Public Abstract

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Title:YOUTH 2 YOUTH: CHANGING PALESTINIAN-AMERICAN IMAGES AND STEREOTYPES THROUGH ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS

Throughout the past few years, the perceived images and stereotypes of Palestinians and Americans have worsened as a result of a variety of political dynamics and policies related to both the United States and the Middle East. Mass media, corresponding to these changes, adopted certain frames, which has contributed to the cultivation of these images and stereotypes. As the world is witnessing a technological revolution in the field of communication, that is reshaping our communities, sociopolitical and economic process, this study aimed at investigating the influence of online social networking on the way American and Palestinian youth perceived each other. Furthermore, the study also investigated the influence of online social networking on young people's level of interaction, psychosocial well-being and social capital, within the framework of controlled online social networking among youth from two different national groups.

The study utilized an online field experiment design to examine how online social networking can influence images, stereotypes, level of interaction, psychosocial well- being and social capital of Palestinian and American youth. The results indicated that as a result of the online interaction, participants' perceived images and stereotypes were positively influenced, as well as positive relationships were developed amongst them. In addition, online social networking also positively influenced the participants' psychosocial well-being and social capital. The results were discussed within the framework of the role online social networking and the Internet can play in bridging the gap between cultures and mobilizing grassroots efforts in people-to-people public diplomacy. Future research is highly needed in this area, through which slightly altered methodologies can be used to further the knowledge about online social networking in an international perspective.

Keywords: Palestinian, American, youth, online social networking, image, stereotype, level of interaction, psychosocial well-being, social capital, and public diplomacy.