NAVIGATING SURVEILLANCE DISCOURSE: VIRTUAL SPACE, CHILDHOOD AND CONTRASTING REPRESENTATIONS OF ONLINE SAFETY

by

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Abstract

This project looked at two different sets of data to further understand the relationship between surveillance discourse and the Internet, how surveillance discourse around navigating the Internet has developed, and how children use social technology and digital media for positive communication as well as an alternative space for social engagement. This project argues that there is a disconnect between the way children use social technology, and the approach authoritative websites take in aiming to educate parents, educators, and children on using the Internet safely. This study performs a thematic content analysis on websites that aim to educate on Internet Safety. Additionally, this qualitative study focuses on semi-structured interviews with grade 4-6 students in a French language school in Western Ontario and their reaction to the question, “how do you use technology”. This project is a stepping-stone into many conversations around the possibilities present for the Internet, children, and communication.
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Dedication

To my siblings,

Lily & Jack Inskip-Shesnicky
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Chapter One:
Setting the Context

Introduction

This thesis explores the relationship between children and social technology. It examines the way in which children and childhood have been subject to social constructions, featuring them as fragile and in need of protection. Social technology has been constructed and understood as a threatening power, worthy of conversations around safety, risk, and control, and seen through a discourse of surveillance. There is a powerful link between this representation of childhood and the representation of social technology because of the growing relationship children have with social technology, digital environments, and Internet use.

This project draws on a larger research project (funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, D. Farmer, P. I. 2009-2012) performed with primary school students from French language schools in Southern Ontario. The overall focus of Dr. Farmer’s study examined concepts of spatial and social mobility.

This project seeks to demonstrate how children understand their ‘fragility’, or if they feel this fragility, alongside the presumed threat of social technology. I argue that this relationship between childhood and children’s active engagement with social technology is displayed similarly to moral panic, through a discourse of surveillance. In addition, I argue that this is manifested by the presence of authoritative figures offering education on the proper way to use the Internet. What I aim to communicate is that children have demonstrated their use of social technology (a communicative aspect of the Internet) positively. I look at the ‘authoritative' websites that give advice and rules on how
to navigate the Internet and children's use. This will be done through a content analysis of examining word choice and the way in which websites communicate their mission statement. Comparatively, I will analyze interviews with children to demonstrate how they a) associate technology with social media and b) positively use social media and the Internet (Skype and Facebook) to communicate with family transnationally, develop relationships, and receive a form of empowerment. Additionally this project engages with existing literature that analyzes Internet and digital media use among children both in North America and Europe.

**Personal Entry Point**

I approach this project from a personal concern for the development of childhood, the advancement of technology and its potential, and the emotional panic that sometimes shadows remarkable possibility. As an (adult) member of society on the cusp of being accepted as a ‘digital native’, the relationship between today’s digital technological field, and Internet developments, changing and evolving by my generation for my generation, is something I have taken great interest in. Although I was not one of the first students in my Junior High School to have a cell phone, and only moved to Apple computers and I-gadgets after my undergraduate career, I have quickly been absorbed by the potential around me. I was ignorant to try Twitter, I did not want to become part of the social media world. Today, the morning begins with checking Twitter and the “handles” (an @ sign corresponding with the title name of which organization, person etc. you are following, for e.g. @globeandmail) of my favorite publications. It has proven to bring me the news before my parents and peers, and allowed me to stay updated throughout the day. It is through conversations with those around me, and the developments of children
in my life that I have seen and understood not only the potential for digital media and the Internet, but observed the social reaction to these developments. In particular, how these developments have come to be understood by both children and parents.

Throughout my last year at Carleton University I focused on two areas to complete my degree, Media Studies, and Children and Childhood studies. Media studies exposed my thinking to both qualitative and quantitative methods for media analysis and what gets communicated through authoritative figures. I engaged with theories such as Framing and Agenda Setting as well as completing various content analyses on the news in print. While finishing my Undergraduate Major in Communication studies, I was also completing a Minor in Sociology, where I focused on Children, Childhood and Education. At this time I was captivated by Pierre Bourdieu and his three core theories of Habitus, Field, and Cultural Capital. Through completing my last year at Carleton University, I was brought into my first year at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). Here I focused on Childhood and the work of Pierre Bourdieu, wherever possible.

Throughout my first year at OISE I worked with Diane Farmer as a Research Assistant. The overall focus of Dr. Farmer’s study examined concepts of spatial and social mobility. At this time I was engaging with concepts of mobility and became very in tune with the ideas around virtual mobility and motility, or mobility potential (Kaufmann and Flamm, 2006). These theoretical frameworks have been guiding principals to my thinking going forward. My thoughts and ideas while engaging with new concepts will be influenced through this thinking while considering the personal experience individuals have moving in and out of space.
Researching and engaging with this dissertation will have pulled in strong elements of mobility theory, theories of Childhood in Sociology, as well as media studies. Being cognizant of this background is important in understanding where I was positioned personally in these areas, and why they have remained relevant areas of discussion and thought as I have completed my thesis.

**Today’s Western Context**

With technological advancement, comes visible changes in society, and this can also be understood in the life of a student as well. Today youth are using hand-held devices to communicate, organize, and arguably operationalize their lifestyles. Young people’s uses of digital practices outside of school are for processes of problem solving, and immediate communication and interaction (Drotner, 2008). Aside from social constructions that dictate what youth are ‘supposed’ to be doing and the roles they are supposed to be filling, there is also at school and at home daily learning for children. Through daily routine children develop skills for learning how to navigate their individual environment, much like adults, both with and without digital technology. Research looks at how to help students prosper throughout their education, but struggles in adapting and recognizing that ‘the student’ is undergoing changes, socially and culturally all the time. Most importantly, these changes are occurring more and more frequently with technology, and this should be considered (Agger, 2011). The student at times is still conceived as operating in a ‘pre digital native’ way and assumed to have not changed. The problem is twofold. Exploration with students and children must involve talking with children about their experiences, rather than conducting research on them. The second problem is that the practices of teachers and parents sometimes overlook a
consideration for the changing context of the student and childhood. One area where this can be seen is the way communication between schools and families can rely on outmoded technology. The school agenda, for example, is a dying tool. Children forget to complete necessary homework and school tasks, and information is not transmitted from teacher to parent. When hand-held mobile devices are banned from the classroom, some of the key tools for youth are left out, consequently reflecting upon their organizational ability. Instead of implementing new ways for students to use school stationery and management tools accurately, studies can look at what students generally use effectively today. Playing to children’s strengths can emphasize their achievements in learning. This informs my thesis because it looks at how there has been a shift in day-to-day activities, moving towards a digital medium that I wish to promote as important, useful, and non-threatening.

It is evident that technology plays a key role in the life of youth and childhood. Research, government, and policy are slowly transitioning to talk about both childhood and technology together in the future. There are varied questions and concerns around this concept. At the forefront is the possibility of progression for the two areas, both the learning and education of children, as well as technology. The idea around educating is a concept that currently is embedded within the daily lives of western children, as social and digital technologies advance, an open mind towards their integration in the education system is relevant.

This project focuses on a Western context. The children in the study are from a minority French language school, in grades 4-6, located in Southern Ontario. Although wireless technology in the classrooms or cellphone use in general was not referenced
often, the majority of the thirty-four students did have a computer or I-gadget in the family home. It is important to be mindful that digital culture, although vastly prevalent in society today, is not a reality for every society member, more specifically children. Although I voice my concern around pessimism and social technology, and argue for a more open arm approach to both its presence in the home and classroom/education, I recognize that with this type of implementation there would be issues concerning unequal access to resources. The one obvious claim about digital technology is that it is immediately considered an ‘extra’. Education and social life among children today are still understood to operate functionally without the ‘added’ device of digital technology, however the possibilities for learning when paired with technology can have an empowering impact.

The overall study I have used for my analysis was conducted in Southern Ontario and was composed of 60 students and 125 participants, which included school principals, teachers, parents, and the students. This project was an exploratory inquiry on the experience of mobile students, and included virtual mobility as a key concept in what local, migrant, and transnational families do with it. This particular site and context are relevant to explore the limits and capabilities to capture children’s relation to social media. I looked at one class where, thirty-four students were interviewed about topics such as mobility, language, representations of a “globalized world” and their location and aspirations, as they co-construct multiple meanings associated with the experience of schooling as mobile youth in the context of new forms of mobility in a global world. Looking at transnational and migrant families allowed me to encounter the use of digital technology as a process for strengthening relationships in these familial makeups and the
importance of virtual mobility. This helped the project in its exploration of authoritative representations of children in relation to technology.

**Key Themes And Considerations**

Digital devices are increasing their societal presence daily. This is not a new phenomenon, but it has stemmed fear within society about its rapid growth. Today, the world is digitized, and as our population grows, and ages, the concern around the idea of the digital divide continues to grow. The ‘digital native’, is a term given to children born in the last two decades. They have consequently come to be understood as ‘native speakers to the digital language of computers, videogames, and the Internet’, and the ‘new’ child and student of today (Prensky, 2001). For the purpose of my research I will refer to youth as ‘digital natives’ although I recognize that the term is contested. This term over-assumes the literacy of youth with digital media and technology, while it under assumes the literacy abilities of adults. ‘Digital native’ as a term also prevents uniqueness and homogenizes children as active and apt on information communication technologies (ICT). However, while being cognizant of these criticisms I wish to use this term to illustrate that the world is digitized in a way to children that is not parallel to adults, because it is new. The term signifies most importantly that children are initially immersed in a world that is digital.

Children have been called experts in ICT because of their sheer constant use of them. However children do not think of themselves this way, because their use of these devices is not exceptional but embedded in their daily lives. Parents and adults with closer relations to youth are a little wearier of where these devices have taken us, and further yet, where they are going to go. This unknowing has led to websites and
organizations aiming to educate on the proper ways in which to navigate ICT’s. I show that these authoritative voices work from a top-down model, not only government and experts onto the parent, but overall - adult onto child. At the same time, ICT’s evidently present themselves as a site of struggle, providing varying and conflicting ways of operationalizing their use. The struggle in learning proper navigation only helps to emphasize the assumed fragility of the child. But when the child is understood as the ‘digital native’, the field of technology becomes even more complex in its struggle. Those in control and places of affluence are adults whom are able to impose rule, however their control should not be as large in a domain sometimes argued to be more knowledgeable by children. However, social order and childhood theory through psychology, social interaction, and development, has historically placed the child below adults, where they are told how to act. Social order ranks children on a vertical hierarchy where they are low in ranking, for areas such as aptitude and ability. Childhood theory looks at the social interactions and psychological developments associated to the upbringing of the child and the traits they project.

Children and youth historically have been conceptualized as fragile beings in need of protection. Throughout varying cultures these constructions are different. Over time the constructions of childhood change, “so much so that the eighteenth century had been claimed a new world for them”, from that of the seventeenth century according to Ariès (Hendrick, 1997). Ariès viewed childhood has a new concept in the seventeenth century, one that developed over time, gradually positioning the ‘child’ as a minority. As transnationalism and the heightening of interconnectivity and global engagement occur, these constructions also shift. What stays at the heart of this, namely in Western
societies, is that the young, and arguably those under 18 years of age, are subject to certain labels, rules, laws, and restrictions defined by adults in a given society that serve to regulate youth activities and circumscribe the particularities of their minority status. One of the underlying reasons I have chosen to focus on the social construction of childhood is that the modern subject that is of focus today often ignores the ‘intriguing ambiguities and difficulties of historical constructions’ (Zhao, 2010).

The digital world has been conceptualized as something that warrants fear and discussion around safety and security. Technology, new advancements in areas not seen before, the Internet and wireless digital media, has changed societal landscapes drastically, and rapidly, clouding policy and communication around surveillance. Both this sudden change from letter writing, to home telephones, to cellular phones for voice calls, and now E-mail, continues to cause alarm. Associated to this is the notion that a particular group of society, children, one not historically known for their expertise, may know more than oneself. There is also a dominating social representation that youth do not have the knowledge and ‘wisdom’ to properly understand the risk associated with such ‘new’ practices.

Technology for children, once taking place in front of a game console, computer or disc-man, now predominately has a social aspect outside of interactive figures. It is through social media where many of modern day western social connections are fostered and maintained. This project is located within the relationship between social technology, the Internet and childhood. Much of the surveillance discourse surrounding ‘digital natives’ and technology is related to communication. Children engage with technology, and use Facebook, MSN, and Skype, in ways differing from traditional
communication. Social technology is now guiding communication both at a business and political level, as well as for personal social interaction. The news is communicated to us over digital sites, and often makes itself known before traditional newscasts or print. It is the change in traditional communication, and the active participation of children within this culture, that exists to emphasize issues of surveillance discourse. According to Genevieve Bell, the Director of Intel Corporation’s Interaction and Experience Research, moral panic in terms of technology needs to change three relationship aspects: your relationship to space, time, and people (Rooney, 2011). Children now use many digital technologies for communication. They have changed when they talk, where they talk, how they talk, and whom they talk with.

There is an apparent discourse of surveillance surrounding children’s relation to the Internet, and virtual worlds. The constructions of technology and childhood as opponents - one innocent and frail, one risk laden and threatening - paint a picture of why these moral panics have persisted. Two worlds have collided. It is important to understand, through social construction, how children may come to understand themselves both through these constructions and through their own experience. How will children understand this collision of digital technology in light of social relationships and communication, when both they and their social technological toolbox have been framed against one another? Learning how to navigate virtual space in association with children and their well-being, has worked to further manifest surveillance discourse. The pressure to navigate appropriately, in fear of failing, creates and further exacerbates the issue. Although children are learning to navigate between fragility and threat, the public further aids in this complexity by feeding the cycle.
It is my contention that through these two constructions there are several different forms of engagement that children perform with social technology. Through engaging with semi-structured interviews with children I was working to further understand their immediate reaction to the question of their technology use and consequential engagement or not. The interviews were conducted by other colleagues working on the overall SSHRC study, and my role involved transcribing and analyzing the data. The interview questioning was semi structured, and most instances lead into Facebook, MSN, and Skype directly. For others the question was phrased as how they used ‘technology’, without the mention of social sites. From the two questioning formats, I was able to gain insight into students’ personal overall understanding of technology. Technology today facilitates communication. Although I was unable to engage with the students about how they understood their communication online in comparison to communication in person, I see this as a space for research in the future.

A recent study highlights that it is the concern about the risk of the Internet, and not the risk itself that comes to attention (Nolan et. al, 2011). The study looks at the physical existence of censorware, such as Norton Internet Security, and not the authoritative sites that discuss it, as I do. They propose, much a kin to my project, that the existence of these types of software is responsible for the increase in fear instilled in parents, and that this fear has the ‘ability to restrict children’s autonomy and opportunities for engagement’.

Research in the area of children and technology, and the risk and surveillance discourse associated with it, is relatively new. I do not wish to state that it is missing and has been neglected, because it is developing, not ignored. However, in the last few years’
research with this focus needs to be looked at with children, as opposed to on them independent of their involvement. Research has looked at children more as objects of study than participants within it. As society constructs an ideology around childhood, children must not be seen as human becomings but rather as human beings, taking an active role in their identity and actions. In my thesis I review the research that has been done on potential digital risks and communication around children. I also emphasize that there has been a lack of data collected with children as opposed to on children and their experiences. Additionally I discuss the literature on social media and its relevance in how society operates today.

Although not strictly about children or explicitly stated, Pierre Bourdieu’s discussion of the fashion field can be related to the position of the child in the technology field. Bourdieu explains that to stay relevant in fashion, the actors must be fast changing and adaptable to succeed. In technology, children are fast acting, innovative, and adaptable. This works to maintain their position as key actors in the field of technology. Likewise, adults are learning how to navigate the field of technology for both themselves and children, and have created a discourse around surveillance. Both adults and children are engaged in the field of technology and the struggles that are present within it.

Understanding how the field of technology works, adapts, and changes, most specifically socially, is key to ensuring ones position within the field. Because children have been born into a time where the field of technology is prominent they are experiencing an ongoing socialization within this environment. Digital technology is an area where the structural relationship between adult and child may be undergoing a change. Due to past experience with youth, in taking on new interests and expanding into new fields, it has
left the representation of youth within this new field of technology to be one that questions surveillance in the adult eye.

I have provided an overview of the context for my thesis and the key themes and considerations in today’s society surrounding the issues of surveillance discourse, childhood, and the Internet. I will continue in Chapter Two to theorize the context given in Chapter One. Chapter Two is broken down into themes in which the literature pertains to; Children and Childhood, Bourdieu - Field and Technology, Technology and the Internet, Social Media, Surveillance Discourse, and an overview of the literature. Chapter Three then discusses the Methodology of this research, examining the data collection of the interviews with children, and the data collection from the thematic content analysis of authoritative websites. This chapter presents the core idea of my dissertation, exploring the idea of surveillance discourse in a context where kids are actively engaged with the Internet. Chapter Four and Five are an analysis of the data collection. Chapter Four is an analysis of the authoritative websites, looking at Childhood and Social Technology. Chapter Five is an analysis of the interviews with children on their social technology use. In Chapter Six I discuss my findings from both Chapter Four and Chapter Five and how they relate to the key themes and theoretical frameworks within this project. The chapter is broken down into the three main themes. The first theme, Safety and Surveillance, looks at Social Media and Everyday Life, and Age and Assistance. The second theme, Technology As Empowering, looks at Multi-Use Technology for a Changing Generation, and The Internet and Relationships. The final theme looks at the concept of a Changing Field. In Chapter Seven, I conclude my dissertation by looking at the Contextualization around my project, the Implications and
future considerations for where this project and findings may go in the future.

My thesis is bringing together literature on childhood, technology, Internet use, and surveillance discourse. These areas are pertinent to how we ourselves, and those around us, are participating in society. We – adults – are experiencing children on the Internet, using different forms of communication, from this there has been contention and attempt to remedy what may be a problem. This perceived problem or emphasis on surveillance discourse is what needs to be engaged with further. There is a gap in the research as to why this surveillance discourse exists. Surveillance issues not only exist, they persist, and there is limited research into why and how they persist in the environment. There may be more acceptances towards social technology use in childhood today, but that does not infer that there is less concern. It is the concern about the safety and not the actual safety this project focuses on. I am investigating this because it will help to advance conversation in the field of children’s Internet use, in the hopes of understanding the ‘digital native’ positively, with acceptance, and encouragement of their future innovative capabilities. I wish for this project to be used as a stepping-stone into many conversations around the possibilities present for the Internet, children, and communication.
Chapter Two:
Theorizing the context

In this chapter I first review literature on children and childhood studies in order to understand how children have come to be viewed in society. Today, Western dominant ideology exposes children as naïve, fragile, and in need of protection. James, Jenks and Prout (1998), Ritchie and Kollar (1964), and Valentine (1997) shed light on this in their past research on the position of the child. I then discuss Pierre Bourdieu’s work on technology and its relation to his writing on the field of fashion. He depicts some key elements worth considering, such as the nature of something so popular to be fast changing, in both its structure and rules of access. After looking into Bourdieu’s perception of technology, I will discuss the relationship between technology and the Internet. Looking briefly at the history of technology and its emergence into the digital, I turn to how the Internet is impacting society and the discourse around children and risk. Sonia Livingstone has been a key scholar in this field and is seen throughout this research as one of the main players in the discourse around children, risk and social media. Peter, Valkenburg, and Fluckiger (2009) speak to how social networking plays an active role in the identity construction of youth. They argue that this is important to consider in its popularity. While engaging with the literature I continue to discuss the increase of social technology and spaces in daily life, how it impacts children’s identity-creation and issues of safety and education. Finally, I discuss the issue of surveillance through the concept of moral panic. Here I consider the work by Cohen, who coined the term moral panic, and the four ways in which he viewed its development, with particular attention to the
media. I then discuss Kristen Drotner’s work, which builds on Cohen’s analysis to focus on what she calls media panics.

Social constructivism is a theory of how knowledge is formed. Stemming from this, constructivist theory tells us that learning is experiential, and knowledge is passed communally through group settings. Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) is a theory centered within information and scientific study (Bijker & Pinch, 1989). It argues that technology does not determine the actions of humans, but rather humans determine how technology is shaped, instrumented, and controlled. SCOT arises in reaction to technological determinism, offering that technology shapes the culture and ideology of individuals and society. I wish to build on the ideas behind SCOT in that children as members of society, much like adults, are able to shape, instrument, and control their use of technology, be it social or not. I use this concept as a thinking tool to inform my inquiry on children and adults as both capable of changing as necessary with technology, and using it for positive means of social communication. The ideas behind SCOT help to formulate the progression of my thesis because it highlights the positive impact technology can have for society and its members. However, this theory does not showcase the technology as the hero, but highlights how people, in this case children, are capable of positive actions and influence as they shape, instrument, and help to control the technology available to them.

**Children And Childhood**

Children and childhood studies contain a vast area of literature. There are numerous areas that can be examined in relation to society’s representations of children, childhood and youth. How has society come to conceptualize childhood and the tensions
between child and adult? Valentine (1997) argues, along with numerous other scholars, that “childhood is an invention, an ideology which is (re)constructed and (re)produced over both space and time, the history of childhood is complex” (p.65). Ariès (1962) argued that the concept of children as a social reality was not widely talked about until the 16th and 17th century, and this only began among the upper classes. Only over time, moving into the late 19th and 20th centuries, could ‘childhood’ be applied to all classes. Ariès explanation of this is that the lower classes did not operate around the concept of childhood, as young people often took on the same roles as adults in terms of labour activity. Hence, Ariès argued that childhood is a recent invention. Beales (1975) reiterated such findings in stating that children were seen as mini adults, or smaller versions of their parents.

Over time there have been many theories, both sociological and psychological addressing the time of childhood, what it is and what it should be. One theorist who wrote on the ‘pre-sociological’ child was Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He divides childhood into stages, where by which they followed his ideas around the evolution of culture. He sees the child as innocent, pure from birth. This is seen in the beginning of his book Emile when he states, “God makes all things good, man meddles with them and they become evil”. In Rousseau’s writing of Emile, he continues to put forth the idea of the child as a person, the consideration of their needs, and rights for these young people. This demonstrated that in the future, there should be concern for the child as an individual. These concepts discussed by Rousseau are known today as the Apollonian view of childhood, which was named by Jenks (1996). Jenks also coined the Dionysian view of childhood that was common in the 16th century and earlier. The Dionysian view said
children should be seen not heard, that they needed to protect themselves, and that childhood is a time to learn discipline. In contrast to this, the Apollonian view saw childhood as a time for play over work, that children needed protection and that they were innocent and passive, and should be happy. Rousseau talked about the child as a person, taking into consideration their needs. His way of thinking prevented children from being social actors and creators of their own identity, by thinking about children as a work in progress. He talks about them as human becoming’s rather than as human beings. In this he removes their autonomy.

According to the work of James, Jenks and Prout (1998) who have examined the theorization of childhood extensively, “as a social status, childhood has to be recognized and understood through routine and emergent collective perceptions that are grounded in changing politics, philosophy, economics, social policy or whatever…we must envision the child within a broad cultural context” (p 196). When considering childhood on a mass global level, there are many contextual aspects of differing societies that work to shape the perception of childhood. Universally, children have been understood as a minority, controlled by someone ‘above’ them in social hierarchy, such as the assumed adult or elder, and looked down upon in a variety of ways. Children’s worlds have been created by adults and are inherited by youth. Simultaneously, children have inherited the societal ideals around an emphasis for communication and are using the resources around them to access communication practices. As technology changes quickly and the rules around surveillance are modified, a cognitive shift in the creation of children’s worlds to allow for changes around surveillance ideology is necessary. I think children will use digital technologies more and more not only as a source of communication, but a primary
tool for communication, as well as a tool for relationship building and a learning support system.

Critical studies of childhood and digital culture present arguments evidencing risk and concern in online worlds and their potential for transferability into the physical world (Wartella & Jennings, 2000). Most specifically, these concerns arise in relation to violence, child predators and pornography, where the concern that this type of behavior will transfer outside the virtual world is high. There is also concern about dwindling interpersonal social skills and face-to-face interaction because of engagement within virtual spaces. Livingstone and Staksrud argue that techniques in prevention of online risk have supported over protective behavior and a risk adverse culture that is limiting online exploration that society encourages for youth in other areas (2009). Why is there anxiety around surveillance, in that children will suffer the risks of Internet use? The deeper-rooted concern here is what children are doing with this fear, and what the movement outside of virtual space may look like.

It is my contention that as children turn to virtual spaces and social technology to gain agency and autonomy, ‘digital natives’ will encounter new difficulties, if they have not already. If there is not a widespread acceptance of the digital and its positive possibilities in children’s lives, the difficulties coming out of strong virtual engagement, will be increasingly more difficult to unpack. Non-place based spaces, otherwise known as virtual spaces, act as hubs for those that find it difficult to make roots outside of ones space, such as the home or school. For children, the home or school commonly represents places where the interior is safe, while the exterior is viewed as places of warning and hesitation. However in situations where home life is not safe, virtual spaces
may increase in their importance. As mentioned it is important to look at children and childhood today alongside the current issues effecting and pertinent to the context. Instances of increase in behavioral problems and anxiety issues in children have been linked to ICT in the news. There is concern over virtual spaces that children engage in, and anxiety about their use. At the same time, there is also a large degree of glorification around youth engagement with technology. This demonstrates that there is an integrated reality for technology, children, and the family. While there is a potential for positive engagement with social technology, this embracement is publicly limited. In turn this can result in confusion for the child when making actionable decisions about their technological engagement. If protecting children is done by constructing “domestic fortressing” (Katz, 2005) and “household hyper vigilance” (Lavalette, 2005), parents are only furthering the fear and skepticism of youth. Katz and Lavalette argue that parental actions of domestic fortressing and household hyper vigilance may actually counter what they aim to do. Too much action towards surveillance while in the home may work to further push a child towards virtual, non-place based spaces, where they feel recognized and comfortable. However, I argue that there is a positive space for social technology and childhood, a space for community and belonging.

**Bourdieu, Field, And Technology**

The sphere of social technology comes with its own rules and history like all fields in society. The pre-existing notions around a field are important to understand how participants within it interact and establish themselves. Within the field of technology the notion of fragility is highly present. Social technology has presented a series of concerns around safety and surveillance. When there are defining features of a field that are strong
and prevalent it is important to understand the rules involved in navigating this field, such as those of surveillance over technology.

One of Bourdieu’s three key concepts was field. As a key sociological thinking tool, it is important to understand this concept for understanding how I have understood technology to be considered a field. Loïc Wacquant summarizes the following, “the various fields of life, art, science, religion, the economy, politics and so on, tend to form distinct microcosms endowed with their own rules, regularities, and forms of authorities—what Bourdieu calls fields” (1998). From this I understand technology as a field because it comes with its own rules and ways of operating. The rules are imposed onto the people entering the field. Struggle thus occurs within fields when there are two or more parties striving to ‘either preserve or alter the rules with in it’. Fields can me conceptualized as battlefields, where identity and hierarchy are disputed over, such as the role and position of children and adults in the field of technology.

Wacquant goes on to explain another critical component of field, its degree of autonomy. This aspect of a field demonstrates its ability to function and insulate itself from external forces through its development. This also raises questions between ones habitus and field, where two entities conflict with one another, or when one area is being penetrated or influenced by another set of rules. The autonomy of specific fields is challenged by its surroundings, and demonstrates a struggle between agents defining and controlling how interactions are played out. Additionally this makes a field subject to people defending how it should work from a traditional internal standpoint, and actors bring in outside sources to help support and maintain their role within the field. In technology we can see this from the standpoint of adults bringing in concepts of
surveillance in order to navigate technology in a way they think is acceptable for children. For children, native to the field of technology, this presents a struggle between the autonomy they get within the social technological field, when adults introduce external forces in the shape of strong surveillance practices. Boundaries are created between youth and elders in this field as they aim to understand and bridge the rules of technology. His conceptualization of social fields, understands each field as having its own rules, and I will discuss this in terms of the digital space (Farmer, 2010). His ideas around rules and navigation are a streamlined way of seeing how technology is not only a subject or thing, but also an established element with impact to society and space.

Bourdieu speaks about technology in relation to photography and those who use it (1990). He says that the meaning of the use of technology, in this case the camera, must be more than its general picture taking abilities, but include how it works, and also be understood in relation to the users class. This would suggest that children within the field of social technology should have an interest beyond the general function of technology, and should include an interest in how technology works to help children communicate. Children must also recognize social technology and its relationship to their positioning in society. This, I would argue, pertains to children’s search for agency and community in virtual spaces.

Bourdieu’s concept of field is a system that is composed of social positions that are structured by internal power and rules. Technology is an example of a field. He wrote on fashion as a field where he illustrated the role of internal rules. Pierre Bourdieu interprets fashion as a code, allowing for social distinction and differentiation pertaining to taste, social identity, and cultural capital (Pundir, 2007). To understand and operate
within this code effectively one must understand a particular type of knowledge. Fashion is a site of struggle, for Bourdieu it can be characterized by dominating and dominated actors, and new entrants. Technology much like fashion is a site of struggle. Fast changing, always evolving, and not relevant or ‘in’ unless understood quickly. Those that know how to use technology use it effectively, and new innovative users, work to maintain technology as a field with rules. These social agents in the field of technology look to seek the appropriation, conservation, or transformation of these rules. Although youth are largely the digital experts, native to using these devices, technology is still held from youth. Technology, and in particular media as a field, has varied social actors that are positioned differently. This offers an ongoing struggle, particularly between the ‘digital native’ in relation to adults and control. How a field works and operates is more complex than it appears due to various struggles. Technology can be used as a strategic research site, similar to how Bourdieu used sport to understand the human body (Bourdieu & Waquant, 1992, p. 93). Technology, particularly the social, can be used to understand and think about the relationships between embodied experience, organized movement, and the organization of society (Sterne, 2003).

The agency created through virtual spaces and social technology is pertinent to that of membership and inclusion of a particular space or field, similar to how Joanne Finkelstein discusses fashion as a means to prevent individuals from being “ground-down” (Pundir, 2007). She states that, “fashion can be seen as a protection mechanism that gives an individual a sense of membership in a particular group and thus provides an orientation in a society that has lost the markers and attributes which had provided orientation in traditional society” (p. 67). This can be transferred and seen in how
children use social technology to operate in spaces of society that are not so easily navigated by adults, due to implicit rules and notions ‘safe space’. Social technology is thus used as a tool by children to create communities for themselves to operate within. These communities can be understood as places where particular communication with particular membered individuals takes place. Social technology thus, like fashion, gives an individual representation in a particular space, “embodiment of a joint spirit”, and agency (Simmel, 1957).

**Technology And The Internet**

Technology, both digital and in understanding the word in its historical definition; *the application of scientific principles to the improvement of human life* (Brym et al, 2003), is often learned through experiential processes. Technology and children share one characteristic in common that makes them susceptible to this train of thought; both are new. Technology is seen as such when it is doing something that something else was unable to do; it is constantly evolving when it is still serving a purpose either in its new or old form. Children experience newness, in involvement and knowledge in a way different from adults, or arguably more. People of all ages have experiences and evolve, and their knowledge production uses previous understandings to make sense of the present. This process of building onto previous knowledge involves an integration of less elements for a child, because they have had less moments of experience. Thus both technology and children experience rapid change and steep experiential learning curves. Children are updating their understanding and their worldview so frequently, as technology changes rapidly; these changes will inform their identity creation and outlook.

Samuel Morse brought the Telegraph to the world in 1837. Public radio broadcast
began in 1910. Television broadcasts began in the late 1920’s, the first Canadian movie theater opened in 1906, computers were developed in the 1950s and in 1982 the Internet was introduced. Over time, technology and media, and what I am referring to as digital structures, are ever present in daily life. Digital technology is data that uses discrete, real numbers or letter value, as opposed to analogue that uses images, symbols, sounds etc. The term ‘digital technology’ is one used frequently to describe how members in society access media and information, moving on from the once popular term, Information Communication Technology (ICT). Learning the history of the Internet, media and digital technology, will not convert opponents into supporters, but does give context to the changing landscape in media and communication devices we have been exposed to over time. The social implication behind changing technology and communication is the relationship between fixed space and movement. As technology has changed, so has its ability to be mobile. Another social implication of changing media and technology is the power to disseminate information. The power of whom is communicating societal task, which has been discussed by Drotner (1999), has changed and expanded as digital technology and Web 2.0 (interactive digital spaces such as blogs) have become prevalent.

The Internet presents risk. This has been proven through cyber-bullying, and child pornography. However what has not been proved quite so fluidly is whether or not these risks are increased, supported, and/or promoted through Internet use as a child. Sonia Livingstone focuses on the relationship between children and the Internet. Her research looks at 33 European countries and how they participate and are active in relationships between children and Internet use (funded by the European Commission). This research identifies areas which require further research in pertinence to children and
the Internet, emerging trends, and the nature of children’s Internet use to generate
anxiety, complicating the already difficult area of research on children’s activity while in
the home (Livingstone, 2010). In congruence with my inquiry this study looks to better
understand how children use the Internet through speaking with children directly of their
personal experience. Through both qualitative and quantitative approaches Livingstone
has brought to light many of her findings. She strives to understand how young people
“generate and sustain a meaningful sense of themselves and their place in the world in a
communication environment replete with meanings not of their own making”
(Livingstone, 2010). In other words how children come to understand themselves and
their experiences when the experiences around them are no longer passive, but engaging,
encourage innovation and activity, and predominantly come from many other sources
around them. This aligns itself with my research objectives because it demonstrates that
there is more to be said on technology, the Internet, and children. How children come to
understand their experiences when they are constantly in flux and changing, makes this
subject a pertinent one to be in current conversation.

Livingstone entered this domain of research neither a supporter nor adverse to
children’s experience with the Internet. Her inquiring unveiled that there was an
increasing number of youth using the Internet each day. So much so that we are near a
point where one can almost safely say all Western youth are well versed on at least a
daily search. However what Livingstone was looking to find was if the moral panics that
have been created and executed by parents really are rooted in fundamental evidence.
Children may or may not be suffering in their online experiences, but this was never fully
demonstrated. In addition to this, the ‘risks’ of the Internet are evident in both cyber
bullying and pornographic sites, with both the potential for children viewing and being the subject of pedophile profiling. She looks at if these are risks of the Internet, if certain children are at risk more than others, and how this can be both researched and remedied.

There is little argument against the claim that the Internet presents risk and potential threats to children. The four popular areas criticized in computer use in education and childhood is the potential physical, emotional, intellectual and moral hazards at play (Cordes & Miller, 2000). These elements have been picked apart to highlight how computers, and today’s digital technology, have potentially harmful features. There are numerous claims in light of the threat digital technology may instill; typing and losing the conscious realization that letters are appearing and forming words, and that this may decrease the process of learning to read and write, back posture while in front of computer screens, vision impairment and an increase in optometrist visits, as well as stunted imagination, commercial exploitation, more exposure to violence, and more. However like many hazards and threats in society, the fear surrounding them only escalates based on those promoting cynicism and distrust. It is not the technology as a tool that will make a difference, but how it is used by children, appreciated and taught by teachers, and embraced by parents, that will be a key element to its success as a permanent fixture in the future.

In the area of digital technology, if engagement occurs early, there is the potential for more instances of change. Change can occur earlier thus resulting in more instances of transition over time, and because of the increasing flow of actors. Children are accessing technology at age 2-4 meaning we are now graduating ‘digital natives’ every year, possibly changing our environment every 4 – 6 years. This infers that the
technologies being given to youth to learn and use are being changed, developed and re-introduced by the same cohort. Namely this demonstrates that social technology and media is transitioning to be made for youth by youth and reintroduced to work better, stronger, and faster, for the same cohort.

**Social Media**

Throughout her research Sonia Livingstone takes into consideration the life of the child and his/her identity creation. As opposed to looking at the perceived problem, she looks at how the Internet may affect a particular child, is talked about by a child, and understood by a child. She operationalized her work differently in that it considers the child as both an actor and a player, but more specifically, not someone to only do research on, but with. This type of investigation allows for insight on children and childhood identity creation, taking into consideration the experience the child plays in constructing their personal identity outside of social forces. Social technology operates differently from the original chat room in that it encourages deeper activation of latent ties that already exist offline (Haythornwaite, 2005; Valkenburg et. al, 2006; Ellison et. al, 2007). However, even though sites such as Facebook, Skype, and MySpace, do not encourage engagement of relationships with strangers, they are still highly criticized (Peter et. al, 2009). Social technology is particularly interesting to look at with children, because they are operating within a particular field. The field of technology has a lot of back and forth struggle in its understanding and navigation, which puts a large strain on youth. Although there is criticism around social technology and how it may threaten youth, it can serve to foster pre existing relationships, and this is often overlooked within critical technology theories.
Some scholars argue that social networking sites facilitate in the identity construction of children in five ways (Peter et al 2009; Hinduja & Patchin 2008; Lewis et al 2008; Manago et al 2008; Zhao et al 2008; Livingstone & Brake, in press). Because I am looking at how the Internet plays a role in the lives of youth, it is pertinent to look at how scholars have summarized its impact on identity. The ability to use technology for communication and social interaction will have an impact on identity creation. Scholars have found there is an *ease of accessibility* and convenience in accessing these sites to start initial identity exploration. The *user-friendliness* of the sites allows profiles to be created and personalized quickly, something not possible in physical space. One’s profile on a social networking site also offers’ a degree of *controllability in self-presentation*. Additionally, the type of information one includes with their profile can be manipulated to offer a particular type of image, potentially one thought to be more desirable. This works alongside *network management*, where individuals can join particular groups, and find validation in the process of creating their identity. Finally there are *reduced auditory and visual cues* involved in social networking. Without face-to-face communication some information that may not normally be shared in physical space settings is shared, and used in the identity creation process.

As I show later in this thesis through my analysis of the interviews with the students, children use these non-place based spaces, to enhance their identity through creativity. Possibilities are available to youth through these spaces that are largely overshadowed by the surveillance discourse. Identity creation and personal development in creativity are important elements of digital culture. The use of social technology on its own works to further mold ones identity and express a particular lifestyle (Livingstone,
Furthermore, the effort of children and youth to differentiate themselves both within a group and from other groups, displays social networking sites as an expression of adolescents’ efforts in emancipation from parental control (Peter et. al, 2009). Children utilize social technology to further create their own identity. They access virtual spaces because they appear absent from parental control. The use of these spaces enables them to differentiate themselves from adults and parents. However, social technology in actuality can be ripe with parental control and authoritative voice. This binary further creates a field of struggle around social technology and in how children understand and use these spaces.

Over 90% of European youth use the Internet, and according to the Ipsos Canadian Inter@ctive Reid Report, boomers in Canada are starting to rival their youngsters, with 89% using the Internet in comparison to youth at 99% (European Travel Commission, 2013). However, this by no means shows that youth have started to decline their Internet usage. Rather the issue and questions are not around popularity, but rather a shift in how young people’s day-to-day life is executed. Internet use has become a hot topic because of its mass presence. It is clear in numbers that not only the popularity but also the evident evolution of the world wide web, digital and media technologies in everyday lives are not going anywhere. Thus it is important to look at the surveillance discourse surrounding digital technology and decipher what is really being said, and how it, if at all, is affecting children. One could state that the preliminary hype and arousal over digital media has come and gone. We are in a second wave, one where there are both defenders and opponents to what the Internet and digital devices are offering society, and more importantly how they are affecting our children.
There are numerous social media sites working to bring people together, enhance corporate communication and make both business and personal digitally relevant. Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, Pinterest, Four Square, Skype, Instagram, LinkedIn, and tumblr, to name a small handful, have a strong presence amongst Internet users. There is little debate that Facebook has taken the world over with its strong existence worldwide. Launching in February 2004 at Harvard University, Facebook reached over 1 million active users by December 2004, as of September 30th, 2012 they had reached 1 Billion active users, an increase of 26% year over year (Etherington, 2012). Furthermore, the minimum age requirement for Facebook is 13, however this can be bypassed easily by changing the birth year while making an account. Behind social media there is an element of technology and an element of social correspondence and relationships. Throughout this thesis I will frequently refer to this type of social media use and platform as social technology.

Engagement with social technology, as a parent, a teacher, and any ‘regulatory’ adult body is said to be key in helping Internet ‘threat’. Software to support parental control is not going to solve a problem or lessen risky situations, unless it is paired with engagement. Engagement allows deep learning for all parties and an understanding of better practices such as how the social technology works and why. The efficacy of parental controls would foster more reliability if they were monitored, implemented and understood before assuming their ability to monitor children’s activity. In the United Kingdom, Safe Internet Day, which just celebrated its ten-year anniversary, takes much of the country’s responsibility on educating children, parents, and educators. This group offers a wide range of activities in the hopes of educating a wide audience (discussed
further under Analysis). The initiative states that it works to, “develop new educational and awareness raising resources for children, parents, cares’ and teachers to meet emerging trends in the fast-changing online environment”. It is integral to raise awareness on subject matter that is constantly changing, evolving and highly dependent on context, such as the Internet. This connects to my argument in that there needs to be a cognizant shift amongst technology use to move away from fear and surveillance discourse and into a conversation around possibilities.

Social media is a communication tool. It allows for connections and relationships to prosper and live over both space and time. Each platform of social exchange is different in its own way. At the end of the day, there are relationships, emotional, distant, or forced, that have another opportunity to survive and remain current. However these differences are important to consider. Why a child would turn to Facebook over MSN and Skype could infer specific meaning. The presence of the visual in using Skype and MSN, Skype being more popular in today’s context, competes with Facebook’s mainstream interface and popularity, where there is no video chat option. On top of social media use, the type of social media children engage with can also give insight into the popularity of this networking tool in society, and why different platforms impact individuals in different ways.

**Surveillance Discourse**

Discourse around surveillance or moral panic is not something only felt within technology. This type of concern is centered in society, and often situated on something that is already highly contentious or monitored. Both technology and children fall within these parameters. Another factor in the causation of surveillance discourse is change
within law enforcement, and how this affects society’s members and relations, i.e. youth and adults (Cohen, 1973). Moral panic brings to light the question of its creation, how does it get created around media, the Internet, and childhood? Furthermore, investigating what surveillance discourse can do to the broader contribution of childhood is a key point to consider. In the beginning of Cohen’s book, *Folk Devils and Moral Panic* (1973), he outlines moral panic in this way,

“A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is present in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians, and other right thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten except in folk-lore and collective memory at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself” (p. 9).

Although in some cases it does not take long for a moral panic to develop, Stanley Cohen outlines four key agents and dynamics of the process; the mass media, moral entrepreneurs, the control culture and the public.

Cohen communicates that *mass media* is the most important in the creation of the moral panic, or what I see as discourse around surveillance. Mass media is not only an actor in its creation, but helps to maintain its presence as well. In my project I understand the media as the authoritative figures that work to spread and disseminate knowledge on proper navigation for child Internet use. *Mass media* works to shape moral panic and surveillance discourse in three ways: 1) Exaggeration and distortion, of the story 2) prediction, and the failure to act, and 3) symbolization, the words of which are symbolizing for threat. The second component of these key agents was *moral*
entrepreneurs, those that work to exacerbate the story. The third actor is societal control culture, or institutional power (this is parallel to authoritative voice). The final actor is public opinion, in which society makes decisions as to what will cause panic and what will not. Often this is done in reaction to a change in societal relations, law, and enforcement. As well, moral panic can be understood through a reaffirmation of societies morals, for example, children outdoing adults in their technological aptitude, which reaffirms for society that this is wrong, and children should not be ahead of adult culture.

Discourse around surveillance is often shaped out of an issue or occurrence that has been exaggerated to emphasize its more contentious qualities. Although the Internet has been shown to have negative cause and effect on children, it has also been glorified in many ways. The Internet, technology, and social media have been understood as exceptional tools to aid children in education, both children with learning disabilities and without. However, the exaggeration that works to create ‘moral panic’ fixates on the negative and makes it over shadow the positive. A Harvard literature review questioned the warnings being shared on child and Internet safety, and saw them as ‘highly exaggerated’ (Clapton, Cree & Smith, 2012). The Internet Safety Technical Task Force (ISTTF) reviewed studies on Internet use by youth and sexual offending encounters. In one study only two out of the 1,500 surveyed had reported a sexual encounter where there was deceitful action of the offender. In most scenarios youth know what they have subjected themselves to in meeting online acquaintances and that sexual relations are likely involved (Internet Safety Technical Task Force, 2008: Appendix C, p. 15). This is not to say that there is no threat in Internet use and sexual offences on children, but it does demonstrate that moral panics and surveillance discourse tend to exaggerate the
dangers of the phenomena they identify. Clapton, Cree and Smith reference Goode and Ben-Yeudah (1994) in supporting this type of action, “it is a sense that a more sizeable number of individuals are engaged in the behavior in question than actually are”. As mentioned, I do not wish to convey that Internet safety is a non-issue, but through exaggeration and media discourse, the overarching field of the Internet and Social technology is being framed as embedded within a culture of fear. The navigation techniques employed by adults further work to manifest negative surveillance discourse, the ideologies around moral panic and safety and surveillance discourse, and the need for necessary control around the online environment.

Kristen Drotner has examined how we understand dangerous media and some of the media panics that are coming out of this growing framework. She says it actually appears as if it is the press that orchestrates public opinion, in the way they use processes of agenda setting and framing, are working to make the masses feel a certain way (Drotner, 1999). She continues to discuss the beginning of media panics from stating that, “media panic started from the dissemination and distribution of publications, almanacs, and ballads”. This was the beginning of media panic because it presented an area and way to disseminate societal task onto individuals, but also groups. In other words, media gave institutions, politics, and business, a way to inform others on what should be done. When control of the media is lost, so is social control, as the media outlets work to disseminate an overall tone for social action and behaviour. This loss of social control is what is of pertinence to this project. Drotner mentions the writing of Ellen Key titled, *The Century of the Child* (1990), and suggest that this book demonstrates our living in a century that has been marked by the upbringing of children. Within this century children
have become an object in which adults look to have control over, take great interest in
and exude constant concern. With a focus on the wellbeing of children, this type of
mentality can often become socially contagious, leading to overemphasis, exaggeration,
and various panics. The relationship between children and panic is unanimous.
Although Drotner (1999) wrote in the late 90’s, before social media and online safety had
become a prevalent issue, the relationship between moral to media panic, surveillance
discourse, and its impact on children, is parallel. This is evident because “children and
young people are continuously defined as objects and often vulnerable victims” (p. 611).
What children are victim to, relates to the dissemination of societal task, which is
controlled through media, which we have seen evolve from television to hand held and
digital devices.

What We Know Now

Socialization theory and social constructivism demonstrate the ability of structural
forces and institutions to dictate the ways in which spaces are navigated and norms are
understood. Institutions and structure within society all come with a certain degree of
power. This power helps to shape culture and ideology, which are accepted as truth and
rarely challenged. Furthermore children are understood based on this shaping and this
plays a role in the daily navigating practices of parents. Children are working through the
meanings put upon them and the binary of fragile with that of threatening technology.
Bourdieu offers the idea of particular fields as having rules, and the difficulty within
these fields when other agents and factors attempt to penetrate the autonomy of a specific
field. His perception of technology as a participant of fast paced culture and rule
formation speaks to the growing environment of convenience, understanding, and
navigating surveillance. Sonia Livingstone has discussed the impact of the Internet on children in depth. Livingstone positions the discussion of surveillance, safety, and risk around the Internet, as not a consequence of the Internet itself, but possibly relational to the child as well. She does this by researching the participants using the Internet, i.e. the child, and some of their unique qualities. Where we blame the Internet for the problems being created, we rarely discuss with children personally, who identify that they feel threatened by the Internet, and some personal traits of these individuals. In relation to this there is plentiful data and research in regards to identity construction, social media, and virtual spaces, and consequentially its active role in the lives of youth. After looking at the various ideologies around childhood, field, and the Internet, it was important to understand the presence and creation of moral panic and surveillance discourse ideology. The media has played an important role in the creation of moral panic and surveillance discourse, and they have done so by taking on the role of disseminating societal task.

This chapter brings in the five main components to my inquiry. I have looked at Children and Childhood, Bourdieu, Field and Technology, Technology and the Internet, Social Media, and Surveillance Discourse. Together these five elements link between one another to illustrate the following analysis and discussion on the experience of children on the Internet using social technology, the conceptualized field as threatening, and the ways in which we are disseminating navigating this field. Digital technology is a site of struggle in which children and adults are engaged and have different attributes. The concept of moral panic through surveillance discourse also develops into one of safety and control. This chapter speaks to my research question by looking at the key theories behind my key concepts and theoretical frameworks. I seek to answer the
question of how children are using social technology and if they find it fearful. These frameworks are important in building the firm foundation of this project for discussion and analysis.
Chapter Three: Methodology

This project aims to explore the idea of surveillance discourse in a context where kids are actively engaged with the Internet. I argue that this relationship between childhood and children’s active engagement with social technology is displayed similarly to moral panic, through a discourse of surveillance. In addition, I argue that this is manifested by the presence of authoritative figures offering education on the proper way to use the Internet. To approach my study I draw upon the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter Two, surrounding, Children and Childhood, Bourdieu and Field, Technology and the Internet, Social Media, and Surveillance Discourse.

There are questions around whether children are aware of the multiple components to technology more so than adults because they were born into a world where their ‘nature’ was of the digital – where as for their elders it must be learned (Savigar, 2001). Savigar questions whether or not the dispositions of children towards digital technology are partly unconscious as they have been acquired early on and developed implicitly through prolonged exposure and socialization. The reality is that in Western society, an overwhelming majority of youth has access to the Internet either at school, or a public institution such as the library. I will use the key themes discussed in Chapter Two (listed above) as an overall framework to engage with sentiments like Savigars and the overall argument of this project. By building upon these themes I have outlined a direction in which I will analyze the data of interviews and the websites.

I chose to analyze the data in the project by looking at the elements of social constructivism and history in Children and Childhood and Digital Technology. An
understanding of these two themes allows me to look at particular contextualization’s within the data. Understanding the history of Social Media and its relevance for communication allows this project to make sense of the data from a communication and interaction perspective. By combining insight into Bourdieu’s work on his concept of field, this project is able to understand how the realm of technology can be conceptualized as a player in society with different entry points and social actors. Finally, knowledge on Surveillance Discourse and the components of moral panic allow this project to further understand how the notion of control and safety can be an integral piece in the communication of policy and social order. This analysis is built upon the above themes, which have provided both historical, theoretical, and present day knowledge around the sociology of childhood, technology, and communication.

I intend on presenting information that showcases children’s engagement with social technology for the purpose of communication and virtual mobility, as well as how websites educating children and parents on social technology use, represent them as threatening and problematic. Using two sets of data, interviews with children and a thematic content analysis of authoritative websites, I have outlined the discrepancies in these two experiences. I have organized my interview data through a table outlining the students, who they were interviewed with, and the important conversations present in the interviews. I used four of the main websites that were generated from a general search engine on ‘Children and technology/Internet’. I read the About Us and Home pages for themes and language use that spoke to the overall ideology of the group or foundation. Through this methodological strategy I was looking to answer questions surrounding how children’s use of social technology is portrayed through surveillance discourse, or as a
moral panic, how navigating surveillance discourse was communicated, and how children spoke about their experience with social technology through interviews surrounding mobility, specifically virtual.

**Methodology**

*Data Collection - Websites*

The interview data is used to understand activity and purpose behind children’s engagement with, and use of, social technology. My other source of data for this project comes from an investigation of popular child Internet safety sites geared towards parents and educators, and what they say regarding the ‘proper’ approach towards the Internet. Childnet.com, commonsensemedia.org, webwisekids.com, and getsafeonline.org, are the four websites I focus on. Childnet.com and commonsensemedia.org operate out of the United States, and webwisekids.com, and getsafeonline.org operate out of the United Kingdom. These sites serve an authoritative function by offering free advice on the ‘how to’ of Internet safety. These sites were in the top 10 search results in Google for word searches of, “internet and children”, and “children and social media”. I wish to analyze the discourse used in disseminating information on this subject. I do recognize that the sites first seen in Google Search, go through a sponsor and bid system and this must be noted when considering the public voice of these sites. Through looking at these sites, their main approach, About us, and Mission Statement pages, I identify how they frame the Internet and children, and the tone of the overall site.

Using sites that try to instruct how to operate the Internet properly and effectively is beneficial in understanding the language used in spreading this information. Understanding the approach of theses texts shows how the discourse around Internet
safety, risk, threat, as well as positive aspects of the Internet, are framed. I approach these websites as texts for analysis on the mainstream approach to the above issues. By conceiving of these texts as data that informs the greater society, I interrogate their position as an informed resource and if it is visible in how children discuss their use of social technology. Comparatively, I look at what the children have said in relation to what does not appear in these texts, and the greater literature on the topic of social technology use.

Working from a social constructivist model I analyze how the discourse surrounding safety and the Internet implies circumstances that are assumed to exist, and how they do not take into account possible differing context. Social constructivism looks at how the social plays a roll in knowledge development. Although this landscape is changing rapidly, knowledge around how the Internet is used during childhood is often something ‘taken for granted’ and assumed to be known and understood, but not accepted. Particularly the analysis of these sites and children pertain to Gredler’s work (1997). He states that social constructionists’ believe that “the signs and symbols developed by a particular culture and the child’s interaction in learning these symbols are essential in developing…higher mental functions”. These signs and symbols would thus be understood as the language and ideology that culture contributes to the Internet. Furthermore that a child’s interaction with these negative relations of Internet symbols would shape their cognitive ideas around it.

Data Collection - Interviews

In researching the relationship between the Internet and children, Sonia Livingstone used both Qualitative and Quantitative research methods to collect data. In
doing this, she had the opportunity to talk with children about their experiences.
Likewise, this project looks at interviews with children, and analyzes how they responded to the question, “how do you use technology”? The interviews come from a three-year study (funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, D. Farmer, P. I. 2009-2012) and were conducted in 2011 at a minority French language school in Southern Ontario. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured, open, interview protocol. The overall study was composed of 60 students and 125 participants, who included school principals, teachers, parents, and students. I looked at one class where, thirty-four students were interviewed on topics about, language, representations of a “globalized world” and their location and aspirations. These topics are looked at as students co-construct multiple meanings associated to life experiences, especially within the new contexts around a globalized world. Although this research as a whole was conducted using a multi-method approach, including group interviews, photography, and reflexive drawing, I will be focusing on the portion of the interviews where the children were directly asked about their experiences with technology and continue to engage in conversation on the topic.

The data being used in this thesis comes from a large study. Overall it looked at 4 different classes in 2 French language schools. I worked on this project as a Graduate Assistant at the University of Toronto in the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. My responsibilities were varied but predominately I spent time re-reading, transcribing and editing the interviews that had been conducted by other members of the research team. The study participants included children, parents, teachers, and school
administrators at the two schools. The majority of the interviews were conducted in French, however some were performed in English. Particular elements struck me throughout the analysis of the children’s interviews, their stories, dialogue, and presentations of their worlds, both in individual interviews and with peers. Asking children directly about their social technology use is relatively new and raw interview dialogue with children can be very rich. One of my most noteworthy thoughts was how little students appeared to emphasize their social technology use, which I will address in Chapter 5. Children were asked, “I would like to know how you use or if you use technology in your free time at home, for example for communicating with others, because this is a research project on (your) mobility” (English Gloss, interview 2_2b2p2q2r_L.doc: “J’aimerais ca savoir comment vous utilisez ou est ce que vous utilisez les technologies dans vos temps libres a la maison, par exemple pour communiquer avec les autres, parce que c’est un travail sur la mobilité?”).

My analysis will focus on the conversations with children and their response to the initial question of technology use, and their follow up comments as well. The interviews range from 2-5 participants. I am looking to outline the trends of technology use, specifically in relation to social technology, such as Facebook, MSN, and Skype, which at times are referred to within the dialogue by the interviewer. I wish to assess the frequency and popularity of these social technologies and how the children discuss their use.

As suggested earlier, I use conversations with children to work from a perspective that is with children rather than on them. I analyze how children speak about technology because it gives me insight into how they place it within their daily life, both at home and
school space. The purpose of doing this in my research is to sense the type of tone and dialogue children make with technology. By focusing on how technology is discussed I gain insight into how it is being used. If children are talking positively and frequently about technology use this will inform my findings in one way. If the participants talk in passing about it, this can infer one of two things. Either technology is not important to them in a great way and it does not impact their day-to-day greatly. Or, it could infer that technology is so deeply routed in their day-to-day that they do not see it as deserving of active discussion. These findings are discussed in my analysis.

I read the interviews solely for the portion on technology. I looked for words that present a positive or negative outlook on the technology use. By examining the authoritative websites first, I developed a sense of language that was used to convey negative and positive ideology around technology and the Internet. This helped to inform my ability to analyze the student transcripts and interpret their statements as having a positive or negative affiliation. Furthermore, while reading the transcripts I recorded which social media sites are used. This produced a table depicting how many students use which sites. Additionally I identified which students not only use social technology, but if they specifically mention its use for communication. These tables demonstrate the overall use of grade 4-6 students with social technology, and if the children have identified their use of the technology for communication practices.

It was important for me to engage with the interviews and analysis with particular attention to social technology. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning they were open-ended questions looking for dialogue. Because the surveillance discourse centered on technology is rooted in communication, these interviews are pertinent for analysis.
They were done with the intent on learning about communication strategies of young people in relation to mobility, and contain conversations around Skype, MSN, and Facebook. The purpose of investigating children’s descriptions of their use of the Internet for these purposes is to demonstrate how they understand and offer explanation of their use. In these discussions I am looking for evidence of access or restriction in using these sites either from physical barriers, or social barriers, such as parental control.

Qualitative interviewing comes equipped with certain rationales and logic. There are benefits to the somewhat informal style of semi-structured interviews as they allow for conversation and discussion. In particular while working with children, the ability to engage in a discussion as opposed to strict question and answer format may facilitate an easier exchange of information. Through interviews I gained knowledge about children’s accounts and experiences through direct conversations with them. This would suggest that my ‘ontological position of children’s knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of social reality which the research questions aim to explore’ (Mason, 2001).

The student interviews analyzed in this study were of children in grades 4 to 6 in a French language school in Southern Ontario. The participants represented their own stories through open dialogue and willingness to engage. Overall, engaging in conversation with children is a way of displaying your care for their opinions and feelings. Additionally by utilizing techniques, and tools such as interviews or focus groups and artistic modes of inquiry, the students involved feel competent and not reduced to an object of study.

The school used in the study was an inner city French Public School in Southern
Ontario. The School has a large transnational community, particularly a large Arabic population. Many of the children in the study were born in Canada but have transnational family ties elsewhere, as well as having brothers and sisters that were born in other countries. This is an important concept in my exploration of the data. The use of social technologies has a large impact on the ability to increase communication, and this has great relevance for families with transnational ties.

Engaging with children must be done with knowledge of generational differences without conforming to ideologies of ageism. One could argue that one major grouping, and important divide in society, is that between adults and children, and adults organize this grouping and division. This division often goes unnoticed in regards to how it is constructed, the structural intersections, and consequential oppression of children. As previously mentioned, and here further argued by Mayall (2008), “children’s daily lives and thus childhood as an institution are structured by adult views of how those lives should be lived and of what childhood is” (p. 109). As adults have taken places in society and made rules, constrictions, privileges, allowances, and rights that pertain to children, the generation gap is an important aspect to this research. Some argue that it is comparable to gender in research on women’s issues in social order (Mayall, 2008). Research with children must consider how they are seen in society outside of this specific project, but generally as well

The following chapter will discuss what this project refers to as ‘authoritative websites’, by conducting a thematic content analysis. Two of the websites operate out of the United States and two of the websites operate out of the United Kingdom. I will begin by discussing the two U.S. websites, commonsensemedia.org and webwisekids.com,
because of their proximity to Canada and nature to report on similar programming. Commonsensemedia.org offers control mechanisms for parents, where as webwisekids.com offers a program based model for instructing on Internet use for children. The remaining two sites are operated out of the U.K. and titled, getsafeonline.org, and childnet.com. Getsafeonline.org is unique in that it has a broad focus on Internet safety and navigation, not only a sole focus on children. I complete my analysis of the websites by looking at childnet.com, which offers a different perspective by showcasing positive elements of the Internet before the negative.

The approaches listed above have shaped the way the data will be presented in the following analysis in Chapter Four and Five. This project will first analyze what the project refers to as ‘authoritative websites’ in Chapter Four. Chapter Five follows with an analysis of what this project refers to as ‘authoritative websites’. The analysis will present information that showcases how websites educating children and parents on social technology use, represent them as needing a discourse of surveillance, as well as children’s engagement with social technology for the purpose of communication and virtual mobility. Through working with a thematic content analysis of the four selected websites and interviews with children, I am able to look at some of the emerging themes coming out of the conversation around children on the Internet. This methodological approach supports my argument that children not only use social media for positive communication, but that the negative ideologies around safety on the Internet are largely communicated through a discourse of surveillance. By completing both a thematic content analysis on authoritative websites, as well as an analysis of interviews with children, I am able to engage with my research questions, focusing on how children and
parents navigate the attached surveillance discourse to social technology used by children.
Chapter Four:
Analysis: Childhood and Social Technology

This project focuses on two different sets of data to analyze childhood Internet use and how it is both framed and understood. Chapter Four will analyze the mission statements and About Us pages from four authoritative websites, which discuss safe Internet use for children. I understand these sites to be authoritative both internally and externally. Internally these sites convey messages that instruct on what to do and what not to do on the Internet. This positions themselves within a domain of authoritative ability, where they have carved out a place for themselves as a knowledge source. Externally, these websites present themselves as authoritative because of their ties and promotion through outsides sources, such as the Government. The following analysis in this chapter outlines my working assumption of the positive and negative language used to frame the arguments surrounding this domain, the tone projected, and what underlining messages are disseminated from each site. I use positive and negative as a form of analysis for language to gauge context and positioning, rather than from a moral perspective. This language indicators are used to direct my understanding of the websites and what messages they are projecting. Following Chapter Four, Chapter Five looks at the interviews conducted with children and their response to technology and social media use. Chapter Five focuses on the language the children use to describe their use of the Internet and technology, and how they frame their activity, as negative or positive, as well as engrained daily movement, so far that it is seen as causing little effect on their life.
The Voice Of Authority

I engaged with four sites that provide an authoritative voice on how to navigate the Internet. These sites present the struggle that is housed within technology-use by children. The knowledge on operating the Internet and navigating virtual spaces is often offered through a top-down model, adults over youth. Within the field of technology, there is the potential for adults to have a hold over youth, rules, and imposed ways of navigation that offer the idea and emphasize the notion that the child is fragile. Because of the context surrounding the ‘digital native’, and fast changing nature of technology, the adult or parent may not be in direct control with the social technology being used by youth. As mentioned in Chapter Two in my discussion on Social Media and Technology, youth enter spaces of social technology for ease of communication, through creativity and potentially through performance. Although most adults and parents are not entering these spaces with their children, both parents and children are integrated with the use of technology, and parents should not be understood as technological dupes. These authoritative sites help to reinforce the fragility of children, the censorship of the Internet, and how creating and implementing these sites exacerbate the characterization of Internet use by children as something in need of surveillance discourse. In line with Cohen, these sites take the role of institutionalizing power through what he calls a societal control culture. Approaching these sites I chose to analyze commonsensemedia.org first because of its stronger known presence in Canada in relation to its close presence from the United States, and reports on similar programming. Through this these sites offer rules and ideology around control mechanisms for parents. My project however argues that children are using the Internet in a positive way. I also demonstrate through conversations
with study participants that parents are not communicating a fear of social technology onto their children. I then discuss webwisekids.com, another US based site. This site operates on a program-based model and as a follow up to commonsensemedia.org, displays some of the ways Internet use is being ‘instructed’. Moving forward, the remaining two sites are based in the United Kingdom. I look at getsafeonline.org next as they have a broad scope of where they discuss Safe Internet. Their section on children is titled *Safeguarding Children* and they open this section by stating children likely know more about Internet use than adults. I close with my analysis of childnet.com. This site advertises itself as global and tied to various global organizations. Childnet.com are unique in that the positive attributes of the Internet they discuss are positioned before the negative aspects. This site was also unique in its promotion of safeinternetday.com

*Commensemedia.org*

Commensemedia.org operates out of San Francisco, California. The research and publications on Commensemedia.org website are from Commensemedia.org in house research analysts, freelance researchers, and private research consulting firms in the United States. The team is composed of a long list of Board of Advisors and Board of Directors, from various areas such as the Mayor of the city of Los Angeles, the Director of GAP Inc. and a Professor from the School of Education at Stanford, to name a few. At commensemedia.org their mission statement is, “Common Sense Media is dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing the trustworthy information, education, and independent voice they need to thrive in a world of media and technology”. The site’s text states that it is needed to provide this service to children because without it there would be further worry. This site offers that, without their
services, kids would not have the necessary tools to thrive in a world of media and technology. This develops their arguments that adults do not see technology as a field where children are wise enough to operate on their own. The site says that they exist because of the increasing engagement that children and youth have with digital culture. Through this they recognize that there is an impact on various areas of their life.

“Children spend more time with media and digital activities than they do with their families or in school, which profoundly impacts their social, emotional, and physical development”. What is assumed is that this impact on social, emotional, and physical development, is negative, and their authoritative voice helps towards the ‘thriving’ abilities during childhood. Their recognition of the impact of technology on various areas of childhood life could be understood as a space for positive impact. This aligns to my argument that social technological spaces can be used for positive communication practices among youth.

Commensensemedia.org says they offer trustworthy information on these issues, inferring that other outlets and initiatives do not. Their tone also offers that that there is a need to be skeptical of the information you are receiving on how to navigate the Internet in regards to surveillance. This process of disseminating information further helps to show how there is a body of knowledge that believes there is a need for concern around how children navigate the internet, additionally how parents and adults both understand this navigation and try to facilitate it. They state 10 core beliefs:

1) We believe in media sanity, not censorship.

2) We believe that media has truly become "the other parent" in our kids' lives, powerfully affecting their mental, physical, and social development.

3) We believe in teaching our kids to be savvy, respectful and responsible media interpreters, creators, and communicators. We can’t cover their eyes but we
can teach them to see.

4) We believe parents should have a choice and a voice about the media our kids consume and create. Every family is different but all need information.

5) We believe that the price for free and open media is a bit of extra homework for families. Parents need to know about the media their kids use and need to teach responsible, ethical behavior as well as manage overall media use.

6) We believe that through informed decision-making, we can improve the media landscape one decision at a time.

7) We believe appropriate regulations about right time, right place, and right manner exist. They need to be upheld by our elected and appointed leaders.

8) We believe in age-appropriate media and that the media industry needs to act responsibly as it creates and markets content for each audience.

9) We believe ratings systems should be independent and transparent for all media.

10) We believe in diversity of programming and media ownership.

The beliefs stated in this list demonstrate that commonsensemedia.org assume that parents need to take a bigger role in monitoring and controlling the media and technology in the lives of youth. They also demonstrate their beliefs that there is a right and a wrong way of navigating space, by instructing on what to do and what not to do in relation to surveillance and control. Consequentially, commonsensemedia.org infers that although there may be positive attributes to what technology and media are capable of, it is in our hands to operationalize this ‘properly’. This not only puts additional pressure onto parents to think about the possibility for surveillance and control, but it takes away from the initial engagement of parents that could be supportive and integrative. This narrative around anxiety with technology, children, and control, clouds itself as an issue of policy.

Two of their statements are framed as ‘aids’ in this navigation process, and an asset to what already exists. They do not say they are trying to change the landscape, but innovate upon it. The two beliefs that support this are seen below,
1) We believe in media sanity, not censorship.

2) We believe in teaching our kids to be savvy, respectful and responsible media interpreters, creators, and communicators. We can’t cover their eyes but we can teach them to see.

They work a realm of navigation instead of change. This is twofold because it displays that there is not a complete trust in a child's ability to understand how to use social technology, and digital media, it also demonstrates that there is, one right way to use these devices, which is relative and complex. However, commonsensemedia.org is not trying to change the Internet and digital spaces. They demonstrate their acceptance of how society and its landscapes have gone through significant changes over the last several decades, and embracing their benefits would be more beneficial than ridding their presence.

**Webwisekids.com**

At webwisekids.com, their slogan is, “wisdom begins with you”. The website is based in the United States and has operated for ten years. They position themselves as a knowledge base and leader to demonstrate to children how to operate the Internet safely. Web wise is structured as a program more so than an authoritative voice. They maintain throughout their mission statement that they wish to help kids flourish, achieve their full potential, and manage issues in relation to Internet use. Through their program model they communicate through surveillance discourse and control.

**Webwisekids.com** has one approach that makes them unique to other organizations. They state their approach as a “hands-on, minds-on’ approach to education by offering challenging and realistic digital games that have been specifically designed to assist young people to evaluate their online activities and experiences, and
take appropriate actions to stay safe online”. This organization does not deter Internet use, but states it is a first step in accepting ‘digital native’ culture and Internet use. Sites advertising for engagement and innovation by youth or with youth on the computer, demonstrate an acceptance of the capabilities’ it encompasses, as well as the ability and acceptance for youth navigation. *Webwisekids.com* recognizes that online games are an effective way of reaching children, and connecting with them. This is interesting connection because games are often associated with play or juvenile quality. However, connecting with children in a realm of digital games demonstrates that adults are equally able to ‘come-up’ to the level of children, as opposed to seeing this as playing down. Adult’s ability to learn about the game culture youth participate in, how to operate/navigate with in it as subscribed by youth, and what is successful in order to succeed at making a pertinent, useful tool for children, corresponds to Internet safety.

*Webwisekids.com* positions the Internet as a nation. Much like the term ‘digital native’ has come to position children as the natural born actors to operate the field of digital technology, this authoritative site recognizes the Internet as an important space and field that has its own rules. The website states, “*Simulations that demonstrate the importance of digital citizenship and allow students the opportunity to witness the consequences of poor online choices are an integral component of all our programs*”. Through this language the website communicates that the Internet is a viable space where one can be a *citizen*. However they simultaneously infer that there are consequences if they do not act as appropriate citizens. This type of control over particular fields in relation to childhood works to demonstrate the attempt of other actors to govern. It is important to recognize that this is not unique to parents, but unique actors and adults from
various fields. This is similar to how Bourdieu explains fashion as a site of struggle, where some know better how to ‘play the game’ or operate, and fashion then becomes subject to new rules. This change in rules dictates how the game is played. Teaching children how to act as appropriate citizens in a digital landscape is how adults and authoritative voices work to implement control. However, this implies that the ‘control’ pursued comes in the shape of a surveillance discourse or at the extreme, moral panic. Stanley Cohen (1973) outlines this type of control culture behavior, and how authoritative websites (media) work to promote moral panic and surveillance discourse, he does this in stating four crucial elements to moral panic formation as follows; “the mass media, moral entrepreneurs, the control culture and the public. Most important are the mass media. Hence, the emphasis on ‘understanding’ the role of the mass media” (p. 17). The moral panic is both created and fed by the people who fear it most. Discourse around surveillance is the first step in the creation of the moral panic. Something that is misunderstood, such as the childhood expertise of digital media, is better understood when those trying to understand it frame it as something dangerous in which they can then attempt to control.

Getsafeonline.org

This site is based in the United Kingdom and offers advice on Internet and technology related mediums in addition to youth culture. They focus on a variety of areas including Internet fraud, virus care, business finance, shopping, gaming, and online dating. They also cater to physical devices such as smartphones, or the I-Pad. Additionally, this website updates news and tips relational to digital media such as new applications, and what is working and what is not. They further work to create the voice
of an authoritative presence in promoting other news sources, working to demonstrate their alliance with other similar thinkers.

On their Safe Guarding children page, the first statement line visible reads, “Children and young people are likely to be equally or more advanced Internet users than their parents”. This demonstrates that there is a widespread awareness of ‘digital natives’, and the cognitive abilities of children to operate technology. I use the word ‘operate’ because the line which follows this on the website states the following, “However, being proficient in technology does not mean they have the life-experience and wisdom to handle all of the situations they encounter”. This implies that although children can mechanically use these devices, they must learn the proper way to do so, and because of limited life-experience, this must be taught. Furthermore, this statement demonstrates that what some adults have experienced and constructed as ‘wisdom’ or safety, is what this site believes children should be taught in regards to issues around surveillance discourse and online engagement.

The heading Safeguarding children, takes on a discourse with these above attitudes and ideologies. Without further elaboration, this heading infers to the reader that the information found on the site will help ‘protect’ the child, that children need protecting in this area and that this space requires discourse around surveillance. What this site does do is facilitate education for adults and parents. They suggest ways to ‘protect’ the child, such as learning the language of chat rooms, teaching youth about privacy, creating a family e-mail account, and setting limits on computer use for play versus work. They do not list ways which children can use the existing structure of the Internet as is, as a means of learning social communication and navigation. They list
many different pieces of advice, but what is most notable, is their introduction to this list. 

*GetSafeOnline.org* states, “*remember that these factors will change as children grow up and should be reconsidered regularly*”. This statement communicates that children are developing and absorbing new information. The site effectively reinforces the idea that children are human becoming’s and not human beings, which is consistent with Ritchie and Kollar (1964) as previously discussed in the social construction of children. This states a false opposition by inferring children are not mature and that adults are mature. Both children and adults are developing in their maturity and experience, and this is not only unique to the child demographic. Society has created ‘safe spaces’, deeming particular spaces, unsafe. The labeling of space has been done in response to the surveillance discourse around the Internet and social technology, constructing a need for control. If children were looked at as participants in society, it could be argued that there would be fewer attempts for control. The need for control has come out of a surveillance discourse that largely clouds what may be a policy conversation or not. *GetSafeOnline.org* is unique to recognize that there are changes of behavior and knowledge based on experience, which the site frames as age. At the same time the site frames youth as needing surveillance and protection, they also recognize the ability for change. They state that the rules and advice must be *reconsidered regularly*, this supports my argument that the field of technology is one of a fast changing culture.

*Childnet.com*

*Childnet.com* is also operated within the United Kingdom, although it presents itself as an international organization. They state they work in partnership with similar agents around the world to make the Internet a safe place for children. They work to
communicate early on that their site aims to access the Internet safety domain with a balanced approach, before noting negative outcomes of the Internet. They do this by stating the following, “we have sought to promote the positive and highlight the creative and inspiring ways children and young people are using the medium for good”.

They focus in three main areas, Access, Awareness, and Protection and Policy. They wish for children to access the Internet constructively, and help children become aware of new literacy skills in a digital age. The Protection and Policy is focused more on exploitation and policy surrounding new technology. Again in their Values and Ethos section of the website they mention balance. Unlike most other sites centered on children and Internet safety that focus on the negative, this site puts the positive and glorification of Internet first. This works to promote the field of technology as a viable tool in childhood, as well as helps to strip some of the negative connotations, which are attached to digital technology and the Internet. Childnet.com also works to maintain the rights of the child at the forefront of their organization and supports the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. While performing new research, or implementing new programs, they consult children and young people directly. By doing this they are enforce children as human beings, by performing research and implementing new practices with children instead of on them.

Childnet.com still communicates the need for safety. They are associated with Safer Internet Day (http://www.saferinternetday.org) a day to promote safer and more responsible use of online technology and mobile phones. The event began in the EU in 2004 and has since been taken over by Insafe Network, and spread to over 90 countries. It is evident in reading over the website, their sole concern is safety on the Internet. The
wording of ‘safe’, is repeated throughout the website, inferring there is something ‘unsafe’ that needs remedying. The website discussed many of its affiliates which made the authority presence strong, but its interest in child safety, in relation to the actual child’s wellbeing, much less. By identifying their lineage with other organizations they appear well connected and legitimized in their claims and program structure. Their initiative is to spread awareness of the issues around Internet safety. They wish to educate on this issue in addition to increasing people’s knowledge. There is no balance in their self-advertising of the benefits or positive aspects of the Internet. Therefore they disseminate a one sided story that increases the surveillance discourse and themes around moral panic.

The analysis of these websites has brought to light the domination of negative discourses around online safety and childhood. How authoritative figures disseminate their programs, frameworks, and mission statement is often focused on protection and defense. This is troubling because it does not allow for positive frameworks to come through. Negative aspects of online engagement by children are displayed before positive aspects. When the positive aspects are alluded to, such as engagement with technology in order to promote ‘hands on – minds on’ ways of learning, they do not receive the same impact because of what came before them. What can we begin to think about going forward, in terms of moral panic and online safety? There is a large proponent of these authoritative sites which frame online safety as negative. This issue is directed towards children, a social group that has been framed as different from adults, and fragile. This begins to inform my research on problematizing the navigation of surveillance and online safety because of its agenda setting and framing aspects. My
findings discuss the relationship between the ideas surrounding the understanding of engagement with the Internet and the real time application with the Internet by children. The findings from this content analysis of websites instruction on how to use the Internet are analyzed in comparison to how the Internet is being used.

I am using surveillance discourse as a means of discussing the ideologies around control and safety. Stanley Cohen, referenced in the Literature Review, outlined four ways moral panic is created. Before there is a moral panic, there is surveillance discourse; this is what we are seeing around social technology, the Internet, and children. His four defining features of surveillance discourse are the mass media, moral entrepreneurs, control culture, and the public. The elements are seen in the above analysis of authoritative websites. The mass media is represented by the existence of these websites, and as Cohen states, the continuation and persistence of this surveillance discourse conversation. The moral entrepreneurs are the individuals and organizations controlling the websites, helping to exacerbate the stories. The control culture is illustrated through the discourse on the websites, one of protection and surveillance. The final feature of surveillance discourse outlined by Cohen, is the public. The public is the audience of these websites, continuing the ability for these websites to exist, but excluding conversation and dialogue. Understanding Cohen’s position that there is a process towards the creation of moral panic, and therefore surveillance discourse, informs next steps for thinking forward. By taking into consideration the four creation practices I have analyzed the websites as if they are presenting a series of information. When I engaged in this content analysis I have looked to see how my understanding of the Internet was being transformed through a process, similar to Cohen’s four steps in the
creation of moral panic, and for the purpose of the project, surveillance discourse.

This chapter outlines one side of data inquiry for my project and plays a key role in contrasting the representations of online safety. In Chapter Five I will look at the interviews done with students which asked the questions, “how do you use technology, do you use Facebook or Skype?” These two chapters will allow my project to answer the questions pertaining to its inquiry around the navigation of surveillance, virtual space, and childhood.
Chapter Five:
Analysis: Interviews with Children and Youth

The purpose of the following section is to look at the interviews that were conducted with students through an exploratory inquiry on their experience of mobility. More specifically this chapter discusses virtual mobility, a key concept in the lives of local, migrant, and transnational families. The previous chapter examined websites that spoke to the Internet and suggested ways for parents and children to navigate it. The interviews with children bellow, allow me to better understand how social technology is used by youth. Youth can use social technology for a variety of practices, such as, empowering their virtual mobility. These interviews are also used to explore if and how children feel negatively towards social technology because of their perceptions of the surrounding surveillance discourse. These interviews are an important component of this research as it unveils how children feel about the Internet when asked directly.

The following analysis is based on data collected through a SSHRC research project. I analyze ten group interviews, ranging from 2 to 5 participants per interview, with thirty-four students in total. The interview responses were not greatly detailed but did give insight into how the students conceive technology and used the Internet socially. I primarily looked for their social media use and how they described either its presence or lack there of in their lives. The interviews show that media with a social element, does not have to ascribe to the definitive title social media. I also wished to look at how the students described their positive or negative view of the Internet. I was interested in correlations between student and parent and if through conversations with children the views of their parents on social technology were put forth. The research material from the
SSHRC project was useful for my inquiry because it created context. This context opened
up an area to discuss the construction of children alongside the discussion of social
technological practices from the perspective of children. With this research I could
understand children’s perspective of social media, in order to contrast it to the analysis I
conducted of authoritative website. Additionally, it did this in a space where transnational
ties were strong, giving a good insight into aspects of communication. I used two sets of
data, the websites and interviews, in order to support my key themes of Children and
Childhood, Technology and the Internet, Social Media, and Surveillance Discourse, as
outlined in Chapter Two.

The children involved in the SSHRC project spoke a variety of languages, had
lived in various countries, and participated in diverse activities both at school and outside
of school. The students were excited to be participating in this research. They shared
stories about home life and school life giving an interesting look into the lives of children
in a French Southern Ontario Elementary school. Listening to the interviews both for my
own inquiring and working on the original SSHRC project, gave me the opportunity to
engage with the children’s encounters of day to day life, moving from home to school,
and the time in between. The students emphasized stories about their siblings and
families. Many of the children spoke three languages. The language spoken at school,
French, was often not the language spoken at home.

The interviews were performed in groups with two to five children. Information
gathered on each student was analyzed individually but took into consideration the group
setting. The interviews I engaged with were based off of interviews that were part of a
larger research project. Within that research project and earlier interviews, the students
participated in an activity, which consisted in creating their own visual language portrait. The language portraits were created by each student in response to the statement: “Je dessine sur ma silhouette les langues et les cultures qui m’habitent, qui me branchent”. The English language translation being; “I draw on my silhouette languages and cultures that connect me” (Farmer, 2012). The language portraits were used as a reflexive biographical tool to support the children in making sense of their mobile reality, which included the virtual. For the overall study, the language portraits were used as a tool for reflective inquiry. As a first step in the overall study, the language portraits played a key role in introducing the students to the project. The interviews that followed were an opportunity for the students to expand their ideas and reflections from the language portrait exercise. The students varied in their extensity in the interviews, but overall were engaged and appeared excited and willing to communicate their feelings towards the questions.

The following table displays how the student interview data was organized\(^1\). The participants were coded and analyzed conscious of grade, either 4/5 or 5/6. When I was reading the interviews I became very familiar with each student, their background, first language, second language, household breakdown, and favorite hobbies. All of the information informed my analysis of these interviews. The file name of both the language portrait and interview were recoded in this table for purpose of reference when analyzing the transcripts. The codes were used to distinguish which student participated in which group for interviewing, and if there was any cross over in other interviews that

\^[1] The interviews were recorded by assigning each student with a letter. Each school where
were used in the overall SSHRC project. ‘Tech use’, as a column illustrates the student’s initial response to the question, “Do you use technology?” An ‘x’ symbolizes a student’s immediate response as ‘yes’ and ‘xx’ symbolized ‘no’. I proceeded to code for ‘Social media use’ mentioned by the students in the interview. The use and description of use of social media sites is noted in the table displayed below.

**Table Outlining Participants and Social Media Use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Language Portrait Files</th>
<th>Tech Use</th>
<th>Social Media Site</th>
<th>Word Use/ Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2a_L 2_2a2c2d2e_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB/ Hotmail/ Yahoo</td>
<td>Can use Internet at school but nothing violent-Demonstrate this engrained fear / has a lot of tech. at home/ looks for word translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2b_L 2_2b2p2q2r_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>MSN/ FB/ Hotmail/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2c_L 2_2a2c2d2e_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Skype/ FB</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2d_L 2_2a2c2d2e_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB</td>
<td>Internet Play Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2e</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2e_L 2_2a2c2d2e_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB</td>
<td>Changed a lot of schools- maintains connection with various friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2f</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2f_L 2_2f2h2m2t_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2h</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2h_L 2_2f2h2m2t_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2j</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2j_L 2_2j2n2o_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Skype/ MSN</td>
<td>Skype with Grandma in Yemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2k</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2k_L 2_2k2l_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Hotmail/MSN</td>
<td>Has to be bigger to have FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2l</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2l_L 2_2k2l_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Hotmail/MSN</td>
<td>*Has to be bigger to have FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2m</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2m_L 2_2f2h2m2t_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB/ MSN</td>
<td>computer isn’t very good/ doesn’t speak to everyone only family/ Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2n</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2o_L 2_2j2n2o_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB/ MSN - only on weekends</td>
<td>Doesn’t have the right to use MSN/FB – Lebanon/ electricity not very good in Lebanon/ Use hotmail the most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2o</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2n_L 2_2j2n2o_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>MSN</td>
<td>Not allowed a FB/ Uncle in Quebec will call and say ‘go on MSN’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2p</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2p_L 2_2b2p2q2r_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2q</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2q_L 2_2b2p2q2r_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Skype/ FB</td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2r</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2r_L 2_2b2p2q2r_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Skype/ MSN</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2t</td>
<td>4e/5e</td>
<td>2_2t_L 2_2f2h2m2t_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB/ MSN</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2v</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2v_L</td>
<td>2_2v2x_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>NO FB/MSN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2w</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2w_L</td>
<td>2_2w2ee2hh</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2x_L</td>
<td>2_2v2x_L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Hotmail (no FB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2y</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2y_L</td>
<td>2_2y2kk2m</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>TV/ Computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2bb</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2bb_L</td>
<td>2_2bb2cc2d</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Hotmail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2cc</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2cc_L</td>
<td>2_2bb2cc2d</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2dd</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2dd_L</td>
<td>2_2bb2cc2d</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ee</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2ee_L</td>
<td>2_2bb2cc2d</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>MSN/ FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ff</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2ff_L</td>
<td>2_2ff2ii2jj2l</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2hh</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2hh_L</td>
<td>2_2w2ee2hh</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>HW/ talk to friends from Cote D'Ivoire on Computer/ games on FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ii</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2ii_L</td>
<td>2_2ff2ii2jj2l</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB/ Ipod/ Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2jj</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2jj_L</td>
<td>2_2ff2ii2jj2l</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB/ MSN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2kk</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2kk_L</td>
<td>2_2y2kk2m</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>FB/ MSN/ Face time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ll</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2ll_L</td>
<td>2_2ff2ii2jj2l</td>
<td>xx</td>
<td>Watches TV/ used the phone (pas beaucoup)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2mm</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2mm_L</td>
<td>2_2y2kk2m</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>I-pod (doesn't mention a SM site)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nn</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2nn_L</td>
<td>2_2y2kk2m</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>TV/ Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pp</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2pp_L</td>
<td>2_2w2ee2hh</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Skype / FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2qq</td>
<td>5e/6e</td>
<td>2_2qq_L</td>
<td>2_2bb2cc2d</td>
<td>xx</td>
<td>Goes to the library if want to use computer- Doesn’t have one at home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table demonstrates the participants’ use of social media. The table allows for themes to emerge about social media, which sites are used frequently, why the participants are using them, and the ideology around their use. The table brings to light trends in social media and the most popular sites used. From examining this table I have been able to engage with the students interviews from the voice of children, and contrast it with the literature on online safety, online engagement, childhood, and surveillance discourse.
After reading and listening to the above interviews I proceed to outline the parts that have informed my research question and inquiry on children’s use of social technology for positive communication. I highlight instances for elaboration and showcase the emerging themes and trends that inform this argument. In paying close attention to the similar themes found through my analysis of the authoritative websites, I outline instances of fragility and risk, the role of parents and family in monitoring online behavior, social media, and networking activity, as well as the innovative ways children have operationalized social technology. Engaging with these interviews shows how children are susceptible to using the Internet. The Internet and digital media is changing, quickly, and surrounding everything from daily tasks to education.

**Interviews**

Using the above table I present the data by engaging with the themes that come out of the interviews and which were visible through the content analysis mapped on the table. In my analysis of the authoritative websites the themes emerging around surveillance discourse, the role of parental need for control and monitoring of digital engagement, and the fragility of childhood and their need for guidance online, have informed my approach to analyzing the interviews. The same themes and frameworks come out of the interviews with the students. Below I analyze the interviews and engagement between students and the Internet, which comes across as a positive interaction. The interviews demonstrate that children are using social technology for positive communication practices. Although the Internet is shown to have many capabilities, children tap into this for homework, language, and communication or leadership skills. In the analysis of the websites, the Internet is presented as dangerous,
and in need of proper guidance. These interviews will demonstrate what the participants had to say on technology and how they used it in their everyday life.

Referencing the interviews, most children use technology. Only one child did not have a computer but mentions going to use the computer at the library. All the children used computers at school, but the focus of the question was towards home life. Out of 34 students in 10 interviews there were 20 mentions of Facebook, 19 of which pertained to communication, one that was affiliated with games and not talked about in relation to communication. Two children were not allowed to use Facebook. In discussing Facebook these students explained that they had to be older in order to have the right to use it. Student 2l responded by stating, “Me, I just have MSN, I don’t have Facebook, I need to be older to have it” (English gloss interview 2_2l2k_L.doc: “Moi, j’ai juste MSN, je n’ai pas de Facebook, je droit être plus grande pour avoir”). Student 2k responds “Me too”, after this statement by 2l. This shows evidence that some households do enforce rules about Internet use and take precautions in trying to keep their children safe. It also displays that there is an assumed age that is acceptable to start engaging in social media, and some ages that are not. This supports my argument that surveillance discourse does help to promote fear and risk ideology around social technology.

Student 2o uses and enjoys Facebook and MSN however he mentions that he does not use it frequently because of its dangerous nature. “I like Facebook, MSN, but I don’t use it, only sometimes, like on the weekends. Some weekends I do not use it because I do not have the right. Facebook is a little dangerous for us because we are still young and we do not know who will speak to us. MSN, you can say that it is you, it is a little like Facebook but Facebook is more dangerous than MSN. This is why I do not have the right
to go on MSN, I need to have someone next to me”. (English gloss interview 2_2j2n2o_L.doc: “J’aime le Facebook, MSN, mais je l’utilise parfois, comme dans les weekends. Quelques weekends je n’utilise pas car je n’ai pas le droit. Facebook est un peu dangereux pour nous parce qu’on est encore petits et on ne sait pas qui va nous parler. MSN, tu peux dire que c’est pour nous, c’est un peu encore comme Facebook mais Facebook est encore plus dangereux que MSN. Ça c’est pourquoi, je n’ai pas le droit d’aller sur MSN, je dois avoir quelqu’un à côté de moi”.) Dialogue has occurred with this child on the risk of talking to people through social media, and that there is potential for people to talk to you that you do not know. This student has come to understand social media sites to be dangerous. The danger has been communicated as present because of age. The child does not mention how his parents use the computer or Internet. He does mention that the communication on Facebook, MSN, and Hotmail that he has engaged in, is for more than talking to peers, but also family in Lebanon. He mentions that because electricity is bad in Lebanon it is difficult to rely on this mechanism of communication. He also mentioned the negative effects of the Internet on the brain.

“Sometimes, the Internet or MSN or Facebook changes your brain and you cannot concentrate, that is why I do not have the right to go on the Internet when I have a lot of homework”. (English gloss interview 2_2j2n2o_L.doc: “Quelques fois, l’Internet ou MSN ou Facebook change ton ‘brain’ et tu ne peux pas concentrer, ça c’est pourquoi je n’ai pas le droit d’aller sur Internet quand j’ai beaucoup de devoirs”.) This type of description of the Internet throughout the interviews was rare, but helps to support that this ideology is present in childhood and works to inform how children feel they should be operating digital spaces. This student has a negative perception of the Internet.
Although he sees the potential for virtual mobility through communication to Lebanon, there is also a strong presence of negative discourse. This informs my argument because it demonstrates a child that sees the Internet as negative and may not engage fully with its communication potential. This negative perception can be the result of surveillance discourse in their surroundings.

One of the predominant discussions around technology use was how it was used for communication with family members. Twenty-five of the students mention using social media to communicate with family members that are not living in close proximity to them. Fifteen of the students mentioned using Facebook, MSN, or Skype to keep in touch with family in Lebanon specifically. This shows that 74 percent of the students interviewed used social media as a means of communication to maintain family ties around the world. Numerous students did not just use digital technology to connect with family in one country, but multiple countries as well. I argue that there is potential in social technology to enhance the virtual mobility of youth. There are many positive aspects to having greater systems of communication for youth to connect transnationally, both with family and society as a whole.

The Internet is used to connect with family members globally by both youth and adults. This action can also be experienced among peer groups. Children learn from their parents and the families in their social circles. Children spend time at the homes of other peers and are immersed in the actions of other families. Families use technology at different rates, and vary in how liberal they use different tools. A kin to cooking, we learn different mechanisms by observing others. In the interview between 2x and 2v this is evident as they discuss the use of Skype. “When I go to house of 2x to play games and
all of that, lots of the time his parents are talking with his uncles and all of that”.

(English gloss interview 2_2x2v_L.doc: “Quand je vais à la maison de 2x pour jouer des jeux et tout ça, beaucoup de fois, les parents parlent avec ses oncles et tout ça”.) The social network and peer group children participate in can mirror their social class. This type of exchange of information can be understood as cultural transmission. Research has shown that children learn more from peers and not their parents, because of the many influences they are surrounded with on a daily basis in relation to social actors and peer groups (Harris, 1995). The technology use among actors within peer groups can influence others within it. Although the structure in the family home is important, discipline and organization in technology can often be indicative of time spent with peers. Although grounded closer to psychology than sociology, Judith Rich Harris was quoted in an article published by The Telegraph, “Outside influences such as popular culture, friends or street gangs have a much greater influence on children than family life or even genetic make-up” (Paton, 2007). Thus engaging with the home life of peers, or observing how other families perform, can have an impact on children by informing their use and understanding of the Internet. I discuss the power of social technology in this project but also want to recognize the importance of physical social relationships in shaping this importance.

Students discussed the different social networking tools available for communicating. Facebook and MSN, were the two most popular forms of social media discussed, as well as Skype. Skype was still popular, but was referenced predominantly towards parents. All tools operate a little differently. Students discussed the multiple capabilities of Facebook when they were asked if they used it. 2pp: “Yes, you can talk to
people and you can put photos on Facebook”. English gloss interview 2_2w2ee2hh2pp_L.doc, “Oui, tu peux parler avec des personnes, tu peux mettre des photos sur Facebook”. After this comment another student mentions that Facebook also incorporates different types of games. One of the main differentiating factors between Facebook, MSN and Skype, is the lack of real time audio and visual. Facebook has pictures, but the chat mechanism is based on text. MSN and Skype both have video and audio capability in real time. 2ee comments: “MSN, you can see, you have the camera, if you want to see someone else, it's like your friend or something, you can just click on camera and you can see the other person, and the other person can see you”. English gloss interview 2_2w2ee2hh2pp_L.doc, “Sur MSN, tu peux les voir, tu as la camera, si tu veux voir quelqu’un d’autre, c’est comme ton ami ou quelque chose, tu peux juste cliquer sur camera et tu peux voir l’autre personne, et l’autre personne peut te voir”. Students are not solely using technology to stay connected, they like the real time visual components of these networking systems as well. Student 2t also comments on the visual:

2t: “I go on MSN more than Facebook because MSN, I have my cousins, and my uncles, and my aunts in Lebanon, and I talk with them on video.

Interviewer: You can see them?

2t: Yes

Interviewer: And they can watch you grow

2t: Yes

English gloss interview 2_2f2h2m2t_L.doc

“2t: Je vais sur MSN plus que Facebook parce que le MSN, j’ai mes cousins, mes
The students recognize a difference in communication when there is video and audio, and when there is not. “2jj: *It is different because in MSN if you have a webcam, you can see people, and on Facebook, you can only write*”. English gloss interview 2_2ff2ii2jj2ll_L.doc, “2jj: *C’est different parce qu’en msn, si tu as la webcam, tu peux les voir, et en Facebook, tu peux juste écrire*”. Although all the students interviewed do not explicitly state it, communication with family overseas is talked about more when using the real time features of MSN and Skype. Communication with similar aged cousins and friends, both local and internationally, is discussed more in relation to Facebook. The students note their parents’ use of Skype, and also say that although they do not use it frequently, they do use Facebook. The students also include a wider more detailed description of the services Facebook offers, even though it does not have video. The students put a lot of value on the real time aspect of communication through social media. The student communication with family and friends oversees represents their virtual mobility. By participating in social technology, students and their families are moving in and out of spaces that were once inaccessible to them.

Children spoke to their Internet use and communication in ways outside of social media. Digital media is discussed as a component of gaming culture. Gaming has been present in the lives of western youth for decades. This culture has continued to advance at
an extreme rate, and is participated in across many demographics. This industry has been subject to more negative publicity than positive publicity, often relating to violence and a lack of ‘good’ mental stimulation.

Two students shared that they play PlayStation, but that they simultaneously use it as a means of communication. “2c: Yes, and I play PlayStation3 with my friends. 2d: I play the Playstation a lot, I go on the Internet and things like that”. English gloss interview, 2_2a2c2d2e_L, “2c: Oui, et je joue au Playstation3 avec mes amis. 2d: je joue au Playstation beaucoup, je vais sur l’Internet et les choses comme ça”. Most video games today have an online or ‘live’ aspect to their interface. Children are able to connect with friends online through multiple mediums. They can also connect to cousins and family members any where in the world in real-time. This changes traditional communication. Children may find it difficult to communicate over the phone or on Skype because these conversation skills are still in the process of developing. The ability for children to communicate with cousins and family members at a young age is important for family lineage and growth. Students can interact with cousins and individuals their age, engaging in gaming activity, and supporting stronger bonds over time. Regardless of whom the online communication is with in video game culture, there is constant communication. This demonstrates online communities as a place where children feel comfortable and welcome. Online gaming spaces can benefit communication skills, problem solving skills, and leadership skills. This type of social technology supports skill building in a non-place based space where children can feel a stronger sense of community and agency.

The Internet was mentioned by students as a tool for homework, research, and
particularly translation or explanation of projects. 2ee discussed this in relation to MSN.

“To keep my family together, and sometimes my cousins who are in Canada, in - (city name), sometimes we cannot see one another so sometimes we do our homework together, I have ideas, they have ideas, and we compare”. English gloss interview 2_2w2ee2hh2pp_L.doc, “Pour rejoindre ma famille et parfois j’ai des cousins qui sont dans le Canada, dans – (nom de ville), parfois, on ne peut pas voir parce que parfois on fait les devoirs ensemble, j’ai des idées, on a des idées, on les rassemble”. The Internet has allowed for communication between family members and facilitated learning, and sharing of ideas that would otherwise not be communicated. Students also use the Internet to facilitate learning and language literacy. “2hh: I use the Internet to do my homework, for research, if I do not understand, and if I do not have a dictionary, I go on the Internet and I look for the word. Sometimes, I see my cousins online, and I turn on the camera to see them”. English gloss interview 2_2w2ee2hh2pp_L.doc. “2hh: moi, j’utilise l’Internet pour faire mes devoirs, pour rechercher, si je ne comprends pas, et si je n’ai pas un dictionnaire, je vais sur l’Internet et je recherche ce mot. Des fois, si je trouve mes cousins, j’ouvre la camera pour les voir”. Students know there are learning capabilities of the Internet, and a wealth of knowledge they can access. This student states if they do not have a dictionary they can use the Internet. Dictionaries in classrooms are popular, but today, online dictionary’s are the most popular as they are frequently updated. In November 2012 the Macmillan Dictionary announced that they would be phasing out the printed dictionary and moving to expand their digital resources (Rundell, 2012). Their announcement slogan stated, “A smarter dictionary for a faster world. We’re setting the dictionary free, to reflect all the growth and creativity that
English speakers bring to the language every day, all over the globe”. The print dictionary is being phased out to make room for new words, and to move into a digital domain where there is more space for the varied creativity involved with language, and children recognize this by using online resources.

Some children mentioned that technology was not a high importance for them and that they would rather take part in other activities. Technology is part of a larger world and environment. Digital technology is used as a communication tool, which this project refers to as social technology, a form of play and for school and research purposes. It has been expressed that technology and digital media have taken over childhood, but in fact they have become part of it. Social technology has not eradicated the other activities and interests which children take part in. Student 2bb comments on this, “2bb: Me, when I have the time, before I go on any technology and all of that, first, I take my dog for a walk, after, if I have more time, I go play a little on my Wi, and when I go to bed, I read a book”. English gloss interview 2_2bb2cc2dd2qq_L.doc, “2bb: moi, quand j’ai le temps, au lieu d’aller sur les technologies et tout ça, en premier, je vais apporter mon chien pour une marche, après si j’ai d’autre temps je vais jouer un peu de jeux sur ma Wi, et quand je vais dormer, je lis un livre”. Another student noted, “2cc: When it is summer, I like to go outside and play with my cousins because they live like two minutes walk from house to house”. English gloss interview 2_2bb2cc2dd2qq_L.doc, “22cc: Quand, c’est l’été, moi j’aime aller dehors, jouer avec mes cousins, parce qu’ils vivent comme à deux minutes de marche de ma maison”.

Children take part in various activities, spaces, and experiences. As children take part in society they are also exposed to first time experience of new space. New spaces
and experience are shaped and understood as children take part and build understanding for themselves. My introduction demonstrates digital space as a newer space, and children are entering it at a younger age than that of the adults they interact with did. This places technology in childhood today, in ways it could not have been for today’s adults. Technology is not replacing other common child hobbies; playing outside, walking the dog, building with blocks, they still occur. Where children’s activities differ today is the ability to be innovative and creative in both a physical approach and digital approach. Digital apps are used for many forms of educational engagement, both recognized and not. Today we have two ways of doing something very similar. The notion of a ‘new way’ of doing the traditional can be positioned under the surveillance discourse, because it touches on the fear of the unknown, and change. Creative culture is unveiling that there are numerous ways to understand and conduct one task.

The interviews with children discussed above unveil that children engage with social networking with family, peers and homework practices. Children do not solely rely on online engagement, but use digital space as a piece to engaging in social experience. The students recognize the different mediums and networks in digital circulation, and use them in numerous ways, such as gaming and homework, to Skype and communication with family. Few children discuss the danger and risks felt by technology and the Internet. This demonstrates that the digital experience is one of positive discourse for students. The children that do communicate social technologies as dangerous, say they are too young and do not have the ‘right’ to engage in these spaces. The students do not communicate that personal experience with social technology has made them feel this way. Their communication of social technology as ‘dangerous’
appears to come through what they ‘know; or has been communicated to them.

The authoritative websites on safe Internet use for children paired with the student interviews on social technology use present the story that the children who participated in the latter study are using social technology for positive communication and are not in jeopardy nor in need of surveillance discourse and policy considerations. This disjunction is presented in several ways. Technology can instill a sense of un-easiness because of its ability to take over face-to-face communication. Children in this study do not communicate this fear. The Internet and online engagement have been positioned around surveillance discourse in relation to safety and risk. Children rarely communicate a feeling of risk or danger in reaction to their technology use. The surveillance discourse or themes of moral panic around social technology exists because of concern centered on control and access. This plays a role in my argument as it demonstrates that the issues are around control and access children may have, and how they may use it. The language used to describe online engagement on authoritative websites, appears to be far removed from children’s accounts of engagement. This discourse can work to create further issues around control and policy, as well as confuse child navigation in digital space.

In Chapter Four and Five I have found a disjunction in the information around navigating social digital technologies, such as social media and communication tools. Authoritative websites discuss negative qualities of the Internet, both independent and alongside children. Through doing research with students I have found that their use of social media has different elements other than the organic communication with friends often assumed onto social networking such as Facebook. The communication referenced by the students is positive and diverse, supporting communication with transnational
families as well as for homework and educational purpose. The following chapter
conducts an analysis of Chapter Four and Five in depth, and will compare and contrast
my findings from the student interviews and authoritative websites.
Chapter Six: Discussion

This project looked at two different sets of data to further understand the relationship between surveillance discourse around the Internet, how surveillance discourse around navigating the Internet and social technology has come to be, and how children use social technology and digital media for positive communication as well as an alternative space for social engagement. Chapter Four considered four different websites aiming to educate children and parents around Internet use. In this chapter I will further discuss the analysis of the four sites and the discourse they use to educate about the Internet. In Chapter Five I looked at interviews with grade 4, 5, and 6 students. An interview guide was designed for the overall research, inviting students to discuss, amongst the various themes listed, how they make use of virtual mobility through technology, using different tools such as MSN, Facebook or Skype. The responses informed my analysis of how children use social technology. In this Chapter I will discuss the key themes that arose from my presentation in Chapters four and five, in order to understand the common threads and connecting themes throughout both parts of this comparative analysis. Throughout this project we are looking at social constructions and ideologies around childhood, as well as technology, and how this relationship is understood in a way that further exacerbates surveillance discourse. This project intends to demonstrate that there is a disconnect between the way children use social technology and the approach authoritative websites take in aiming to educate parents, educators, and children on using the Internet safely, in fear of problems around surveillance and safety.

Childhood has historically been constructed as a stage needing protection. The
content analyzed in Chapter four on the four websites similarly demonstrates that the notion of protection has maintained on the subject of children’s engagement with the Internet. I engage critically with my findings and research in literature, and in doing so have gained insights that demonstrate the potential consequence of the authority and advice of these websites, such as the positive or negative misunderstanding of the Internet by children. The negative messaging around children’s ability to navigate the Internet and the surveillance discourse that underlines these messages are at odds with the experiences described by children in the interviews I analyzed.

In support of my overall argument, there is a positive relationship between social technology and its use among children; the advancement and ways in which social sites are navigated should shift similarly to technologies progression as well. Social technology is spoken about through a discourse of surveillance. Although there are aspects of moral panic surrounding social technology, they are rooted in safety and control, two aspects of surveillance discourse. The concept of safety and control is a rich field to discuss the navigation of the Internet by children.

The websites I engaged with - commonsensemedia.org, webwisekids.com, getsafeonline.org, and childnet.com - provide information on how to navigate the Internet for children and parents. The overarching tone of the websites conflict with the student accounts of Internet use, discussed in Chapter Five. While the websites are focused on the dangers of Internet use, the children who were interviewed have a deeper connection with the Internet, technology, and social media, redefining this field and the assumptions surrounding it. Technology has the ability to strengthen and promote the longevity of transnational ties and communication through virtual mobility. I argue that attempting to
navigate and control digital, virtual, and technological space, largely exacerbates the surveillance discourse in this area. This means that by trying to control or shift something, we make the issue at hand appear larger by continuously discussing and putting emphasis on it. Issues around safety and control communicated through the websites listed above have developed under a discourse of surveillance. In the next section I will show how this type of discourse becomes an active player in the construction of childhood, looking at control and safety. I also discuss that this discourse offers skepticism towards technology and what this can represent for children.

My discussion of surveillance discourse is organized around Bourdieu’s concept of field, and Cohen’s notion of moral panic. Bourdieu lays the ground work for this project to discuss a specific space and place, at which point this project looks to the work of Cohen to understand shifts in surveillance discourse as discussed through moral panic. The websites communicated that there should be a fear among adults that children and youth needed protection on the Internet, and more over, that children should also feel this need for protection. In the interviews with children there was a mild degree of fear communicated. This was done more in terms of ‘right by age’ than an overall issue over safety. The surveillance discourse is small in attempting to define the technology field, but prevails because of issues around safety, control and ideology. Cohen refers to exaggeration and distortion of stories in the media as a principal source behind the creation of moral panics, and leading into this is the discourse around surveillance. Through the interviews, children’s actual use and understanding of the technology field dealt with transferable skill, such as problem solving and the ability to adapt. To Bourdieu this understanding and ability to move within fields is a source of power.
Additionally, the data displays parents as complicit to Internet use and social technology. Although authoritative websites communicate the need for control and safety, the majority of the students communicated they were online in some manner, largely for the purpose of communication with others. Therefore parents were allowing the use of the Internet at home, and an engagement in social technology that was mildly, if at all, monitored. I have chosen to discuss the themes in this project under three headings, Safety and Surveillance, Technology as Empowering, and A Changing Field. The purpose of this analysis is to show where key themes of safety and surveillance can be seen in day-to-day usage of the Internet and throughout the lives of children. Bourdieu’s concept of the field and translating power from field to field is visible through the discussion of Technology as an empowering entity. It is important to view the overall concepts from Bourdieu which pertain to movement and abstract relationships, as well a Cohen’s concepts around moral panic which refer to changing social constructions, so that I can further provide the purpose of this project through the notion of ‘a changing field’.

**Safety and Surveillance**

Cohen has brought to light the steps involved in the creation of a moral panic, all of which stem from surveillance discourse. This surveillance discourse has paved the way for both issues and discussion around safety, policy, and control through technological shifts. Changing technology, which allows for new ways of doing, brings to the forefront day-to-day shifts, the discussion of safety and surveillance and how we understand our self-governance. This section is important to this project because it provides a way of thinking about change and why through new developments in
technology and the position of the child in society, we see themes around surveillance and control which pertain to a perceived safe way of operating daily. Matters of safety and surveillance are key platforms for discussion because of their inherent nature in both the daily lives of individuals, as well as matters of policy, and global issues.

**Social Media And Everyday Life**

Every child in the study except one said they used technology. Social technology is embedded into the everyday lives of children (Clarke, 2009; Zuckerberg, 2013). The embedded context of technology and the growing instance of social tech centered applications makes it one where safety and surveillance discourse is relevant. The children were asked directly if they used technology and within the question, asked about their use in relation to Facebook, MSN, and Skype. Because social media was within the question, it does make the results more warranted to be about social media. However, the fact that all but one child said he used technology in the home provides the rationale to study the reasons for technology use. Students overall used social media, either one or a combination of the following: Facebook, MSN, Skype, and Hotmail. Overall the students did not go into great depth about their use of social media, and often only elaborated when they were asked whom they connected with. They did not communicate excitement, or a sense of newness in specific relation to social technology. They also did not communicate the idea that social technological activity is special, different, and important to bring across in front of your peers. As social technology use becomes more popularized the importance of emphasizing one’s participation within it decline. Overall the students were excited about the larger project and investigation, but there was no change in their demeanor over the topic of technology.
This type of dialogue demonstrates not only the power and frequent use of social technology, but also, its embedded nature within the lives of youth. The discussion, although informative, lacked in detail, and displays that frequent use of social media has perhaps become part of daily routine. As ‘digital natives’, being born into a language of technology, it seems normal as opposed to ‘abnormal’, that technology is used for various elements. The normal or routine approach to communication takes place in social technological spaces. Youth today use technology and the Internet for a variety of things. Surveillance and safety are inserted into these everyday activities, as many institutions fear that young people will lack face-to-face time; thereby decreasing their human interaction skills and opportunity. However, Kaufmann and Flamm (2006) have argued that technology has the power to increase face-to-face time and that technology and the Internet have the ability to build relationships. It does this by increased motility, a term the authors define as ‘mobility potential’. There is an increased potential to access more spaces, and this triggers surveillance discourse around policy and control. Virtual space has allowed for a bridge to connect spaces that were once unable to connect. In using technology for a variety of elements, and communicating an understanding of possibilities between technological spaces, such as Facebook or Skype, children are showing their potential to transfer skills and knowledge into other fields outside of technology. For Bourdieu this movement into other fields is a form of power. The ability to act and be accepted in multiple fields is something few people can do. The ability to navigate through various fields is a form of capital, or capital of mobility (Kaufmann et. al, 2004). This movement challenges the websites discussed in chapter 5 and suggests that the embedded characteristic of social technology and media in everyday life, can be
seen for its positive engagement and not solely its surveillance and control needs.

**Age And Assistance**

Action based on age and appropriateness which runs counter to what rules and regulations imply, displays certain characteristics of surveillance discourse, predominantly in regard to safety and control. Safety is relevant to Cohen’s concepts and understanding around what he calls a *control culture*. Throughout the interviews, two of the children stated that they did not use Facebook or MSN. Their reasoning for this was that they were not old enough to have the right to use it. In society, it is understood that age tells us what someone is capable and not capable of doing. Age is a determinant of things such as curriculum, and the appropriate lesson plans and activities for that cohort. ‘It is well recognized that ‘youth’, as a group, are constituted as a minority within societies’ (Holland et al, 2007; Leonard, 2005). When these children voice that they *do not have the right* because of their age, this suggests that they understand themselves as only deserving of using these sites at a certain age. We may also infer that they see themselves as deserving of the surveillance discourse around them. This does not however infer that the children are victims, but that they may see and perform age as a hierarchical system. However this is changing, and as children engage more with digital technology and understand it as a native language, the knowledge divide within this field is one where children have the potential to come out on top, shifting the control.

The majority of the students interviewed had a Facebook account, many of them actively using the site for a range of purposes, such as communicating with family abroad. The children were all under the age of twelve at the time of the interviews, however Facebook’s age restriction is thirteen, due to the Children’s Online Privacy
Protection Act (COPPA). This shows that children demonstrate the ability to be tech savvy, and by altering the date on their profile, they are able to create a Facebook account for themselves. This behavior also further challenges the question of, what is online privacy and protection? Additionally, this suggests that parents are allowing children to use the Internet freely. This also demonstrates that policy on age limitation is something that Facebook, although advanced in its technological capabilities, is not set up to monitor. Present in this type of behavior are many of the risks discussed on authoritative websites through surveillance discourse, which aim to educate on safe Internet use for children. With this knowledge that children are using social media sites, and doing positive things with them, perhaps age restrictions need to be reconsidered. There is an active use and acceptance of digital media by youth, and as society continues to shelter children from areas within social technology, the means by which they acquire this access will continue to evolve. Webwisekids.com is an authoritative website that positively recognizes this. Their slogan “hands-on, minds-on”, demonstrates their acceptance of engagement by youth with the Internet. They do not advertise that they are eradicating the proven negative issues that have ties to the Internet, such as cyber-bullying, pornography and fraud, but they aim to assist youth in confidently managing these areas through what could be referred to as media literacy. Management is important because it speaks to why we see issues with safety and surveillance framed as approaching moral panic. This is where the need for control around safety, and thus methods of surveillance, are enacted.

Webwisekids.org demonstrates that ‘assistance’ is a positive way of bringing the realm of childhood and the Internet into the conversation on moral panic and ideas
around navigation. *Webwisekids.org* talks about assistance in regards to parents helping children with their online engagement. This project suggests that adults see a possibility for children to know as much about navigating digital technology as they do, which would subtract age from the knowledge equation. This idea comes from the context of both children and adults coming to understand this field as it develops at the same time. This can be attributed to the attempt to control the Internet, for reasons around safety and surveillance in a field that is not understood popularly. Assisting children in making confident choices online could bridge the gap in this type of dialogue. Where once the literature in online involvement erred towards action that would eradicate use by children, it has now, and slowly continues, to evolve into literature that aims to help promote confident use of the Internet by children. Assistance in children’s use of social media and internet technology could, in contrast to hard rules of prohibition, allow for developing skills, experience and confidence, and in turn innovation and creativity (Stone 2003). With surveillance discourse that over-burdens the opportunity for play and engagement, there is a potential to prevent deep learning, preventing growth, and the skills credited towards this power later in life.

Innovation by children is linked and supported in various present day initiatives, such as the *Educate to Innovate* campaign launched by President Obama in the United States. This campaign works to support STEM studies (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). When these types of initiatives launch, displaying acceptance for active engagement in digital technology, the shift in authoritative websites may adopt a mission statement closer aligned with that of *webwisekids.com*. Innovative ideas behind the engagement of youth online can create space for progressive conversation. There is
necessary communication here, as innovation and change are also main characteristics of surveillance discourse and safety. There must be a cognizant understanding of how moving forward toward children’s digital engagement and innovation may also be responsible for the increase in revisiting policy ideologies around surveillance discourse.

*Technology As Empowering*

Safety and Surveillance are two of the main components of this research that are elaborated on above. They are important to understand alongside technology because their common denominator, change, is an integral link to this project. Where I have discussed Safety and Surveillance I have linked it back the data where we can see growing engagement in technology by children. It is important to now look at the effects technology has in the lives of youth. This following section will look at how the data shows us that technology can be empowering. There are many ways technology, particularly social technology, are used today. The Internet is a mechanism for bridging physical and geographic space through virtual communication. Furthermore, digital technology presents the opportunity for autonomy, confidence, and empowerment in children, as demonstrated below.

*Multi-Use Technology For A Changing Generation*

Technology has allowed for an increase in multi-tasking and convenience as it progresses over time. Using one device or social system to achieve multiple goals offers a form of advantage. As the options for access to elements of society increases, such as school programs, athletic teams, social opportunities and so on, the ability to achieve multiple aims at once becomes alluring. The students interviewed discussed how they used technology, allowing for further understanding on its multiple uses. The interviews
with students demonstrated that both children and parents in the household used technology. The children were not explicitly asked if their parents used technology, but if the children had indicated they had family abroad in the beginning of the interview, they were asked if their parents used the Internet to talk to family. According to the students, many of the parents used Skype to talk to family members overseas. Not as many children used Skype, as much as they used MSN and Facebook. The children mentioned that Facebook has several functions. Facebook has applications for games, surveys, and pictures. You can be ‘friends’ with someone on Facebook without having direct interaction with them, operating similar to a telephone book. MSN and Skype require you to have an account with the service directly, such as a Skype login, or a specific compatible e-mail address for MSN. Outside of chat, these two devices do not provide additional services. Parents appear to operate their personal use of social media more strictly to connect with family overseas. This is something children can both observe and take part in. It is probable that parents used Facebook as well, but this was not a component of the interviews. The interviews demonstrated that students engaged with Facebook frequently. The websites I discuss have pushed for parents to be on ‘high alert’ and fearful of the safety issues around the Internet. However, in the interviews we see that both parents and children have adapted to the Internet as a key tool for communication, specifically transnationally. The ability for children to connect with family overseas with the Internet instills a source of communication autonomy and empowerment. This autonomy can sometimes appear minimal for children in physical face-to-face experience.

As technology advances, there are more devices that serve multiple functions,
presenting different relationships. The virtual, and non-place based space, can offer different functions and support for children. Video games while supporting transnational communication also leverage team-building and leadership skills. These transferable skills can be understood as powerful in multiple fields, which is important for Bourdieu and the relationship to empowerment. In Sir Ken Robison’s 2010 Ted Talk titled, *Bring on the Learning Revolution*, he refers to youth that do not understand the need for an object that only serves one purpose (Robinson, 2010). This is becoming more relevant as technology advances, and the applications used through digital technology evolve based off of users’ innovative repurposing of them. This demonstrates that digital mediums are multi-purpose, and an alluring side of technology is the amount of purpose and empowerment possible from a sole technological object. Facebook satisfies this present day phenomena as it allows individuals to chat, event plan, share photos, play games, conduct surveys, edit videos and more. This activity is all done on one site that your friends and connections can watch and engage with if they choose. ‘Digital natives’ can be unique in their activity but united in that this activity is virtual and digitally based, demonstrating the importance of non-place based participation for both autonomy, agency, and empowerment through technology.

*The Internet And Relationships*

The students interviewed used Facebook more than MSN and Skype. Of the 34 students interviewed, 74% stated their overall use of the Internet and time on social media was to engage in communication overseas. This means children are navigating virtually, transnationally. The first reference to social media was for communication, the majority of the children either offered immediately that this communication was with ties
abroad, or responded to a follow up question asking whom they communicated with and their location. At commonsensemedia.org they state their service of providing trustworthy information, education, and independent voice for children, is to eliminate concern around the Internet. This site essentially offers that without their service, kids would not have the necessary tools to thrive in a world of media and technology. They also imply the presence of universal Internet worry. In contrast, children are navigating media and technology in a way of great positivity. Skype and MSN along with a host of other online chat devices have facilitated visual and audio communication for relationships across the globe. Virtual mobility has allowed people to move from space to space without disturbing their physical place, and increased the potential to stay connected (Kaufmann & Flamm, 2006).

Students noted alternative modes of communication technology that have been subject to negative ideology much a kin to that of the Internet. While these authoritative websites suggest children are static and merely consumers, children understand themselves as dynamic and innovate users of communication tools; Students noted they used PlayStation to communicate with cousins. Gaming devices such as PlayStation and Xbox live allow you to connect with family, peers, and other online gamers worldwide. Instead of playing next to one of your friends, you can play with them online. On commonsensemedia.org one of the features of their website is a ‘Reviews’ page given by both children and parents. For the popular game, Call of Duty: Black Ops 2, under the heading “What Parents Need to Know”, there is a variety of information about the game. The last paragraph speaks to the argument of my thesis in that technology can be a powerful tool if we step back from surveillance discourse;
“Parents need to know that Call of Duty: Black Ops II is a gritty, extremely violent military first-person shooter set mostly in the near future. Players engage in graphic combat that involves constant killing using realistic weapons, with blood and gore pouring across the screen during more intense scenes. Cinematic sequences can be even more dramatic and graphic, with both soldiers and civilians dying in horrible ways. Players are cast in the role of good guys during most of the campaign, but they also take on the role of the game’s villain in a couple of pivotal scenes, giving them opportunity to do evil. This M-rated game has frequent profanity and some sexual themes and drug use. Parents should also be aware that this game facilitates open voice communication.”

After describing a game that appears ripe with violence and gore, and from what the contributors at commonsensemedia.org provided, very limited to positivity, the last sentence is perceived in a way that offers it as a negative statement as opposed to a positive one. I argue based off of the statements of the children who mention using the ‘live’ or online component of their digital devices, that these systems offer primarily positive communication elements. What this demonstrates is that children are capable of using a form of entertainment to gain more insight and life skills than assumed by the general public and media. There are more interactions through Internet supported spaces, and the field of technology that are not visible to the human eye, because they take place in a non-place based environment, the virtual. Similarly, education and learning is also communicated between young family members through online spaces. One student discussed online participation in conversing with cousins when they did their homework. Also seen above, 2ee: “I have ideas, they have ideas, and we compare”. This is a great way to facilitate ideas and sharing between young people, both family members and not. Kids are transforming the use of technology for more than just gaming culture and this can be brought into other fields outside of technology. Although children have been presented as consumers, they are also innovators.

One of the main criticisms of the Internet, gaming, and social media, is a lack of
face-to-face time and deterrence in relationship building. Although time spent in person with one another may have declined, a negative consequence has been the only assumed outcome. As mentioned above, Kaufmann and Flamm (2006) argue technology has the power to increase opportunities for communication and relationship building by increasing the quality not quantity of face-to-face time, by helping youth form relationship skills online. However, online time is still engaging, interactive, and plays a part in building and maintaining relationships. Social media, such as Facebook, largely works off of pre-established relationships, as mentioned previously in my literature review. Using social networks is a way for youth to stay in contact with particular social groups, in one contained space (Fluckiger, 2006; Ellison et. al, 2007; Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Peter, Valkenburg & Fluckiger, 2009).

Sharing and collaborating with children about Internet knowledge is a form of empowerment. There is an opportunity here to innovate and create with children. The Internet is a medium that children are at times self-taught and savvy, and adults can choose to enter by means of engagement. GetSafeOnline.org notes that children are probably more tech savvy than adults, but that they lack the life experience to navigate potential problems effectively and critically. This website works as an authoritative figure in dictating parents need to monitor and understand the Internet in order for their children to use it safely. It also aims to tell parents and educators that children are not adequately experienced, giving parents room to lay down more laws and guidelines. Although there are issues involved in how this website sees children as human becomings, rather than human beings (Ritchie & Kollar, 1964), it presents an opportunity for collaboration with children on the Internet and to form new relationships, as opposed to negatively viewing
children’s solo Internet use.

There are two types of relationships being fostered and empowered within this type of collaboration discussed above, adult/child, and the acceptance of the Internet. Both are visible in the data I have presented on interviews with children, and authoritative websites. Looking at the data, some of these authoritative websites show us that when parents and educators use the Internet along side children and promote hands-on minds-on mentalities, they promote engagement for children. Demonstrating trust in an area such as online activity and social media use, exhibits to children that they are capable of operating the system on their own, promoting confidence. Working alongside children and their knowledge in technology, infers to both parties that adult and child, are developing at something together simultaneously. A rigid approach to Internet use and technology that frames the child as weak and in need of protection, does not protect the child, but presents the opportunity for an increase in uneasiness towards it.

The second relationship demonstrated in this collaboration is a strong bond with family members across transnational boundaries. Technology is an all-encompassing field to enhance communication frequency. According to Cao et al, “Distant family members have never had as many ways to communicate as they do today” (Cao et. al, 2010). This statement aligns with what the grade 4, 5, and 6 students communicated in the interviews. I believe that this type of social media activity is ripe with positive benefits, such as autonomy in a new space. The notion that elementary aged students have accessed social media to maintain familial contact transnationally is powerful. Online communication allows children to connect in ways they were not able to before. Children’s autonomy to communicate provides an opportunity for empowerment,
enabling an opportunity for a space of confidence to build and strengthen connections.

*A Changing Field*

Social media today, such as Facebook, Twitter, Skype, and MSN, represent new ways to connect and communicate with people. These technologies for the most part, are only a decade old. The authoritative websites described above appear outdated in comparison to the responses offered by the children in the interviews to the question: “*how do you use technology; do you use Facebook or Skype?*” Authoritative websites continue to disseminate information about the Internet that frames it as having more negative attributes and dangers than positive qualities. The websites also frame children as being without the adequate skills or experience to operate the Internet safely without help. However, as children and all members of society come to understand and engage with technology and digital space rapidly, these websites and voices will need to adapt with them. This type of cycle has the potential to produce unfounded ideas around technology and leaves misconception behind as building blocks. If parents understand the voices of these websites in a way that promotes anxiety and fear, they will be further disconnected with their children simply in action of practice and understanding of the systems. Technology and its characteristic of constant change, is a defining feature around surveillance discourse and safety, when trying to understand and navigate the ‘new’.

What does this mean for safety as a topic around digital culture, and is this something that should be disseminated by authoritative type websites? The element of social control and who gets to dictate it is at the forefront of these conversations. Rules and regulations around safety on the Internet have been brought into issues around social
and ethical debate. The value of relationships and the ability to see them, both between people and technology, are under question. It has proven difficult to assess where these issues should be discussed because of their propensity to change rapidly. The fast nature of change in a digital space moves this conversation outside of surveillance and security, but towards a discourse of ethics. Digital space; social media, networking sites, lifestyle applications and many others, can change by a simple alteration to a data and coding algorithm. Almost as quickly as one can change the format of a digital space, society is adapting and implementing technology for various tasks. I wish to push this further in discussing the ethics behind rapid change, and what discourse we may begin to enact in order to navigate a lack of rules in today's changing environment.

In the safety and surveillance debate around social technology the discourse comes out of a means to control the abstract field of communication and relations. In a field that changes so rapidly, staying on top of how to navigate its unspoken rules is complex. I have suggested looking at the ethics behind fast changing fields as an alternative to surveillance and safety discourse. In the social technology field, the surveillance and safety discourse can be understood through Cohen’s explanation through moral panic and an effort to control scenarios that are new and not yet understood. Through looking at the ethics behind situations of change there may be an opportunity to avoid an automatic discourse of surveillance. Communication practices that have now shifted to an online nature are being navigated with a discourse of safety, policy, and control. In actuality this type of navigation is hindering a positive means of communication that has formed itself out of a necessary need for more communication mobility, in reference to relationships, empowerment, and advancement. The real
navigation that is attempting to be understood through surveillance is how to control technology and the Internet, something where rules are not concrete, be changing. Much like Bourdieu’s description of those that excel in the fashion field, designers do not challenge it but evolve with it. The concept of navigating social technology is not necessarily one that must be controlled, but embraced and expanded for social relationships and growth in communication. Social digital technology is one of many players in the social reality of children and adults.

I have used this chapter to discuss the key conversations coming out of the analysis of Chapter 4 and 5. Safety and Surveillance are a key issue coming out of the discussion around how children use the Internet and how education around the Internet is disseminated through authoritative websites. Social Media and its embedded nature in everyday life is changing the means by which people not only communicate but share information and move in and out of space. Technology offers empowerment through its multiple uses and functions as demonstrated through the students use of social technology in building relationships skills and learning, outside of direct communication. Finally a common element pulling these themes together is an element of fast and constant change. When discussing the Internet and its use by children, it may be necessary to shift the way we conceptualize the navigation of this relationship. Surveillance discourse hinders the conversation about the benefits of this fast changing field. I suggest discussing the ethics behind a field with a fast changing nature, and how embracing new forms of communication can demonstrate great positivity instead of exacerbating a discourse of surveillance.
Chapter Seven:
Conclusion

This dissertation aims to illustrate how children use social media and technology, how they are told to use it, and where these rules have originated from and developed. It does this by exploring the relationship between children and social technology. I have examined the way in which children and childhood have been subject to social construction featuring them as fragile and in need of protection. I then looked at the association to social constructions surrounding technology, and the impression that social technology is threatening, unsafe, and worthy of surveillance discourse. I hoped to see and understand how children communicate the idea of fragile and threatening together. I have argued that we can see this through surveillance discourse, manifested by the need and presence of authoritative figures 'educating' on the proper way to use the Internet. Looking at the responses from the interviews with students this project argues that the benefits of children’s engagement with social technology can be seen several areas. The project demonstrates that technology can be used as an empowering tool through its ability to connect individuals transnationally, enhance communication opportunities, create the potential to share information, foster confidence and skill, and promote autonomy in a virtual space. Outside of my findings, I encountered further considerations that are necessary for offering contextualization and further understanding.

Contextualization

This research has brought to light many interesting ideas and contextualization’s which add to the overall understanding of this project. The following observations made up the overall context for this project, contributing to how the analysis was conducted.
and interpreted in Chapter 6. My decision to use pre-existing data from a larger research project adds an in-depth understanding to the data because of my knowledge of the overall project which I gained through taking on numerous roles within its unfolding. The part of the overall study, which I examined, looked at thirty-four students in one grade 4/5 class and one grade 5/6 class. The focus was on elementary school students. It would be interesting to compare data with older students, as the technology field changes rapidly. However, the data allowed for insight into a younger population.

The questions asked in the interview were part of a large study on mobility and language. Before being asked the question about technology, students were asked to explain the language portrait they had done as part of the research (as explained in Chapter four), and whether or not they travelled either alone or with family. The questions and answers from other students will have informed the answers of participants when they responded to the question directed at technology.

The school where the interviews took place for the larger research project was a French language school. The school was also considered an inner-city school with a large Arabic population. These aspects are not detrimental to my research, but play a role in the context of results, and are important to note in relevance to doing further research in this area.

Conducting this research unveiled further themes that were not expected. This research uncovered how children, to maintain transnational ties, use social technology. Depending on the demographic and geographic area where the interviews and data collection were performed, different trends could emerge. This data was collected from one neighborhood school. Other studies with a range of participants could bring about not
only different examples of transnational ties, but additional trends overall.

The nature of research in technology and digital space is that it is subject to change, and fast. Throughout my research I referenced how the quick changing field that is inherent in technology, is important to consider because of how individuals understand context and skill. Because this field and its rules are changing quickly, what was relevant during the collection of this research and what is relevant today, are different. New ways to use technology in the classroom have emerged in the last two years, and handheld devices have further evolved. While doing my research I encountered new literature, and emerging trends in the media. When researching the field of digital technology it is important to move fast, analyze quickly, and realize the field you are interrogating is reinventing itself daily.

**Implications**

The research was conducted to look at the relationship between children and technology, particularly with social media. Additionally the research was interested in how authoritative websites instruct children and parents on how to use the Internet, and how these bodies of knowledge worked to disseminate or educate around surveillance discourse and Internet safety. These sites make visible how the navigation process around understanding safety issues surrounding children’s Internet use is exacerbated and frequently perceived in a negative light, rather than a welcoming, innovative one. This research provides room to discuss the implications of authoritative organizations on the discussion around Internet safety. This is similar to Sonia Livingstone’s work and findings that research must be conducted with the children who feel at risk on the Internet. I wish to reframe the approach to these arguments in a way that does not
position the Internet as threatening, but as a player among many other societal realities that children are exposed to. Perhaps if we look more closely at the gatekeepers who moderate and instruct children, educators and parents on how to use the Internet safely, we can identify the ideologies being disseminated, how, and by whom. This can be done through examining tone and voice, approach, and structure, as well as the other content these sites advertise simultaneously.

Safety is one of the most important issues to a parent when it comes to their child. When the Internet, and its host of offspring, such as social media, video games, chat, and blogs have been positioned as dangerous, the reaction expected of parents is to attempt to protect their children. The key concern here is the positioning of the Internet as dangerous. It is difficult for anyone to know first-hand that digital media presents dangers for kids if you are not a kid yourself, interacting first-hand with this content. Without direct conversations with children about their firsthand experiences, ‘knowing’ that the Internet presents risk and danger for them, is second-hand information. As mentioned previously, this research does not aim to say there are no risks involved with online activity. What it does aim to do is demonstrate that the way in which children act online, is not indicative of what the media tells us, and does not represent negative behaviors or outcomes. In fact, the participants in this study demonstrated that they used social media for positive communication with distant family members. This project informs future research possibilities on Internet safety and social media in that it is important to focus this research with children as opposed to on them.

This project also exhibits the possibility for doing further research from a communication perspective focused on the gatekeeping and framing of Internet safety
issues and how this is perceived by parents and executed in daily life with family, at home, and at school. Research is being done daily on children and their screen time presence both with television and hand held devices. CTV recently aired a segment about the danger in an increase of these types of studies, and what they might really be saying, or not saying (Mulholand, 2013). This is a new, and hopefully increasing approach by the media to tell their audience to be mindful of the studies which news reports reference. The report references a recent study out of Britain which looked at 11,000 children between the age of five and seven that spent over three hours a day in front of a television screen. The study published that there was an increase, (however small), in children’s negative behavior. Some media and authoritative outlets picked up on this and framed it as, “excess television time produces bad behavior in children” (Mulholand, 2013). Some other authorities, such as Britain’s National Health Service, came out saying the results from the study were so small they were almost insignificant. There was only a 0.13% increase in problems pertaining to negative conduct. This means that their claim was not rooted in a realistic context. With an increase this small, the change in reaction from children was almost negligible. This percentage shows that yes, in fact there was a slight increase in problems, but they are not weighted/comparable to anything. Therefore this means that the increase is not representative enough to be a true statistic. The study also failed to remark on what type of television was being watched, when it was being watched, and if it was being watched with an adult.

These types of studies are an example of how the media works to disseminate threat and danger. Issues around safety and vulnerability are easy to publish, attract readers, and presents an opportunity for follow-up stories. This project works to open up
discussion on gatekeeping and framing around surveillance discourse and Internet safety.

It does this by showcasing interviews done with children on their experience of technology and social media, and the positive tone in which these children convey this experience. Furthermore, the Internet experience is one of many components. Children are recounting that they are using social networking sites to connect and maintain connections with families transnationally. If this type of behavior is nurtured and embraced, the future of social media, technology and the Internet can continue to grow.

**Concluding Ideas**

There is considerable research on children and the Internet. However, much of this research has been conducted *on* children, rather than *with* them. Research that is done on children, ignoring their ability to be active in the ethnography experience, can provide misleading data, especially in an area on youth engagement and technology. By analyzing interviews with 34 children, and their responses to questions on technology use and social media use, I shed light on how children use technology. Students used social media, Facebook, Skype, and MSN, primarily to talk to family members overseas. They used this as a means of connection and maintaining relations with family they may not see frequently, or at all. A few students mentioned they could not use Facebook because of their age or that they did not have the right to. All students interviewed were under the age of 13, which is the minimum age requirement to register for a Facebook account. The participants also noted that they used the Internet to connect on homework subjects and language translation. The Internet was also used in different ways than just a desktop computer, but through gaming devices. This facilitated communication between cousins over seas and has the ability to foster communication, leadership, and team building.
skills, all while being an online space. Outside of the Internet, participants did not lose sight of extra curricular activities or hobbies and still walked their dog, did artwork, and played outside.

Surveillance discourse works through a heightened fear of a particular social circumstance. They are advertised and promoted through the media, both indirectly and directly. Although the news, publications, and the media have provided information on the perceived dangers and risks of the Internet, it is the authoritative websites educating on this topic that work to exacerbate Internet safety. This need to protect and fear of the new is seen within society as childhood has been constructed into a time of uncertainty and fragility.

Technology has triggered a vast array of changes in society, from corporate business, politics and home life. The change that digital technology undergoes is often executed by the same generation the change is for. It no longer takes a decade to change the way something is done, technology fast tracks everything, and if a mode of communication does not exist but is in demand within society, it will be created and implemented in a short time. Because of this fast paced environment and change, there is conflict. Bourdieu’s notions around fast paced changing environments and the need to change quickly in order to stay relevant in the fashion world, is a kin to that of technology. Fashion designers do not challenge the fast changing field but change with it and embrace the evolving field. Children that understand or ‘get’ the field of technology are able to go through these fast changes in creation, design, applicability and use. In order for technology to serve a greater purpose, it must change with the likes of its users, and so it does, quicker than authority figures would like. As Cohen argued, a change in
Authoritative voice, or a culture centered on control, does not react well to change, especially fast change. This works to exacerbate the attempt to navigate change in communication, and puts an emphasis on surveillance discourse. What the data and interviews with children do is bring up the social actor behind the topic of Internet and safety. This social actor represents the positive change possible and occurring in this field.

Authoritative bodies continue to disseminate these ideologies as Internet use and access to digital space increases. Society, largely parents and educators, are seeing a rise in computer culture among their children as well as other areas. This could result in the assumption that there is a need for more safety measures and consequentially surveillance discourse. Youth now access the Internet more on their mobile phones than on a desktop. Children can bring their Internet spaces around with them, with little monitoring by parents. Youth in the West have been moving away from Facebook as it becomes more popularized, and moving on to applications such as Instagram and Snapchat. These applications focus solely on images and video. It can be argued that as Facebook becomes more popularized and used by adults, such as parents, youth will still aim to source their own space, one that may be slightly more intimate than the ever-growing Facebook community. With an increase over time in the surveillance around Facebook, youth may be losing their once achieved autonomy in virtual spaces.

I have brought attention to surveillance discourse around engagement with the Internet. The topic of technology and youth has been discussed through surveillance discourse, with increasing understanding this topic also lends itself to conversation around social control. One of the underlining reasons we look at children’s issues is that
it can open the field in to a larger population of adults. Both youth and adults are active in digital space and communication. For youth, a digital virtual environment may be their most active space. If the future developments within the digital field are important, it is not necessarily a conversation around surveillance discourse, rules, risk, and children – but rather one of social control, and ethics of communication where this will continue to develop.
References


