sense surrounds fasting, admiring very thin celebrities, and advocating “research” (often taken out of context) that encourages the lifestyle (Rankman, 2011). However, in the context of society as a whole, these pro-ana websites are disturbing and shocking. Other websites that promote self-harm, such as pro-bulimia sites and cutting sites, do not contribute to the useful side of life, and the teens that frequent these sites are mistaken in their private logic that they will never be thin enough, pretty enough or good enough. Although these sites may seem few and far between, many Generation Z youth are browsing them. The promotion of harm to self or society via these sites may provide a sense of validation to self-conscious teens that could lead to unsafe behaviors. These teens may also see other participants on these sites whom they may relate to, which can cause a false sense of belonging.

Recent research has reported a potential link between actual violence and playing violent video games doesn’t necessarily exist, however, an individual who approved of hateful and destructive images in media, rather than simply using it as a form of entertainment, was more
likely to engage in violent behaviors against others (Ferguson, 2008). For example, the gunman behind school shootings of Columbine, CO in 1999 had a website with a hit list and bomb instructions (McGreal, 2009) The Virginia Tech shooter, Denver, CO movie theatre gunman and Sandy Hook elementary gunman were able to access weapons simply by ordering online. Instructions for making weapons can be accessed in seconds via search engine results. Though these are extreme cases, it is important to note that the content a child is viewing reveals a great deal in relation to social interest.

All the shooters in these tragic events were operating from a non-cooperative and obstructive side of life. Dreikurs and Mosak’s expansion of the life tasks discusses sense of self. These teens are severely distorted in their self-perceptions and sense of self. Trauma is a factor to consider with teens whose distorted self-perceptions have led to the exhibition of highly unsafe harm behaviors. Child-hood trauma and various self-harm behaviors may be correlated, and have been investigate in previous research, according to Sansone, Sinclair, and Wiederman (2009).

Therefore, understanding the content of what sites teens are browsing can provide a window into the way a teen is functioning, and how their social interest is adversely affected. Teens that are focused on cutting behaviors, viewing bomb making instructions, anorexia, and bulimia are operating from a perspective that is harmful to self and others. Although these behaviors have existed before the internet, online capabilities allow for access to information that may promote these behaviors (S. Trail, personal communication, October 23rd, 2013).

Social Communication and Social Interest

Although people are conversing with each other now, as in generations before, the way that they interact is changing. With the incorporation of technological tools as a go between for individuals in their interactions, society has begun to grow accustomed to being increasingly
networked as individuals, rather than socially embedded in groups. In past generations, people interacted in small, tight social networks, however, this new world of networked individualism continues to orientate around looser and fragmented networks. The adverse affect of this lower boundary is diminished trust, and widespread loneliness with the capacity to help one another at risk (Rainie & Wellman, 2012).

Online connections were conceived first as a substitute for face-to-face contact, once individuals within society began to perceive face-to-face interactions as impractical. From the innovation of the telephone, to the cellular phone, to the use of pagers, to the development of text messaging (which combines cellular phones and pager systems), innovation has provided a medium of communication that promotes distance and choice. Technology makes it easy to communicate when, where, and how we wish, yet it also provides the opportunity to disengage in interactions at will. The point of disengagement is apparent by teenagers who have reported to feel discomfort when they are without their cellular devices (Turkle, 2011). The text message and the way Generation Z youth use it to communicate may present the most difficult task for teachers, parents, and clinicians to assess. These digital natives continue to find new and innovative ways to communicate through technology, such as instant messenger systems, Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of communication that do not require face-to-face interaction. However, does lack of face-to-face interaction effect the way children learn to interact? How might the way Generation Z youth interact display socially disinterested, non-cooperative behaviors? It is important to look first at face-to-face interaction. Secondly, the author intends to discuss cyberbullying, and how it promotes social disinterest. Finally, the author intends to discuss multitasking versus continuous partial attention, and how uncovering the distinction of these concepts may inhibit social interest.
Face-to-Face Communication

Emerging research continues to suggest that too much texting, Facebooking and other online modes of communication can negatively affect social and emotional development. Giving and paying attention to another person is the universal sign of how much an individual may care about them, and when attention is not being paid, the opposite message is being sent. As mentioned, many Generation Z youth are increasingly connected to other people solely through the means of text. Text messaging, as convenient as it may seem, does present an issue in regards to development of conversational skills. Texting does not provide the opportunity to look people in the eye, let alone hear their voices over the telephone. Thus, a major problem of text messages, instant messages and online posts are that it becomes difficult to read what the sender is really thinking or feeling. Without the opportunity to see an individual’s facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice, contemporary youth may over interpret digital messages, assume the intent of a sender, and oftentimes, misjudge the meaning. Therefore, when important emotional matters are expressed via crammed media spaces that do not allow for nuanced engagement of honest engagement, human relationships are at risk of being affected. Thus, many adults have expressed a concern that Generation Z youth are growing within a culture that is less attentive, compassionate and caring (Steyer, 2012).

An online survey of over 3,400 North American girls, ages 8-12 found that time spent in face-to-face interaction was most closely associated with a wide range of social feelings, as higher levels of face-to-face time equated to greater social success, greater feelings of normalcy, more sleep, and fewer friends whom the children’s parents believed were bad influences (Pea, et al., 2012). To further expand the importance of face-to-face interaction, a link between texting and anxiety was revealed by Reid and Reid (2007) in their study which revealed that anxious
participants reported a preference for texting, as opposed to voice calls, as they were able to achieve expressive and intimate contact via this medium. This finding provides a positive outlook of texting, as it allows anxious children an opportunity to interact with others. Texting could be viewed as a stepping stone for an anxious child to develop social skills that may eventually harness face-to-face skills. However, the value of face-to-face interaction should not be lost, as it allows for all parties involved in communication to be present, and if there is a question, it can be answered, with the ability to express mixed feelings in a coherent fashion, while e-mails and texting have the potential to go back and forth, without resolution, and with frequent misunderstanding. Tones can become misinterpreted and feelings can get hurt, with the greater number of e-mails equating to greater misunderstanding (Turkle, 2011). E-mail, text, and instant-messaging provide an environment where face-to-face interaction is not necessary to communicate. Texting and instant messaging may seem more convenient, in the minds of some, and anyone is accessible at anytime. Generation Z youth are learning that they can be connected constantly with others, even if they are physically alone. Profiles on Facebook, for example, can be viewed at anytime, by any friend. Thus, the potential of raised anxiety in regards to being connected constantly is present.

In Sherry Turkle’s book “Alone Together” (2011), which delves into the way constant connectivity disrupts attachments in a manner that may cause individuals to feel completely alone, she defines a concept, known as presentation anxiety. The years of identity construction (ages 13-18) are now built in terms of profile production. The pressure to conform to how they represent their identities, particularly when faced with an audience can cause great worry and strain in the lives of Generation Z youth. Living out fears of how others will perceive these teens is not a new concept. What is a new concept, however, is that these teens are now living these
fears out in public (Turkle, 2011). Hence, the development of discomfort when working to build an identity is not rare for teens in any generations. What is rare for older generations is the fact that any mistake or expression of interest can be picked apart and criticized by hundreds, and sometimes thousands of friends online. Social interest is impacted in Generation Z youth who are no longer becoming trained in the nuances of the art of communication, as lack of face-to-face communication can potentially inhibit the development of the skills needed to connect socially. Parents, clinicians and teachers may better understand the importance of encouragement when taking the concept of presentation anxiety into account. Helping a child gain empowerment through face-to-face communication promotes courage and may decrease the need to seek validation from others.

**Cyberbullying**

Generation Z youth, in nearly every town, everyday, witness, participate in, or suffer from cyberbullying. The screens of computer monitors and cell phones act as safe havens. Oftentimes, the anonymous nature of online communication has empowered many Generation Z youth to post anything, about anyone they would like, whether the information is true or not. It is much easier to engage in these bullying behaviors, which have resulted in several cases of suicide over the years, when the consequences do not need to be considered. No longer do bullies need to look their victims in the eyes, or deal with the reactions of victims, as the online format allows for impersonal and impulsive means of victimization (Steyer, 2012).

When a child is engaging in aggressive bullying behaviors, whether they are of the cyber nature or in face-to-face interaction, a clinician is able to make an assessment of their social interest. According to Adler (2011), “An indication of a hostile environment is to be found when a child is constantly quarreling with others, afraid that if he is not the aggressor the others with
attack first” (p. 104). Adler (2011), continues his thoughts regarding bullying, stating, “No act of cruelty has ever been done which has not been base upon a secret weakness” (p. 105). The inferiority feelings serve as safeguard mechanisms, which drive inferiority feelings towards overcompensation, resulting in contentious and combative behaviors towards others. These behaviors deviate from social interest and cooperation. Although the concept of inferiority feelings and overcompensation leading to aggression towards others has existed in all generations; a difference does present itself when investigating cyberbullying. The difference with Generation Z youth who cyberbully, in comparison to other generations and bullying, is that they no longer see the immediate consequences of these maladjusted behaviors, as the internet provides a safety net of anonymity while also accommodating a large public audience to view these hurtful and destructive interactions. These interactions can be impulsive, yet have far reaching and devastating consequences on the victims of bullying. The instant and impulsive nature of the internet is a phenomenon that is entirely unique to Generation Z youth, and it allows for socially disinterested behaviors to proliferate in ways never before seen.

**Instant Communication and Anxiety**

Living in a constantly connected environment allows for Generation Z youth to become instantly gratified. No longer is it necessary to send letters via the mail, nor is it necessary to wait for a response when calling someone. With the onset of instant messaging, which is supported via texting, and other platforms, such as chat rooms and social networking sites, the existence of split second communication, without delay, is undeniable. Therefore, the development of anxiety may present itself to Generation Z youth who no longer have to wait for anything. The expectations that individuals within society place on one another is apparent by the anxiety they experience when an e-mail, text, or instant message is not responded to rapidly. Since it is
assumed that all people are near their communication devices at all times, some Generation Z may feel hurt, unimportant or dismayed when an initial message is not reciprocated promptly. The time available to sit and think through complex issues, uninterrupted, is shrinking over the years, as the current culture of communication no longer allows for sufficient space to ponder complicated issues. The instantaneous nature of contemporary communication no longer allows for downtime, daydreaming, or the ability to manage having to wait, and the downfall of such communication physiologically and emotionally is that individuals lose their ability to maintain and regain focus (Turkle, 2010). The sad nature of this instantaneous context is the language used by some in regards to unopened e-mail. Turkle (2010) describes these missed messages, as items that need to be “handled or gotten rid of”, as if the comments from friends, or even family, equate to virtual pieces of trash (p. 168).

**Neurological Implications of Electronic Devices**

The way that Generation Z youth interact may also be linked to disruptions in neurological development. Hours of television viewing of children ages one to three can be linked to higher risk of attention problems at age seven by nearly 10%. The impulse section of Generation Z youth’s lower cognitive regions, which stimulates impulse, is constantly being activated by the continuous bombardment of neurological arousal provided by text messages, Facebook updates, and video game play. The fear of many researchers for Generation Z youth is the fact that the prefrontal cortex, the epicenter of judgment, rational planning, and orderly thinking, may be adversely affected by the constant stimulation of the lower brain area. Most answers to any question can be sought within seconds, as a “Google culture” of learning continues to change the way Generation Z youth concentrate, write, and reflect (Steyer, 2012). Although Generation Z youth demonstrate an apparent ease and familiarity with computers, they
rely heavily on search engines, view rather than read, and may not uniformly possess the critical and analytical skills to assess the information they find on the web. The capacity for linear thinking is pushed aside by a new mode of thinking, which needs to take in and dish out information in fast, disjointed, overlapping bursts (Wallis, 2010). These youth no longer need to go to libraries for research papers, as every answer is at their finger tips via the internet. This can compromise the ability to think logically and thoroughly retain information. Cheating by Millennials in the college setting has increased on campuses throughout the country, as the “cut-and-paste” culture of homework completion is a troubling task for educators (McNeely, 2005). The risk is of cheating on assignments and lack of true reflection is greater for Generation Z youth who have had access to internet and social media from birth.

**Multitasking Versus Partial Continuous Attention**

As mentioned previously in this study, the explosion of media communication via smartphones, tablets, and the like have contributed to a massive expansion of multitasking behaviors. The concept of multitasking allows for fulfilling two or more task simultaneously, such as a teen who is writing an essay assignment, while also texting, watching videos, attending to Facebook, listening to music, and shopping. But how much attention can an individual give to more than one task? Continuous Partial Attention is a concept that continues to frequent psychology, community and education articles. The concept of Continuous Partial Attention describes a situation in which an individual does not focus on one thing fully in reality. Continuous Partial Attention may lead to fully engaging in nothing while trying to follow everything. This concept highlights the impact that constant accessibility of information has on focus and attention. For example, a contemporary youth who texts, while having a face-to-face interaction with a peer, as music plays in the background from a device, may find it very difficult to pay full attention to the
face-to-face discussion with his or her peer. The peer may view this interaction as disrespectful, since they are not being fully heard. Although the goal of being constantly in connection with everything, anywhere, at anytime, is ambitious, it is disruptive to the ability to give full attention to anything. The result of this is constant connection to several media at one time may cause stress, and appears as insincere to the others who may be involved in a face-to-face conversation (Firat, 2013).

Oftentimes, Generation Z youth are described as fantastic multitasker’s, however, an argument could be made that they are in fact engaging in Continuous Partial Attention, which is less efficient and more stressful than multitasking (Firat, 2013). This phenomenon is often seen in University classrooms throughout the country, as students taking notes on laptops often wander to Facebook, YouTube, and shopping websites. The result of such distractions present in students with laptops open in class is apparent by their struggles in academic success when compared to classmates taking notes by hand. This is because students with laptops open during class are not fully engaged and participating in the class discussion (Turkle, 2011). The term “absent presence”, which means that people may be physically in one place while their social attention and communication focus is elsewhere, is a part of the ever-changing etiquette of rapid technological advances (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). Humans are simply unable to effectively process two streams of information at once. This is not only apparent in the difficult task associated with having a face-to-face conversation while also giving partial attention to a device, but also true in the deadly dangers of distracted driving, which usually results from cell phone use while driving (Steyer, 2012). The compulsiveness associated with refusal to put a phone down while driving demonstrates addictive behavior, which affects functioning.
Continual Partial Communication is not only limited to children. A parent, who is engaging in continuous partial attention (which many mistake as a form of multitasking), on their cell phone, computer, or tablet, instead of interacting with a child face-to-face, by paying full attention to the child, may be sending the child the message, “I am too busy for you” (Reardon, 1999). Thus, social interest is at risk, as the increase of multitasking capabilities pull parents and contemporary youth away from giving their full attention to others. Cognitive development is potentially at risk, as the ability to increase logical thought and retention of information is compromised. Therefore, the time needed to “recharge” the brain, which helps an individual refocus, does not occur enough to optimally develop cognitive functioning. Generation Z youth who fear face-to-face interaction demonstrate lack of functioning fully in society, as their anxieties inhibit communal ties. A Generation Z youth who lacks the ability to fully function without instant gratification, with needs of constant entertainment and stimulation may be affected in functioning, as they are unable to manage the dull times of life, and struggle to cope with the discomfort and worries that drive the evolution of human beings.

**Recommendations for Parents, Teachers and Clinicians**

The definition of social interest, as well as the concept of social interest in regards to Generation Z’s use of technology, and its potential adverse affects of functioning have been discussed in depth. Although technology and the massive increase of its use in the lives of contemporary youth is not inherently “bad” or “good”, it is something that parents, teachers and clinician should be aware of when working with children, students and clients of this generation. In this section of the peer review, the author intends to explore ways that parents, teachers and clinicians may potentially prevent children, students and clients from developing socially disinterested behaviors, while also discussing methods of parenting, teaching and counseling that
is encouraging, democratic and useful. In order to do so, the author intends to examine the parenting, teaching and counseling styles of interaction that could hinder growth of social interest. The author also aims to attempt discussion surrounding the concept of overcoming obstacles as a means of encouragement that teaches Generation Z children, students and clients how to gain independence, manage discomfort, refocus inattention and enliven social interest.

**Overcoming Obstacles**

According to Adler, “Only such persons who are courageous, self-confident, and at home in the world can benefit both by the difficulties and by the advantages of life. They are never afraid. They know that there are difficulties, but they also know that they can overcome them” (p. 39). To summarize Adler’s view, social interest is critical for the development of skills to overcome obstacles. Difficulties and worries are a reality of life that every human will experience. Dreikurs (1964) expands on this point, stating, “Children have immense native courage and really try to do the things they see others doing” (p.41). In his book *Children the Challenge* (1964), Dreikurs describes to parents the importance they must place on constant “…encouragement towards independence” (p. 55). Notice that Dreikurs does not stop his sentence at encouragement, but continues by adding the word independence. The distinction and addition of independence implies that parents, in order to help children gain courage, confidence, and skills to contribute, should encourage a child towards self-sufficiency and overcoming. Adler (2011) echo’s Dreikurs sentiment, by emphasizing the importance of rearing children to be “…prepared for all the problems of life, what are invariably social problems” (p. 39). Adler states, “From a human standpoint, it is necessary to be prepared for social behavior” (Adler, 2011, p. 39). These core beliefs developed by Adler, and further explored by Rudolph Dreikurs, formed the foundation of Adler’s original child guidance classes for youth and parents.
A child’s inferiority feelings will go unnoticed until the child is faced with an unfavorable situation. Adler insists that, for children, they must understand that they are capable of facing obstacles, and that they can overcome the problems of life. A prescription of building self-confidence (or what may be termed today as self-esteem), is Adler’s remedy for dealing with a person who trapped in a cycle of inferiority feelings (Adler, 2011). The opportunity for children to grow and learn to test their ability to cope with difficult situations provides the training necessary for them to become useful and independent adults (Dreikurs, 1964). The useful side of life, which Adler (2011) defines, by stating it as “in the interest of mankind” and its converse, the useless side of life, is the mechanism in which it is encouraged for therapists to investigate a client’s inferiority feelings and the useless movements towards superiority (p. 17).

Adler and Dreikurs insistence and emphasis upon the importance of overcoming, although developed many years ago, relate to Generation Z youth today. As discussed earlier, a child who struggles to fully focus, due to giving Continuous Partial Attention, hinders the opportunity for them to learn the life skills associated with waiting and patience. A Generation Z youth who is unwilling to engage in Face-to-Face communication may struggle to learn the nuances of a conversation, which may include awareness of tone of voice, facial expression and inflection. When a Generation Z youth uses a video game, or other potential distractions to avoid difficult feelings, emotions, or thoughts, they are may be missing out an opportunity to learn healthy coping skills that can be utilized. Without the struggle to overcome, the potential to repeat disruptive patterns can impact not just an individual, but their relationships. These impacts are not just related to childhood behaviors, but they potentially mold the development of adulthood coping skills, behaviors and relationship patterns.
Therefore, a clinician, teacher, or parent who incorporates the way children use technology into their assessment of a child’s behaviors may better understand what side of life a child is operating from. As touched on earlier, if a child is engaging in unsafe behaviors online, spending vast amounts of time in isolation, or exploring content that promote self-harm or self-degradation, a cause of concern for the child’s mental health may be warranted. Children engaging in these unsafe behaviors, through technology, may not have had the opportunity to learn the importance of overcoming obstacles, and may hinder their ability to develop a strong sense of self, while lacking the development of skill that promote autonomy to effectively manage life stressors.

**The Spirit to Overcome**

The Adlerian principle of striving, which focuses on the way organ inferiority leads to inferiority feelings, leading to compensation, due to the purposeful nature of behaviors, was adapted by John Reardon. Reardon discusses the way that minus feelings move towards a spirit to overcome, which turns to a pattern of striving, forming a lifestyle (1999). The spirit to overcome, which is the way in which we manage, cope or move through situations that life presents to us as humans, is how we learn to strive. The pattern of behaviors that forms from this movement is the lifestyle. When the spirit to overcome, or the ability to deal with difficulties that life presents to an individual, is disrupted by pampering and neglect, the compensation then forms a pattern of striving that is developing an entitled lifestyle. “Victims”, “Takers”, and “Getters” are roles that may form potential useless disruptions in regards to the will to overcome (Reardon, 1999). Parents, teachers and clinicians should provide children, students and clients with the opportunity to overcome obstacles, in order to encourage confidence in self. Although it may seem beneficial to allow a child to cope with stressors, boredom or frustration, via
technology sources, the potential to disrupt the ability to learn through trial and error is possible and useless when teaching a child to learn the ability to develop the spirit to overcome.

**Increasing Awareness of Entitled Lifestyles**

As previously mentioned, pampering is a harmful message that parents send to children, who believe they are “the center of the universe”. With Facebook profiles acting as a further technological innovation that promotes focus on self as center stage, the message of self-centeredness can be even more pervasive. Wanting a child to have everything, intervening for a child in conflict with a peer, making sure a child is never bored, and even just doing tasks for the child sends a message that they are incapable. In order to feel significant, a child who is pampered believes that they must be the center of the universe, while hiding feelings of inadequacy and incapability (Reardon, 1999). Thus, parents, students and clinician must always remember to, as Dreikurs (1964) warns, “Never do for a child what (they) can do for (themselves)” (p. 193). This can cause the adoption of the role of a “Victim”, and they may attempt to get others to do things for them, to hide their feelings of inadequacy and incapability (Reardon, 1999).

Neglect, as previously mentioned, is another way that parents may hinder a child’s ability to form social interest. Inadequate food, shelter, attention and education is neglectful, yet there are other messages that parents send to children that they may not realize is neglectful. Always being late, or not showing up at all for important events, for example, sends the child the message that they are not important or “worth it”. The irony lies in parents who yell at their children for not listening when they are asked to do something, as it is apparent that they have learned this behavior from the culture at home. Thus, the will to overcome in a neglected child has the potential to take on an attitude of feeling owed, and may resort to demanding behavior
and justified aggression, in order to compensate for feeling ignored or diminished. Demanding behavior and justified aggression is one example of many potential reactions that may persist for neglected child. The potential manifestation of feeling “owed” may cause pattern of living in the role of a “taker”, as the taker feels incapable and believes they must take what is “rightfully” owed to them (Reardon, 1999). Generation Z’s manifestation of neglect may show up in the form of bullying behaviors, whether in person or through online interactions.

**The Entitlement Trap**

Richard and Linda Eyre’s book *The Entitlement Trap* (2011), explores the differences between entitlement and responsibility, as their book serves as a modern day account that equates pampering and neglect to entitled behaviors. In the book, the authors discuss contemporary parenting style that cultivate a culture of entitled children, citing how current parents (in the name of love) are indulging children, rather than providing consequences. Parents may also fall into the trap of giving rewards instantly, instead of teaching the value of delayed gratification (Eyre & Eyre, 2011). Promoting laxness, not discipline, and developing dependence rather than independence is another trap proposed by Eyre & Eyre (2011). By promoting such useless pursuits, parents are trying to control children rather than give children control, which in turn teaches children to value the wrong things, by pushing them into the trap of entitlement (Eyre, & Eyre, 2011). The impact of such parenting is present when education suffers, as entitled children believe they should not have to work for grades, nor should they have to do their own homework, while entitled children may believe they, not the teachers, should decide what should or should not be taught. Relationships are impacted, as entitled children believe that parents should always step in and resolve fights and conflicts with their peers, without setting limits to what they do, and who they hang out with. Work habits, the ability to earn, and to care for their
belongings may also suffer, as all things are optional for entitled children. Ultimately, self-esteem, pride and a sense of accomplishment is derailed, as these traits come from working, earning, choosing and owning (Eyre & Eyre, 2011). The book provides parents with ways to encourage children who feel entitled. Providing an environment that encourages equality and ownership promotes security and responsibility according to the Eyre and Eyre (2011). Helping children understand their family values, traditions and identity allows for ownership, belonging and security. By emphasizing family traditions, parents may help promote a family infrastructure. Traditions, weekly family meetings, inclusive negotiation, discussion and enforcement of family laws, provided children with significance, by fitting into the family structure (Eyre & Eyre, 2011).

Ownership is a crucial aspect in helping develop self-sufficient children. A family economy allows children to earn their own money, by doing some of the work that goes on in the home. Doing the work and accepting responsibility for tasks gives children the sense that they are useful and valued in the family, as opposed to giving an allowance outright. This allows the children to also buy what they like, learn to budget, save, experience delayed gratification (after running out of money) and feel a sense of ownership and pride in what they purchase (Eyre & Eyre, 2011). These lessons strongly resemble the teachings of Dreikurs and Adler, however, they are written for contemporary parents and youth, while providing essential information that can be used to help Generation Z youth gain self-esteem, independence, ownership and responsibility.

Structure and Discussion: Limiting Technology Use

The concept of structure, equality, and responsibility have been discussed, however, how can parents relate these concepts to technology? First, it is important to note that screen time for children fewer than two years of age may not be beneficial, and in fact, may be harmful to
cognitive development. Limiting screen time for all ages is important, and, as was previously mentioned, researchers have found a correlation between the amount of time children spend on screens (TV, phones, tablets, etc) and performance in school. Setting family rules that allow limited screen time, in conjunction with family time spent together, while interacting in face-to-face fashion, allows for opportunities to be active, explore the real world and increases the ability to interact with others (Steyer, 2012). Setting limits in regards to media use during communal family times (family dinner, for example), would mean that children would be prohibited from texting on their phone, listening to music, watching television, or browsing the internet during these family meetings. The intention is not one of punishment, rather the goal of limiting screen time is focused on the objective of connecting with one another in a personal way, which provides learning, promotes interpersonal connection, and allows for the opportunity of a parent to give a child attention that shapes social interest. Parents may want to consider a proactive approach, including filters and time restrictions. When one considers the rise of Generation Z’s accessibility to graphic material, abilities to send provocative self-images, and sexually suggestive messaging (sexting), limits on phone and computer use may allow parents to have difficult, but helpful discussions surrounding internet and phone safety.

**Negotiation**

Allowing a child the opportunity to take part in discussions surrounding limits of technology use allows for collaboration, and the child is given a chance to be heard. A parent who is asking for the input of the child is sending a message which expresses a belief in the child, by valuing their input. During negotiation, the parent’s actions communicate that children have the ability to offer ideas. Discussing the structure with the child also provides an opportunity for them to develop a critical eye, by really thinking for his or herself. The concern
of parents, educators and clinicians for too much passive entertainment can be offset, if other forms of fun, besides technology, are encouraged as a family, in class or in therapy sessions. Parents should work to avoid using screen medias as a babysitter, because it may send the message of neglect (“You’re not worth my time”), and it avoids the habits of overconsumption of technology (Dreikurs, 1964).

Simply setting a rule is not enough, however. Children are better able to follow through with expectations when parents provide consistency. Effective follow through of screen limits have more potential to be effective when children are aware of the rules, and participate in the negotiation of limits (Carlson et al., 2010). Spending time being present, patient, and undistracted with a child allows for parents and children to build bonds of trust and love (Dreikurs, 1964). It is impossible to provide the respectful amount of time to a child if parents are giving partial continual attention to their devices. Parents must remember that what they do can send messages that children may interpret as neglectful. The way a parent acts is just as influential to a child, if not more so, than what they say.

Clinical Interventions

As mentioned earlier in the review, for the purpose of assessment, a clinician who works to better understand how much time a client spends on technology, what type of content they are viewing, and the way they communicate through technology, will provide clinicians with possible factors that contribute to a client’s lifestyle and level of social interest. When clinicians and teachers further investigate time spent, content and style of communication, they not only are assessing the way a child interacts, but they are also providing an opportunity for a child to be heard, in a language that is native to them. However, teachers and parents should remember that technology can be used as a tool, not just a toy (Steyer, 2012). Using technology to connect with
a child may be helpful, but it must be used as an enhancement, instead of a replacement. Clinician’s may connect with Generation Z youth, not by playing a video game, but asking what the child is learning from the game. Some example questions may include; how did they learn to get through a level? What problem-solving skills did they use? How do they feel about themselves when they completed a task? What did they learn about themselves after accomplishing the task? These interventions provide an opportunity for a child to demonstrate strengths, and feel empowerment. The client is revealing a window into their personality, and clinicians can observe and analyze the client’s world view. Highlighting the strengths from the client’s demonstration is an avenue that a clinician can use to encourage a client, while also building a therapeutic relationship with the client.

A clinician is also able to investigate private logic when a child is discussing the way technology adversely affects functioning. For example, if a client reports feeling hurt by a peer who denied a friend request on Facebook, the clinician can use this scenario as an opportunity to better understand the teleological line that they may be following. Clinicians can use this instance, in conjunction with other assessments and interventions, as a way to confirm private logic that may be disrupting healthy functioning and social interest.

**Conclusion**

There is no denying that technological advances have shaped the way American society interacts with one another. With the massive and rapid influx of internet accessibility for nearly all children in American society, there is no avoiding the potential conflicts that present themselves to parents, educators and clinicians. The fact that parents were raised in a different time than their children, while reared around differing significant events, in potentially differing parental environments, will, and has, undoubtedly caused unnecessary power struggles within
households in America. There exists positive consequences for parents, teachers and clinicians who work to understand the perspective in regards to youth who communicate, interact, learn, and analyze, oftentimes, with the aid of an electronic device. Although the mode of communication may differ when compared to previous generations, a new opportunity is present, as parents, teachers and clients can learn indicators of technology use that allow for deeper understanding of a differing generations frame of reference. Gaining deeper awareness of a different generation’s frame of reference will serve to help bridge the gap between these youth, and their parents, teachers and clinicians who build relationships with them. An unwillingness to take a different generation’s frame of reference into account has the potential to contribute to misunderstanding, miscommunication and discouragement between parents, educators and clinicians, and the contemporary youth they work with. When parents, educators and clinicians take the time to see the world through the lens of Generation Z youth, they may gain increased understanding in regards to the purpose of their behaviors, and if the behaviors are demonstrating a lack of social interest. When parents, educators and clinicians stay actively engaged in the lives of these youth, while providing structure, promoting responsibility, and encouraging development that will emphasize the importance of coping with the difficulties of life, they are breaking through generational barriers, and connecting on a personal level that allows for growth of social interest and advancement of mankind for future generations. The explosion of technology is neither good nor is it bad, it is simply the reality. However, when the adults in the lives of contemporary youth focus on the strengths that the technology provides, while also continuing the traditions of connection, on a personal level, the result is one which can only enhance the social interest for all.
Reference


Reid, F. M., & Reid, D. J. (2010). The expressive and conversational affordances of mobile messaging. \textit{Behaviour & Information Technology, 29}(1), 3-22. doi:10.1080/01449290701497079


doi:10.3109/00952990.2010.491879