Summary and Analysis of “Youthful Indiscretions: Should College Protect Social Network Users from Themselves and Other?”

The article “Youthful Indiscretions: Should Colleges Protect Social Network Users from Themselves and Others?” is written by Dana L. Fleming. This essay appears in the 2008 winter issue of the New England Journal of Higher Education. Fleming’s intent with this article is to show the negative view of joining a social networking site. In this article she shows and at the same time warns people what social networks can do to your personal and professional life. She informs the readers how it can be used against the student when applying for jobs, scholarships, and can be used against them in the court of law. Through the use of negative stories and examples the authors portray the idea of social networking sites can only be deleterious to your life. The first negative example Fleming writes is about a student who was going to get an internship but the executive from the company discovered he had a Facebook and saw his interests and likes and didn’t give it to him. There are many stories and examples that are similar to this one, but the author just tries to show you that everything is not appropriate for Facebook or to be tweeted on Twitter and minors should not be allowed to be on these social networking sites.

The online social networking communities have since expanded from a college campus base to a worldly audience. It has been an epidemic since the start of the MySpace, Facebook, Friendster, Tagged, and many more other social networking sites. A continuing factor for
obtaining a job, Internship, or being recruited can be performed by a background check on one of those social networks. At the University of Pennsylvania a young woman that “was denied her teaching degree after a fellow student brought one of her MySpace photos to the attention of the school administrator. The photo, which has spurred a lawsuit, features the young woman wearing a pirate hat, drinking from an opaque plastic cup. The photo is suggestively captioned “Drunken Pirate.” (Fleming 439). In another case a University of Chicago student “ruined his chances at a summer internship when an executive from the company viewed his Facebook profile, only to discover that his interests included “smoking blunts” (cigars stuffed with marijuana), shooting people, and obsessive sex” (Fleming 439). While “a chemical engineering major sabotaged his career in a similar manner by confessing in his online bio that he liked to blow things up” (Fleming 439). In another instance two swimmers from the Louisiana State University lost their athletic scholarship for making “disparaging comments” about their coach on Facebook (Fleming 439). Those are only some of the examples of how social networking can have an adverse effect on your life. A 17 year old Rhode Island girl was repeatedly “dragged and raped by three men she befriended on MySpace” (Fleming 440). Parents, attorneys general, and legislators are discussing ways to protect young users from internet predators and themselves. The office of student affairs at the University of Maine warns that while “the administrators are not monitoring Facebook,” they may act on any violations of law or University policy if it is brought to their attention (Fleming 440). There are some policies that universities follow for social network users: “Don’t post anything you wouldn’t be comfortable with your grandmother seeing.” (Fleming 440). There is no real way for the universities to really monitor the stuff student’s post on social networking sites because it would require a full time staff to work around the clock.
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