

FOREWORD

Over recent decades, the prominence of technology in the lives of children has grown dramatically. While previous generations of parents and researchers were concerned about the impact of television upon the development of children, the veritable leaps and bounds of technological innovation have made it difficult to keep track of the almost daily changes in the forms of technology in the lives of children. The widespread use of cellular technology has made it increasingly more common to see not only adolescents, but young children carrying cell phones. The ubiquitous nature of the internet, along with the growth of ever-changing forms of social media, has created a rather dichotomous existence for many youth – one in which they live in the “real world,” and yet another in which they live in the “online world.” Even the simple notion of a young person playing video games has taken on a radically different quality, as the majority of such games now emphasize the online interaction with other players. Although researchers have been attempting to study how the various forms of technology may potentially affect children and adolescents, there is no denying the fact the technology is playing an ever-important role in their lives.

Recent estimates concerning the levels of usage vary, with some suggesting that adolescents are spending over eight hours each day engaged with some form of technology. Even preschoolers are not immune to the inclusion of technology, as some studies report them as using technology over four hours each day, on average. In many ways, a generational divide has developed, such that children and adolescents, who have grown up in a world where mastery of technological change is an absolute must, have a decided advantage over their parents when it comes to the ease of use of technology. Older generations often find themselves fumbling about with their technological devices, such as their smartphones, and when they are unable to comprehend how it is supposed to function, they turn to their own children for assistance. There is little doubt that contemporary children and adolescents are exposed to changing technologies, not only at home, but also in their schools. As such, they frequently demonstrate a mastery of technological devices which leaves most adults both impressed and embarrassed.

Several decades ago, researchers from a variety of disciplines began to raise alarms about children's increasing exposure to television, and how both the quantity and quality of television shows could affect them. In most instances, such concerns were made from a social problem perspective, and typically involved a range of warnings about the potentially deleterious and harmful impacts which television could have upon children. Technologies and technological change, however, do not necessarily have to be envisioned as harmful. More and more often, educators are developing new ways to integrate technology into the classroom, making it a central component of their pedagogical plans. Given that children are already drawn by the appeal of using new technologies, it is quite logical that the use of such in the classroom could significantly improve the learning environments and educational outcomes for children. On the other hand, technologies in the lives of children can, in fact, be quite problematic. Many parents live in fear of their children being lured by sex predators on the internet, of having their adolescents engaging in "sexting" with others, or of being "bullied" online. The effects of technologies on children and adolescents, then, can potentially be both good and bad, which makes our need for better understanding the nature of technology in the lives of children and adolescents even greater.

In this volume of *Sociological Studies of Children and Youth*, we attempt to pursue these issues, with investigations of a variety of technological forms, and across a broad representation of children and adolescents. In "Cyberbullying in the Era of Digital Relationships: The Unique Role of Resilience and Emotion Regulation on Adolescents' Adjustment," Giovanna Ganesini and Antonella Brighi examine the effects of peer violence in cyberspace upon adolescents' emotion regulation and socio-emotional adjustment. They find that while online victimization is quite common, resilience can often play an important role in coping with online bullying. Although social interaction in the online world appears to involve a great deal of anonymity, such interactions are, nonetheless, witnessed by others. Jessica Niblack and Jodie L. Hertzog also examine the nature of online bullying, but focus upon how others react and respond when they observe such behaviors. In "Factors that Influence Bystander Behavior in the Cyberbully Context," they note that while the majority of youth have witnessed online bullying, the reactions of "bystanders" can vary quite a bit.

The ever-changing nature of technologies can often bring about tangible changes in the interactional patterns of youth, as well as the ways in which they see themselves. In "Cell Phone Use and Youth Perceptions of

Communication in South Africa,” Radhamany Sooryamoorthy examines the use of cell phones by young college students. Not only are the patterns of usage found to vary substantially by gender and race, but the perceiving meanings and forms of communication are shown to vary, as well. Using a sample of Swedish adolescents, Åsa Andersson, Margareta Bohlin, Linda Lundin, and Emma Sorbring investigate the manners by which teens use their online activities as a means of defining themselves. The internet, in the eyes of many youth, represents an opportunity to establish an identity, and the authors find that many young people are eager to do so, yet significant differences exist between boys’ and girls’ usage. The meaning of the internet, particularly as an element of the social lives of youth, is explored by Elmir de Almeida, Marilena Nakano, Maria Elena Villar e Villar, and Vanderlei Mariano in “Young Collegians: Between the Physical and Numerical Territories, Different Processes of Individuation.” Using a sample of young college students in Brazil, their study demonstrates the relative meaning of online lives, which can vary considerably in both experience and consequence, for young females and males.

The generational divide between young people and adults, particularly in regard to the use of the internet, often leaves adults fearful of what young people are doing online. Ana Campos-Holland, Brooke Dinsmore, Gina Pol, and Kevin Zevallos investigate how children and adolescents try to steer their way through the online world in “Keep Calm: Youth Navigating Adult Authority across Networked Publics.” They find that while young people are aware of adult monitoring and supervision, many children and adolescents are adept at working around such controls. As Harry T. Dyer points out in his study, “All the Web’s a Stage: The Effects of Design and Modality on Youth Performances of Identity,” although youth are increasingly making use of social networking sites, their usage patterns are constrained by the form and structure of the sites, themselves. Identity portrayals and social interactions depend heavily upon the design and modality of the websites, thus prompting young people to adapt their behaviors as a function of the qualities of the sites. Despite such boundaries of the online world, however, youth are able to cultivate a peer environment of their own design. In “n00bs, Trolls, and Idols: Boundary-Making among Digital Youth,” Matthew H. Rafalow examines how young people create social boundaries which actually serve to encourage civility among youthful online users.

Understandably, researchers, practitioners, and parents alike are concerned about the effects of online activity upon the development and well-being of children and adolescents. In “The Impact of Information and

Communication Technology (ICT) Usage on Psychological Well-Being among Urban Youth,” LaToya O’Neal Coleman, Timothy M. Hale, Shelia R. Cotten, and Philip Gibson examine the impact of online activity upon the psychological well-being of urban adolescents. Their findings suggest that both the quantity and quality of online activity needs to be considered, in regards to the well-being of youth. Beyond psychological well-being, behavioral issues must also be addressed, in relation to the use of technology by children and adolescents. In “A Longitudinal Examination of the Relationship between Technology Use and Substance Use during Adolescence,” Christine McCauley Ohannessian examines how the substance use patterns of adolescents may be affected by the larger combination of cell phone, computer, and video game usage. While significant effects are shown, she also demonstrates that the relationship between technology use and substance use is very much a reciprocal one.

In some instances, a seemingly benign technology, such as the cellular phone, can be used in a manner by youth which causes great alarm within society. In “Sexting, Digital Dissent and Narratives of Innocence – Controlling the Child’s Body,” Brian Simpson examines how young people are sending sexualized images via their phones. Focusing upon the Australian context, he demonstrates that what many adults perceive as an entirely inappropriate activity may also present a dilemma for how the legal system deals with the same. Jennifer E. Simpson, in “Technology and the fostered child: A new social work response.” offers a similar perspective. She notes that traditional perceptions of children’s and adolescents’ online activities have primarily come from a problem-orientation, and have largely overlooked how youth can actually exercise a substantial amount of both self-control and self-responsibility. The misperceptions of adults concerning children’s and adolescents’ use of technology are also made evident in the research by Sarah Tulane, J. Mitchell Vaterlaus, and Troy E. Beckert. In ““That Is SO Not True”: Adolescent Perspectives of Adult Misconceptions of Teen Text Messaging,” they use qualitative analyses of a sample of high students, who clearly illustrate that adults often have little understanding of what adolescents are actually doing, and their fears about such behaviors as “sexting” are typically not based upon realistic assessments of teen’s actual cellular phone use.

Although emerging technologies often generate a considerable amount of alarm and fear among parents and researchers, even long-existing technologies have been shown to have substantial effects upon the lives of children and adolescents. In “Watching Television and Reading Achievement: A Study of Third Grade Language Minority Students,” Gregory J. Mills

examines how television viewership can affect the development of reading skills among language-minority elementary students. In his study, Mills notes that, contrary to many existing concerns, television viewing appears to provide a positive impact upon the reading achievements of language-minority children, as it may serve to facilitate their development of reading skills. In regard to other behaviors, however, the use of technology may not necessarily be beneficial. Such is shown by Yuping Mao and Lu Shi in their study, “Can Media Consumption Predict Immigrant Adolescents’ Acculturation-Related Risky Health Behavior? An Analysis of Latino Sample in CHIS Survey.” Using a sample of Latino adolescents in the United States, they find that higher usage rates of television, video games, and computers are associated with a tendency toward greater risk-taking behaviors by Latino teens. In “United Future Leaders: A Case of the Use of Technology in Youth Programming and Hidden Curriculum,” Erin Kostina-Ritchey, Holly E. Follmer-Reece, Sara L. Dodd, Kayla Sherman, and Gloria Gonzales examine the “hidden curriculum” within technology platforms, and how these might be used by practitioners to provide more positive influences in the lives of youth.

Overall, the authors in this volume provide a very broad and enlightening examination of the role and impact of technology in the lives of children and adolescents. Their studies clearly offer a much greater understanding of how changing technologies are bringing about change in the very fabric of childhood and adolescence. Their collective research offers considerable insight into the potential effects of technological change, and also underscores the need for such research to continue. Indeed, given the pace of technological change, it is vital that researchers maintain a similar pace of investigation. Many thanks are due to the authors for their efforts herein, to the many reviewers who helped along the way, and to the editorial staff at Emerald Publishing.

Sampson Lee Blair
Patricia Neff Cluster
Samuel M. Cluster
Editors