

# Chapter 92

## Cyber Behavior in Social Studies Education

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### ABSTRACT

*Events throughout the world have demonstrated the powerful use of technology to shape political ideas, give people a voice, and impact human behavior. The field of social studies education has long been a proponent for the use of technology; however, educators continue to be eluded by a paucity of studies to validate the effectiveness of implementation through longitudinal and outcome-based research. Key areas of focus for the social studies include digital citizenship, the evolution of the electronic republic, the Internet's impact on political elections and movements, the rise of participatory democracy in cyberspaces, the power of the Internet to transform society through social networks, and the potential to transcend physical boundaries to promote community building and global interaction.*

### INTRODUCTION

Social studies education is the integrated study of the social sciences, behavioral sciences, and the humanities to promote student academic and civic competencies (National Council for the Social Studies, 2010). Cyber behavior within the social studies focuses on interactions within cyber environments, integration of digital technology as a tool for social studies education and inquiry, as well as use of online tools as a vehicle for civic and social change.

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### OVERVIEW

The impact of science and technology on society is a topic of interest in social studies education. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) National Curriculum Standards explicitly outline the need for students to explore the impact that science and technology have on our daily lives, including how these forces alter our understanding of the world and our place in it (National Council for the Social Studies, 2010). It can be argued that the rise of the personal computer, and the more recent omnipresence of the Internet, has more

drastically and rapidly altered society than any technology innovation since the steam engine or printing press.

The speed at which technology has evolved is staggering. Not only has the amount of technology drastically changed, but so has the way in which the average person interacts with the available tools. In the early days of the Internet, or Web 1.0, users were consumers of information, exploring published websites. With the advent of Web 2.0 technology Internet users have become producers of information through on-line vehicles such as wikis, YouTube, and social networking sites. This shift in the utilization of the Internet from glorified library to an interactive resource for gathering and sharing information has changed the way in which individuals can connect with one another on a global level.

One of the most interesting changes in on-line behaviors has been the rise of social networking sites (SNS). These sites enable users to create on-line networks of friends and communities of common interest. Critics of SNS were originally concerned that the rise of on-line communities would have a negative impact on users' ability to socialize and develop community ties in the real world (Carty & Onyett, 2006). A Pew study on the impact of social networking on users' lives found that SNS users had more close relationships, received more social support and were more politically engaged than non-SNS users (Hampton, Goulet, Rainie, & Purcell, 2011).

Scholars in social studies education have long had an interest in technology and its impact on society and education. In 1983, one year prior to Apple's famed Super Bowl introduction of the Macintosh, NCSS published its first technology-themed issue of *Social Education*, the NCSS practitioner journal. Over the next fourteen years, technology-related articles regularly appeared in *Social Education* and an additional themed issue was published in 1987. Beginning in 1997, NCSS published an annual technology-themed *Social*

*Education* issue. Internet-related articles pervade the technology themed issues (Bolick, McGlenn, & Siko, 2005), which is not surprising in light of the dominance the Internet has had on society over the last fifteen years.

Peter Martorella (1997) referred to technology as the "sleeping giant" in social studies education, a tool for growth and reform that had yet to be realized. Seven years later, Michael Berson and Peter Balyta (2004) likened technology integration in the social studies as having to transcend a period of adolescence; in other words, growth in research and practice in social studies-related technology integration was still needed. Berson and Balyta also called for the examination of technology as a factor in social, emotional, and psychological change.

## **Digital Citizenship**

Digital citizenship has been defined by Ribble, Bailey and Ross (2004) as the "norms of behavior with regard to technology use" (p. 7). The authors identify nine areas of behavior associated with digital citizenship: etiquette, communication, education, access, commerce, responsibility, rights, safety, and security. Tasked with the responsibility of preparing effective and engaged citizens, social studies teachers must educate their students to be good citizens of both the digital world as well as the real world. Such preparation involves instructing students about their rights and responsibilities in the digital world, including safety and privacy, etiquette and communication, and the ethical use of technology (Berson & Berson, 2004).

Ilene Berson (2010) calls for the examination of the frame in which children's digital lives are examined. Children are frequently portrayed as either the perpetrators of cyberbullying or the exploited victims of the inherently dangerous Internet. Focusing on the perils of the Internet limits the discourse of digital citizenship to topics of safety and regulation; discussion about the po-

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