Social media and education: Learning how to network safely and productively

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Context

- As of 2011, 80% of Canadians (aged 16+) use the Internet
    - 58% report using social network sites regularly

- As of September 2012, 52.7% of Canadians are Facebook subscribers

- 71% of teens in North America own a cell phone

Social Media: Pros &Cons

- Self-actualization and personal expression
  - Building community, social activism
  - Narcissism, hatred, extremism

- As of 2010, The Hate Directory (Franklin, 2010) listed around 2,000 hate websites, hundreds of hate groups, 100+ racist blogs

Research Project

- Changing nature of social interactions

- Objectives:
  - Perspectives
  - Power
  - Pedagogical potential

Data Analysis

◆ 10, 305 discussion threads

◆ *"Was the war in Iraq justified?"* (911 interactions)

◆ 6 super-users (Venkatesh, Shaikh et al., 2012)

◆ Computer-mediated discourse analysis (Herring, 2004)
- ◆ Actualizing vs. Dutiful citizen (Bennett, Wells, & Rank, 2009)
- ◆ Personally responsible vs. Participatory vs. Justice oriented citizen (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004)

Research Findings

◆ Changing perspectives longitudinally

"The Taliban were [sic] providing security for Bin Laden and his organization to train, arm, recruit, and plot further mischief. They were financing themselves with Opium grown in Afghanistan, and running a number of training camps indoctrinating and crafting a more lethal terrorist force. We had to take them out. Pretty simple."

Research Findings

◆ Changing perspectives longitudinally

"How about you put your own politics aside - your own hatred of America - and listen to the Iraqis - not the ones with the rocket launchers - listen to the common peaceful Iraqi. I plan to listen hard - because we require their friendship if we are to turn a stable government over to Iraq - which should be everyone's goal regardless of politics. […] I think Tully & I have a common interest - the stability of Iraq - so I would like to work with him towards this goal."

Affordance of Social Media

◆ Social media provides spaces for dissenting views to be forwarded and legitimized.

◆ Violence, hatred, and extremism tend to "flourish in circumstances in which there are no legitimate political channels for the expression of grievances" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 81).

Future Research

◆ Social media literacy and digital citizenship

◆ Critical thinking

◆ Social media, social exclusion, and othering

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Forthcoming Publications:

In *Educational, Psychological, and Behavioral Considerations in Niche Online Communities* (IGI-Global)

1) Citizen in/action: Analyzing online forums for pedagogical insight. (with Nicole Fournier-Sylvester and Vivek Venkatesh)

2) Citizenship @ the edge of two worlds: The connection between theories of citizenship education and the study of niche online communities. (with Robert McGray)