Chapter 13
Using the 3V Model to Explore Virtuality, Veracity and Values in Liminal Spaces

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ABSTRACT

Adaptation and adoption of immature emergent technologies for instruction fails to account for the challenge to, and creation of, new concepts of self, identity and community both in real and virtual spaces. New insight is necessary to develop social policy responses, including those of educational systems and institutions, to the consequences of these new conceptualisations. This chapter presents an original theoretical model which aims to assist in the interpretation of existing theory, exploring the interrelated dimensions of values, virtuality and veracity disturbed by the adaptation of emergent technologies. It invites an exploration of existing theoretical and methodological instruments available within the broader Social Sciences to examine emerging notions of identity. The emergent theoretical model visualizes a set of complex assumptions within the concepts of the "real-virtual" interface created by emergent technologies; the 3V model represents one means of explore internal structure to this liminal space and invites further empirical study.

INTRODUCTION

The fear of change that appears to pervade our education systems is perhaps rooted in a fundamental lack of comprehension. What is technology? How do we recognize it, measure it, evaluate it? Even within the nation state there are huge variations across educational sectors, and within sectors, across differing social geographies, in the adaptation and adoption of technology. There is a need to provide policy makers and practitioners with explanations, and methods of comprehension, although these are undoubtedly problematic. Technology adoption patterns in all societies, developed and developing, are complex and difficult to represent. Socio-economic, gender, ethnic and

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educational differences suggest digital citizenship is a multi-faceted and complex phenomenon.

In this chapter, we draw on our own academic development and pedagogical practice with emerging technologies and associated practices. We propose a new model for describing and researching cyber behaviour. This model may even, we venture to suggest, provide the basis for new insights at an institutional level into how technologies affect change.

Web 2.0 emergent technologies offer students and staff new opportunities to explore new concepts of self and identity. These tools and services are creating, recreating and evolving new communities both in real and virtual spaces. Existing social theory is struggling to accommodate these changes and social policy responses, including those of educational systems and institutions, and we need new models to account for these new conceptualizations. An original theoretical model, the 3V model (Atkinson & Burden, 2007) described here, aims to facilitate interpretation of existing theory, provide a context for the evaluation of learner and staff conceptions of identity in new liminal spaces between the 'real' and 'virtual' worlds. There are a range of well developed and well tested theoretical and methodological instruments within Social Science research and many of these can be applied to, and integrated into, the 3V model. What the 3V model aims to do is provide a framework for a set of complex assumptions concerning the concept of the 'real-virtual' interface; it seeks to provide a visualization of these liminal spaces and offers a framework for further empirical study.

Despite anecdotal evidence, there is little substantive evidence to indicate how cyber behaviour, specifically that relating to Web 2.0 community applications such as Myspace, Bebo, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube and Voicethread, changes the social practices, personal behaviour and socio-cultural expectations between individuals. As educators in tertiary institutions in two English speaking countries at opposite ends of the globe (New Zealand and the United Kingdom), we are interested in understanding this behaviour. Our institutions advocate 'lifelong learning' and provide tertiary level programmes for Early Years (Kindergarten) practitioners through to professional development programmes for established practitioners in Higher Education. In our work, the concept of 'digital literacy' is a contentious point of professional discourse. That the real impact of technology adoption on learner performance, expectations and behaviour is poorly understood is evidenced by the lack of appropriate policy responses across the educational sectors within a single national state's education system. As the commercial sector laments Universities' inability to provide graduates with appropriate skills, Universities themselves are struggling to provide flexible and effective access to digital support for learning. There is a pressing need for education at all levels to understand the fundamental shifts in the norms of inter-personal communication and patterns of user engagement, and what the consequences of this change might be.

These shifts are fundamental and ill-defined. There is a requirement to define what we mean by '*emerging technology'*. It is, at times, difficult to distinguish between the emergence of a new technology, and the fusion of various disparate technologies into single devices. An example of this is the convergence of previously disparate devices, telephone, video player, music player into a single portable unit. Researchers must also be clear about the socio-cultural and socio-economic contexts in which claims about technology are being made. There is a real danger that we talk of emerging technologies and societal impact from a 'Developed World' perspective. This Occidental bias in much of the published literature needs to be accounted for in our theorizing. Finding models that apply to all societies, at whatever stage of technological sophistication, will be a challenge.