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TEACHING, LEARNING, AND
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CIVIL TALKS: ANALYSIS OF ONLINE DISCUSSIONS IN SOCIAL STUDIES
CLASSROOMS (303 pp.)

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The Internet has revolutionized the way we live, the way we learn, and the way we discern public issues. Put simply, a new public square has developed online. Social studies teachers, as social educators, should be well suited to fuse technology and classroom discussions about civic issues. Many argue the social studies classroom remains the most appropriate place to teach citizenship via discussion and deliberative practices. Teaching discussion skills is foundational to an issues-centered curriculum and advocated by social studies educators because an effective democracy depends on the practice of publicly deliberating issues that are important to society. Yet, facilitating classroom discussion of controversial issues has never been easy, and moving these discussions to online spaces presents a new set of challenges altogether.

The purpose of this research study was to understand, explain, and forge new theoretical concepts for online deliberative practices. Data from 4 issues-centered blogs used in the high school social studies classroom were gathered and analyzed. Three findings emerged revealing these new deliberative spaces (a) leaned toward conversation, (b) attempted to balance authentic engagement with needed procedures, and (c) tended to shortcut reason. The findings were interrelated and provided grounding for a Model of Online Deliberation, a conceptualization of such hybrid deliberative activities.