**Consent Form**

**Social Capital and Civic Engagement of Marginalized Youth on MySpace**

Dear Youth and/or Parent,

Dr. Anne Deepak and Dr. Amy Russell are researchers from Texas State University and are inviting you to participate in a research study about social capital and civic engagement of marginalized youth on MySpace. Dr. Deepak is an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work. She can be contacted at 512.245.8837 or by email at [ad21@txstate.edu](mailto:ad21@txstate.edu). Dr. Russell is also an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work. She can be contacted at 512.245.4563 or by email at [ar41@txstate.edu](mailto:ar41@txstate.edu).

The purpose of this study is to explore relationships between social capital, civic engagement, and MySpace usage for marginalized youth. We want to know about your friends and relationships (the social capital part), and about how you do any sort of thing to improve your community or express your political voice (the civic engagement part). And we want to know how you do these things on MySpace. By marginalized, we mean people who don’t have the same access to power and resources that other people do. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a youth, a student and/or participate in an organization at Texas State University, use MySpace, are between the ages of 14-21, and are marginalized in some contexts in life. This research is being funded by a grant from the Texas State University Research Enhancement Program.

If you agree to be a part of this study, you will be one of approximately 100 youth to participate. You will be asked to complete a survey at one time only, either in person or online (online if you are 18 years old or older). The survey will take about 45 minutes to complete. The survey will include questions about you, your friends and social networks, activities you are involved in that may improve your community, how you express your political voice, and your use of MySpace. For example, we ask if you agree or disagree with statements like this one: “I use MySpace to discuss issues of importance with my friends.”

After we collect the responses from the survey, we will contact some participants to tell us more for a follow-up interview in person. You do not have to agree to the follow-up interview. This interview will be conducted at a place convenient for you by either Dr. Deepak or Dr. Russell. It will take an hour, depending on how much you want to talk about, and we will ask you about two things: one is if you use MySpace to have a voice about decisions being made in your life, and if you use MySpace to have an impact on your community. This will be a relaxed conversation and time for you to talk about how you use MySpace. This interview, like the survey, will be confidential and your name will not be on any of the information taken from the interview. The researchers will take notes during this interview and you may look at the notes anytime during the interview. You may ask questions any time as well. By agreeing to be contacted later for this part of the study does not mean you must participate in the interview. We will simply contact you and see if you would like to be interviewed.

By participating in this study you will help investigators better understand the impact of MySpace on social capital and civic engagement. You might even find it fun to answer questions about yourself and how you use MySpace. We plan on using the results of the study to create programs that focus on your strengths and use of MySpace to express yourself, and your participation in the study will help to develop these programs. The results of this study may be published in professional and/or scientific journals. It may also be used for educational purposes and/or professional presentations.

You may choose to not answer all or part of any questions for any reason or withdraw from the study. If you do not want to be in this study then you don’t have to be. No one will be upset with you if you choose not to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to withdraw from the study. Participation in this study is voluntary and there is no penalty for choosing not to participate.

There are no foreseen risks to participating in this study. The study is confidential and we will keep your information private and it will not have any identifying information attached to it. You do not need to answer any questions if they make you uncomfortable, and the major concern you may have is the time it will take to complete the survey. However, you may complete the survey whenever it is best for you. There are no more than minimal risks associated with participating in this research study, meaning that it would be no different than what you deal with every day. Drs. Deepak and Russell will have a MySpace webpage with information and contact numbers about the study. We will use this webpage to update you on the study, help you access the online survey if you so wish, and answer any questions you may have throughout the study.

All efforts will be made to ensure and maintain the confidentiality of your participation in this project. Each participant’s name will be paired with a code number by the researchers. This code number will appear on all written materials. The list pairing your name to the assigned code number will be kept separate from all research materials and will be available only to Drs. Deepak and Russell. Confidentiality will be maintained according to legal requirements. All data will be kept in a locked file cabinet that only the researchers have access to. The data will be collected for a duration that is approved by the Institutional Review Board approval, approximately five years. Any data collected and transferred to computer files will be password protected. Analysis of data will be completed in another password protected file that is solely accessed by Dr. Russell and Dr. Deepak. Neither the computer program nor our final reports will provide any information that will allow the linking of names to specific comments.

A summary of the findings from this study will be shared with you as soon as possible. To obtain a summary you may contact us by phone or email. We will also post the summary of the findings on our MySpace page. You can ask questions anytime about the study. If you have questions, you can call the researchers or go to the researcher’s MySpace webpage under the same title as the study.

Any further questions you may have about the research or research participants' rights should be directed to the IRB chair, Dr. Jon Lasser 512.245.3413 ([lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:lasser@txstate.edu)), or to

Ms. Becky Northcut, Compliance Specialist at 512.245.2102.

Institutional Review Board Approval Number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

\*for internet surveys if 18 and older: check box for comprehension

Youth/Participant: I understand the contents of this consent form and I give consent to participate in this study.

If Applicable: Parent or guardian, please check your decision below and sign.

\_\_\_\_\_\_I give permission for (youth’s name)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give permission for (youth’s name)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_to participate in this study.

Printed Name Signature

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If Applicable: Parent/Guardian Consent

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Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 I am willing to be contacted at a later date for an individual interview.