Chapter 3
The Claim on Human Conviviality in Cyberspace

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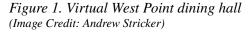**Daniel A. Connelly**
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ABSTRACT

This chapter sets out by defining conviviality in a way that allows the term to be simultaneously applied to face-to-face and virtual experiences. The educational context is introduced as one of many that can benefit from both types of experience. Impairment of the components of a shared learning experience (self, others, teacher) does not have to occur if educators understand the unique combination produced by the content to be learned plus the markers of the type of learning experience selected. Matching the content to the medium produces the optimal results. The authors conclude that conviviality in a specific application is not only possible, but potentially highly productive in cyberspace, minimizing the logistical, high-risk, and cognitive constraints identified by Calandra and Puvirajah that can impair other forms of communication and specifically non-cyber learning experiences. This chapter contributes to new era of human interaction literature in the age of virtuality.

INTRODUCTION

Technology today is an overwhelming force. The available handheld information devices are becoming a necessity for those that need to remain connected for real-time information. According to Hopkins and Turner (2012), there are more handheld devices available in the world than toothbrushes! Although technology experts and futurists proclaim that we are still very much in the transformational stages of technological evolution, many feel that we are barely in the age of discovery (Bonk, 2010). Millenials, the next generation entering society after the turn of the century, have adapted the use of their electronic devices throughout their daily routines. Unlike generations of the past, they communicate through texts

Figure 1. Virtual West Point dining hall
(Image Credit: Andrew Stricker)

and instant messages as opposed to phone calls. For entertainment, millenials prefer to personally download their music, stream movies, and choose dating partners online. The Internet becomes the information center for inquiries about restaurants, cars, medical providers, electronics, or various appliances or services (Burstein, 2013).

A recent PEW Center survey of U.S. adults discovered that the social media preferences for 2018 were a mix of long-standing trends with emerging choices. Facebook and YouTube were the top two social media networks chosen by adults, while younger Americans (18 to 24-year-olds) desired platform diversity. Approximately 78% of this younger demographic use Snapchat, reporting that 71% visited multiple times daily. Additionally, 71% of this group also utilized Instagram, while nearly 45% leveraged Twitter as well. Although Facebook remains the most widely used social media by some 68% Americans today and YouTube the video-sharing platform as their next choice, no other social media sites were chosen by more than 40% Americans in this survey. Further, the PEW Center has inquired about five trending platforms from previous surveys and have focused on five choices by Americans: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Pinterest. The media preferences across the U.S. population remains constant since the 2016 survey with the exception of one platform; Instagram. This platform use has increased to 35% since the 2016 survey where 28% of the population chose this site previously (Smith & Anderson, 2018).

Social media is alive and well in the U.S., but how does that impact daily face-to-face interaction among Americans. Does this mean that our day-to-day human interaction has been decreased? How much of this human interaction have we lost each day? How may this affect overall human conviviality and relationships throughout our population. How much has social media impacted our culture? Does social media influence empathy, a key ingredient in human relationships?

A recent study has documented that Facebook and Twitter has affected the adolescent population based on their use of these networks. Moreover, these adolescents not only displayed high scores in the area of empathy, but with increased use of these specific platforms, reported lower self-esteem. Empathy has been an important connection to our ability to communicate with others. Empathy may be examined through affective and cognitive perspectives. Affective empathy describes the ability to feel and share

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