Digital Youth: Privacy, Identity, Play & Sociality in Everyday Spaces

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ABSTRACT

Digital Youth: Privacy, Identity, Play & Sociality in Everyday Spaces

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This ethnographic study investigates the role and meaning of digital culture in the everyday lives of a group of middle-class, urban, young people in Montreal. In this work, I examine how a range of new media and technology are influencing their communication and sociality. Additionally, I consider young people's changing experience of on and offline spaces, and the ways they have reconstructed notions of public and private identities.

The research reflects an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing on ideas from the fields of Sociology, Communications and Education to examine young people's engagement with digital culture. The study considers how geography, socio-economic class, language, culture and a pervasive anxiety about risk situates and contextualizes their particular experience of technology.

While this project reflects on theoretical discussions surrounding young people's use of technology, it means to highlight their voices. Here, participants share rich accounts of their daily use of technology in school, at home, and on city streets, providing a complex and nuanced interpretation of their own experiences. Their narratives provoke critical questions, such as: How do technologies alter existing social norms? How do young people make important decisions about privacy issues online? How do their digital interactions affect interpersonal relationships in on and offline spaces?

Both the stories and the inquiry that emerge from this work contribute a better understanding of what it means for contemporary youth to come of age in an increasingly digital world.

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Introduction

> Alyssa sits cross-legged on her bed, eyes flicking back and forth across the screen of the Mac on her lap. She is consumed by the images of young people on beaches and ski slopes. It's the week after spring break and Alyssa is intently checking out her friend's Facebook profiles to see who has the coolest pictures. She has a hamburger-shaped phone nestled in the crook of her shoulder and is animatedly comparing notes with her best friend —the two of them are 'Facebook-stalking' their peers. She has a screen open with a half completed history assignment and is downloading and listening to music while she switches from screen to screen, effortlessly multitasking. Her cell phone vibrates on the bed beside her; she picks it up, glances at it briefly and begins rapidly texting while her eyes return to the computer screen. Her Mac pings as Mellissa IM's her, "Check out Ashley in Hawaii – is that the skimpiest bikini ever?" Alyssa checks the bikini and comments on Ashley's photo "You are so amazingly hot – love ya xox" (field notes, March 2010)

If this were a young adult film, Alyssa would play the 'cyberkid': a techno wizard who has mastered all the digital tools of the day and moves between them with ease. However, there is more to Alyssa's story than meets the eye. The purpose of this dissertation is to unpack the stereotypes that have come to define Alyssa's generation in contemporary

media, in order to explore the reality of young people's multifarious and multi-faceted engagement with technology.

Scholars suggest Alyssa's generation is profoundly distinct from every previous generation because of their immersion in digital culture (Bauerlein, 2008; Palfrey and Gasser, 2008). The frequency and intensity of young people's engagement with technology has deepened intergenerational conflicts: Many adults believe young people prefer to be digitally connected rather than communicate face to face with their peers, and don't understand these relationships. A commonly used discourse now constructs youth as "in crisis' in regards to their engagement with digital media technologies.

Looking at the surface of Alyssa's online engagement provides only a small part of the story. If one embeds these moments in a more extensive ethnographic study they reveal a richer, complex, layered and nuanced engagement. Longitudinal ethnographic research (that encompasses the geographical spaces and social contexts of their everyday practices) can provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of digital culture in young people's lives. Depictions of so called, 'digital natives'[1] in much of the academic literature I have researched for this project seem one-dimensional and clichéd compared to the real-life practices of the participants in this study. The young people I have interviewed are also confused by these representations: They agree that they might represent one aspect of their engagement with digital culture, or reflect extreme examples, but they resist the notion that these stereotypical portrayals represent or define their generation.

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[1] Prensky (2001) uses the term 'digital native' to describe youth and their strong association with digital culture. In opposition, adults are regarded as 'digital immigrants'.

My ethnographic research reveals that the communication practices and social lives of these young people are much more multifaceted and multifarious than is often portrayed by both academics and the mass media. I have found that young people often do prefer to socialize in person, and that they also simultaneously continue to communicate and socialize with people in multiple spaces. When a group of young people are hanging out in the park, they are almost always also texting their friends at the mall, the friends they met at summer camp who live across the country, and their best friend who is on a student exchange in Italy. They text their mom at work to reassure her that they are safe and have not been abducted by a stranger on the way home from school, and that yes, they will pick up their little brother at the math tutor's on the way home. They check out online profiles collectively, while chatting, comparing notes and exchanging gossip with their friends. Could it be that being connected to so many people in real time enables a sense of being connected to larger community, allowing young people to vicariously experience social interactions and multiple spaces at the same time? Perhaps this generation is not lacking social skills after all but are, in fact, redefining the very nature of sociality.

Ethnographic stories are valuable for capturing a moment in time, enabling researchers to theorize about what the experiences of a particular group of people might reveal about the larger culture in which they are situated. This dissertation explores the ways in which digital culture is embedded in the everyday lives of a group of young people in a neighborhood of Montreal. It is an ethnographic study of a very specific group of people situated in a very particular place and time, and serves as a snapshot of the way a group of friends socialize, play, interact, and communicate through digital

media technology.

To begin this discussion, I examine how young people function as a subculture within an urban environment. Because, the 'scene' that constitutes the field site is particularly relevant, I detail the environment in which the ethnography takes place. I provide a portrait of the city of Montreal: its demographics, unique linguistic situation, distinctive educational system, and general ambiance. I introduce the neighborhoods in which the action takes place. I then extend the specific examination of growing up today in Montreal to a more general discussion of the issues surrounding young people and conclude with summaries of the chapters to follow.

Young People as a Subculture

A subculture is defined as, "a subset of the dominant culture that has distinct values, beliefs and norms. In complex societies, subcultures allow people to connect with other people who have similar interests" (Carl, p. 56). Carl provides the online social networking site Facebook, with its 69 million or more users, as an example of a subculture. He suggests that the culture of Facebook has values, norms and sanctions that are distinct from the 'dominant' or 'parent' culture.

I argue that digitally engaged young people form their own subculture as they create norms and sanctions around their use of cell phones, social networking sites, and the very specific spaces they occupy online. The ways in which young people's use of digital technology is interwoven into their everyday lives, and the way in which this interconnectedness shapes the values, norms and sanctions surrounding use characterizes these digitally connected young people as a subculture group. According to O'Brien and

Szeman, authors of *Popular Culture; A users guide* (2010), subcultures (as opposed to counter cultures) are typically limited to specific "scenes" and are often dominated by young people - while counter cultures are not limited by this criteria.

> Indeed, while countercultures have not been immune to criticism from any number of vantage points, it has been subcultures that are more commonly viewed (by the mainstream media, for example) as little more than self-indulgent practices engaged in by spoiled youth who will "grow out of it" soon enough" (p.264).

This perspective of subcultures frames their practices as fleeting trends that will soon be dropped and forgotten as another new fashion emerges. As a result, this viewpoint discounts the political undercurrent and rejection of mainstream values that often underlies subculture practices (O'Brien and Szeman, 2010). In the case of digital youth, engagement with digital technologies affords opportunities to challenge previous roles of children and adolescents in Western culture. Young people's digital practices disrupt existing notions of privacy and communication redefining the ways in which individuals form relationships, socialize, play and experience space. The challenge to conventions is not a fleeting fad, but rather, will have profound implications for future understandings and social customs.

The concept of youth as a subculture originated at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1970's with the publication of *Resistance Through Rituals* (Hall & Jefferson, 2006), a study of British working class youth. Subculture theory emanated from research into juvenile delinquency (Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004),

which suggested that the subcultures of adolescents were distinct from adult culture as a result of young people's resistance to accepted adult norms:

> Sub-cultures must exhibit a distinctive enough shape and structure to make them identifiably different from their 'parent' culture. They must be focused around certain activities, values, certain uses of material artefacts [sic], territorial spaces etc. which significantly differentiate them from the wider culture. But, since they are sub-sets, there must also be significant things which bind and articulate them with the 'parent' culture (Hall, Stuart, Jefferson & Roberts; 2006 p.7).

Subcultures can emerge from either working or middle-class parent or dominant cultures. When groups are characterized by age and generation they are referred to as youth subcultures. Sometimes youth subcultures are permanent parts of the parent class culture and remain stable over time, for example the subculture of the juvenile delinquent in the working class. However, other subcultures appear temporarily and are defined by a historical period in time; they become the focus of public attention and then fade away. Subcultures form and are structured around the distinctive activities that are the primary interests of their group. Members of the subculture can be either very closely intertwined or loosely affiliated with each other; they can be distinctive and very separate from the parent culture or they can exist within the parent culture, having subculture characteristics without having a separate realm.

> Yet, despite these differences, it is important to stress that, as subcultures, they continue to exist within, and coexist with, the more inclusive culture of the class from which they spring. Members of a subculture may walk,

> talk, act, look 'different' from their parents and from some of their peers: but they belong to the same families, go to the same schools, work at much the same jobs, live down the same 'mean streets' as their peers and parents. In certain crucial respects, they share the same position (vis-à-vis the dominant culture), the same fundamental and determining life-experiences, as the 'parent' culture from which they derive. (Clarke, Hall, Jefferson & Roberts, 2006, p. 8).

As Sarah Chinn (2009) notes, the social and historical construction of adolescence as a separate time of identity formation, independence and resistance to adult norms and ideas of appropriate conduct has only been in existence in America for the past hundred years and the notion of the teenager has been around for just over fifty years (p. 6). According to Clarke, Hall and Jefferson (2006) the idea of youth culture as a subculture stemmed from five important social changes. America's post war economic growth resulted in a culture of affluence, which allowed young people to stay out of the work force and provided them with more disposable income. With the arrival of more leisure time and mass communication, adults became concerned about market- driven mass culture and its influence on youth, and instigated moral panics. Additionally, the war changed family structures and social conditions. Absent fathers and a culture of violence provoked concerns about young people's well being and socialization. Clarke, Hall and Jefferson (2006) discuss the rapid 'bourgeoisification' of the newly affluent worker, whereby everyone aspired to similar middle-class values based on consumption. As class distinctions became less relevant, age distinctions increased in significance. Youth came to be viewed as separate from adults, and the vanguard of social change. Because these

social changes also led to an increased demand for an educated work force (particularly in areas relating to technology), teenagers stayed in school longer. High school segregated young people from the larger society and forced them to turn inwards, developing a strong peer culture. The final factor in the development of youth as a subculture, however, was the emergence of a distinctive style of rock music and fashion that clearly distinguished youth from adult culture. A whole new 'scene' emerged.

Young people have always pushed against the boundaries that separate them from the broader public sphere, and adults have often pushed back. Today, adults grow increasingly concerned that children are not being properly socialized into adult culture. This concern may in part stem from anxieties arising from the reality that digital technologies provide opportunities for young people to have unprecedented access to information and the public sphere, challenging the traditional balance of power between adults and youth. In response, adults erect more boundaries, and implement more controls through surveillance (e.g. through the use of web cams, cell phones, cameras in schools, etc) to try to govern their behavior. To resist this surveillance, young people pull closer together as a group and further distinguish themselves from adult culture, creating a rift, (characterized by some) as the biggest generation gap since the rock and roll era (Nussbaum, 2007; Frontline, 2008). [2] In this process of unifying, young people have

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[2] In her book *Inventing Modern Adolescence* Chinn describes the initial generation gap as occurring in the 1920's between immigrant parents and their Americanized children – who were influenced by popular and consumer culture, were working and so had some financial independence and most importantly could speak

created a separate subculture revolving around new media and digital culture, which is distinct from both general adult culture and digital adult culture.

Andy Bennett (2004), author of *Virtual Subculture? Youth Identity and the Internet,* supports the idea that youth in virtual spaces function as a subculture. He suggests that the Internet enables young people to transcend the limitations of geographical space, describing the Internet as, "a 'sub-cultural' space – a space in which, freed from the socio-economic and cultural constraints of their daily lives, young people are at liberty to form new alliances grounded in trans-locally communicated youth cultural discourses" (p.164). While there is the potential for online relationships to transcend geographical limitations, it is evident from the data gathered for this dissertation that for many young people identity is still very much grounded in everyday offline spaces and activities. There is a fluidity to both online and offline relationships and identity formation. Belonging to a subculture implies insider knowledge regarding group interests, the power that this knowledge brings and a feeling of exclusivity. All of these attributes are very much wrapped up in young people's engagement with digital media technology and the cultural spaces they support (Bennett, 2004).

Scene Research as a Method of Study

English. Although, according to Chinn the greatest intergenerational conflict occurred between 1967-69.

In her article on the ethnography of scenes, Michaela Pfadenhauer (2005) identifies scene research as having emerged from the study of subcultures[3] in the 1920's, in The United States. Ethnographer Gary Allen Fine stresses the importance of the researcher becoming immersed in the 'scene' in order to understand the culture of a group. It was by spending time idly chatting and being present around participants' interactions that I was able to contextualize and understand what the data that I had acquired during my fieldwork meant. Fine suggests that:

> It is through gossip and rumor that one can gain what is, in effect, a map of the social environment in which one lives and works. Through these forms of communication, people are attempting to assess the social relations within their community (as cited in Sassatelli, 2010, p. 4).

It is by being engrossed in the shared gossip, banter and stories of the small group being studied that the ethnographer can produce thick description. According to Norman Denzin (1994), a thick description moves beyond simply offering the facts of an experience, additionally providing the context, explaining the objectives, significance and implications. "Out of this process arises a text's claims for truth, or its verisimilitude" (p. 505). In order to write a thick description, the researcher must take care to set the scene for the reader.

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[3] 'Subculture' is often used to describe a larger community of youth to which participants belong, however I will use the term 'scene' to describe the small, interconnected subset of young people that comprised the participants for this ethnography.

Setting the Scene

The following section sets the scene for this dissertation's fieldwork on the island of Montreal, a major metropolitan city in Canada. As of 2006 census, the total population of Montreal is 3, 588, 520 people and within that population 1, 861, 925 people in the city speak both French and English (Statistics Canada, 2006). French is the official language in Quebec, and consequently Montreal. The city is divided linguistically into three primary groups, the dominant Francophone group whose first language is French, the Anglophone population whose first language is English and the Allophones whose first language is 'other' than French or English. The proportion of Anglophones in Montreal is 32.7% (595, 920) (Statistics Canada, 2006). The city is divided into 19 boroughs and 15 reconstituted cities. The study participants primarily reside in two distinct Montreal neighborhoods. One of the neighborhoods is an affluent, predominantly Anglophone community; the other is a middle class, culturally and linguistically diverse area. Many of these boroughs and reconstituted cities have a dominant linguistic or ethnic group, which add a distinctive character or identity to the community. The city is divided by many characteristics; but linguistically the division is generally the English to the West and the French to the East. The West of the city is predominantly Anglophone with 80.1% of the community in Montreal West (4,140) Anglo, 72.4% of Westmount (14, 330), and in Montréal East 5.8% (215) of the people are Anglophone (Corbeil, Chavez, & Pereira, 2010). According to Richard Florida. one of North America's best known urban experts:

> … more than one third of the Montreal work force comes from the creative class - scientists, technology workers, entertainers, artists and

designers, as well as managers and financial types - putting it in the top 10 percent of all regions in North America and a global leader (as cited in Aubin, 2011).

Montreal has an urban culture of creativity. As I will detail later, the participants in this study are encouraged to engage with digital culture, not only because they have middle-class to upper-class status and can afford new technologies, but also because the culture and economy of the city promote innovation. Adults in this urban society tend to see the benefits of youth engaging in digital culture as a means of enhancing their future learning and earning potential. Anxieties around new technologies are therefore tempered by adult's desire to have children embrace, master and make the most of them. However, adults do seek to influence the ways young people use digital technologies—for example, they generally prefer youth use them productively, rather than socially. The tension between adult desires and anxieties around young people's engagement in digital culture is a critical theme that emerges throughout this dissertation.

Montreal is a densely populated city; urban planning discourages the use of cars in the city. Buses and trains supplement the extensive metro system. The compact geography makes walking a viable option in many cases and there is an extensive bicycle path with a public bixi (bike-taxi) system. Because the city is so easy to navigate without the use of cars it creates an urban environment that is hospitable to young people who can move safely through city space. The ease with which young people can navigate the city influences the ways in which they experience their city; however, adult concerns regarding safety in public spaces and constructive uses of time limit spatial freedom. This is discussed extensively in chapter 5. The geography of the city shapes the movement

and interactions of the participants as they negotiate the city. "Most experts agree that innovation and productivity are driven by density, and Montreal ranks third among all North American cities in average population density" (as cited in Heffez, 2008). This population density contributes to city where people tend to come into contact with each other frequently.

Montréal is a city with nine universities and twelve junior colleges in an eight-kilometer radius. In proportion to its population, Montréal is the North American metropolis with the greatest number of university students, at 4.38 students per 100 inhabitants (Source: McGill University, *Montreal: University Capital of North America,* 2000).[4] Because of the numerous universities in close proximity young people tend to remain in Montreal living at home through undergraduate and even graduate studies. The primary and secondary level (elementary and high school) education system in Montreal is distinctive. Until 1998 the school boards in Quebec were confessional. In 1998 they were re-organized under linguistic boards. Schools are currently categorized according to language and whether you attend a public, private or alternative school.

> Private and independent schools in Quebec are a tradition. Quebec has the highest percentage of students attending private or independent schools in Canada and perhaps even North America. About 17 per cent of the province's students are enrolled in more than 200 private and independent schools. The percentage of private school enrollment is even higher in

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[4] According to Canada Economic Development report on Socio-economic Trends in Education http://web.archive.org/web/20080526152536/http:/www.dec-ced.gc.ca/Complements/Publications/AutresPublications-EN/tocen/css/tocen_15.htm

some urban centres, like Montreal[5] (2010)

While my research was conducted in English, all of my participants were bilingual to varying degrees with several of the participants speaking a third language. However, they all predominantly texted and consumed media primarily in English, even those participants who attended French schools. It's common to walk down the streets of Montreal and hear groups of young people intermittently and continuously switching languages. While the distinct culture of Montreal shaped the ethnography, I would argue that the digital experiences of this group of young people are not unique. Other Western, middle to upper class young people living in urban environments with comparable degrees of access to digital technologies would probably have similar experiences and perspectives.

Considering Significance: Why Study Youth and Digital Culture?

Ruth Behar (2003), author of *Ethnography and the Book That Was Lost* explains that as ethnographers we write, "commentaries about the commentaries that our informants share with us about their lives and their societies. Most crucially, we listen to other people's stories, especially to the stories of those whose voices often go unheard" (p.3). The following ethnographic report provides an opportunity to compare a specific group of young people with other small friendship groups in other places. Additionally, when placed in a continuum with other studies, it reveals how this current stage of technological innovation fits into a larger evolutionary process—perhaps facilitating

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[5] http://www.ourkids.net/quebec-private-schools.php

predictions about how young people will adopt other forms of digital culture in the future. As Behar relates:

> Long after the theoretical platforms of ethnographies have been superseded, what still makes them interesting as texts are the chronicles they offer of a society observed in a given historical moment; and the fictions they often unwittingly embrace, the fiction of who the ethnographer thought she/he was in the field, the fiction of how that society was constructed by the ethnographer, whether harmoniously or con-flictively, depending on the nuances of the ethnographer's sensibility and the historical moment in which the ethnographer happened to be present as an observer. (p.4)

Over the past two decades theorists have been researching the transformation of childhood, particularly in regards to the role of new media technologies in affecting changes. Chapter Three of this thesis, "Risk, Moral Panic and Nostalgia", examines the ways in which a contemporary postmodern culture of risk breeds moral panics, particularly focusing on those surrounding childhood and new media technologies. Conversely, new technologies provide potential for unprecedented access to knowledge and opportunity. However, as digital culture becomes increasingly pervasive and embedded in the lives of some highly connected young people it becomes taken for granted which is when Mosco (2004) suggests that "technologies are at their most powerful and transformative, developing the potential to shape social norms" (Weber & Dixon, 2007 p, 5). The consequences of being born into and growing up in a digital world are as yet unknown as no generation has yet had to negotiate the changing nature of

privacy, the ways continuous connectedness impacts relationships over time, and realized the implications of having their data collected, aggregated, stored, and shared throughout their lifetime (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008).

This research is particularly timely. Herring (2008) describes the current generation of young people as a transitional generation, embodying both their own experiences of digital media and the perspectives of adults. She suggests that as researchers "we ought to take advantage of the present transitional moment to reflect across generations about technology and social change" (p.72). Herring notes that generations (sometime in the future) will normalize the social and cultural changes that are currently being negotiated; and warns that challenging these practices at that point will become less possible. We are in a unique position now to research this transition in progress, and therefore should take advantage of the present moment to record and examine societal transformations. Because today's young people are born into a digital world, it is becoming increasingly important to gauge how they adopt, use, adapt, make sense of and incorporate emerging digital technology into their everyday lives. In her forward to *Digital Youth, Innovation, and the Unexpected* Ito (2008) also calls for scholarship that acknowledges the importance of this unique moment in the evolution of new media technologies. She argues against technological determinism, suggesting that present technological engagement must be examined in light of current social and cultural realities while taking into account the history of media adoption. Both youth and digital media are in a perpetual state of change and so documenting the continuous process of evolution and implementation becomes critical.

Examining a range of young people's experiences with digital technology contributes to a clearer understanding of how they experience digital culture in their everyday lives. In their book *Born Digital,* Palfrey and Gasser (2008) pointedly caution against labeling this cohort of young people as a digital generation, because only 1 billion people of the 6 billion people in the world even have access to digital technology (p. 14). Within that digital population there is a wide range of access. It is prudent to note that just by virtue of being Canadian, the participants in this research project have a high degree of access. In a report on privacy policies prepared for the Privacy Commissioner of Canada the degree to which Canadian youth are connected is outlined.

> Maximizing Internet penetration into homes and schools has been a consistent theme of Canadian public policy since the mid 1990s, and special emphasis has been placed on connecting Canada's children (Canada, 1994; Manley, 1999). In 1999, Canada became the first country in the world to provide Internet access to every school and public library within its borders, and by 2002, 73 per cent of Canadian households with children were connected to the Net (Statistics Canada, 2004). By 2005, that number had risen to 94 per cent, approximating universal access (Spears, Seydegart & Zulinov, 2005). Canada's children are now among the most connected in the world, and over 99 per cent of them use the Internet regularly (Media Awareness Network, 2001) (Burkell, J., Steeves, V. & Micheti. A, 2007).

The participants in this study are arguably some of the most immersed in digital culture, and are also socially, culturally, economically and educationally advantaged – they have

increased access and therefore represent only one end of the digital continuum. By studying this particular group, however, and learning about the cultural desire that drives their particular responses, we create a benchmark for analysis within a broader social and historical context.

Contribution of the Research

The importance of considering the historic, geographic, cultural, social, political and economic contexts in which digital technologies are situated cannot be overstated. While this current, transitional generation of young people is often characterized by their engagement with digital culture, we cannot assume it is the only factor influencing their experience of young adulthood today. In this research, I analyze how digital technologies are embedded in young people's everyday spaces of home, school and city neighborhoods, considering the role of digital culture in these greater contexts.

My work also seeks to highlight young people's stories of their own experiences: In the course of the interviews, I invited participants to share their stories of digital culture, and include material that was important and meaningful to them. As an interview technique I opened the floor to their interests and concerns, and additionally, asked three of the participants to read and respond to the resulting chapters. The participants read, commented and critiqued my 're-storying' and analysis, and providing critical insights of their own. This strategy influenced my writing voice and helped to achieve one of the main goals of this dissertation—to make the research and analysis accessible to the people that I was writing about. By using narrative in this way, I mean to counter the moral panics pervading popular media by presenting rigorous academic research that resonates with, and is accessible to the greater public.

This dissertation reflects (in both theme and methodology) a return to the study of childhood and youth, for sociology as a discipline. I study childhood culture or youth culture as a reflection of social and cultural forces operating within the greater society. I also take care to consider young people as I would any other group of individuals situated in a particular context, not just as children in a 'state of becoming adults'. Digital culture inherently troubles the social construction of youth as not-yet-adult because it disrupts traditional balances of power between young people and adults.

The following study provides an intimate view into the lives of a group of young people, revealing the particular challenges of growing up in an urban environment today. Important, timely themes resulted from the research—for example, a critical consideration of young people and privacy in a digital world. The study data provides ethnographic support for John Dewey (1936)'s argument that affording (adult) individuals the right to privacy benefits society as a whole. Through the stories collected here we realize that young people require the same right to privacy. This ethnography discusses, in particular, the functional role of secrets as they relate to privacy. By inhabiting secret spaces and cultivating secret identities online, young people are developing a unique and very contemporary sense of self; this process is beginning now from a very young age. Additionally, the research reveals that keeping secrets provides young people with a sense of power and equity.

This dissertation also explores the critical theme of young people's play: How youth are attempting to reassert unstructured, voluntary, and unsupervised play in their daily lives, (Huizinga, 1967), and the ways in which they use digital technologies and spaces to facilitate this process. While the results of this study will interest Sociology and

Communications the research will be of great benefit to the field of Education, by informing digital literacy curriculum. As I researched participants' use of new technologies in everyday spaces, I uncovered valuable data concerning gaps in their knowledge around the social norms of digital culture. It became clear that young people were struggling to re-negotiate social norms on their own, because much of their socializing occurred in secret, away from the eyes of their parents. Although participants certainly resisted adult regulation and surveillance of their social activities, they were eager to engage in discussions with adults who showed a genuine interest in helping them address issues that arose surrounding online sociality. The information gleaned from this particular group of youth can be used to develop proactive digital literacy curriculum and better policies that will support young people in their use of digital culture.

The participants in this research really are living digital lives—they are the ones on the front lines quickly realizing the benefits and consequences of digital relationships, often without the help of adults. This dissertation gives voice to their experiences, and provides greater insight into the new world they must learn to negotiate.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter Two - Methodology & Contextualization of the Fieldsite

In this chapter I outline how the research questions for this dissertation evolved through the course of the research process. I explain how participants were recruited, describe the participants, portray the evolution of the research, depict the field site and provide the details of the data gathering. I use an ethnographic vignette to set the scene for the subsequent discussion surrounding my relationship to the participants who took part in the research. The chapter explores the ways in which my position as a parent

potentially impacted the research, both raising challenges and creating unique opportunities. This section then examines the role of narrative stories in ethnographic field research, the importance of ‘story’ as research data, analytical tool, theoretical framework and literary devise and the process of writing stories. Ethical issues inherent in the research are also discussed.

Chapter Three - Risk, Moral Panic and Nostalgia in the Everyday

Chapter Three situates the ethnographic research in the context of contemporary discourses of youth as “at risk”. The chapter opens with an ethnographic vignette portraying a public discussion that I attended at my local library. The event clearly illustrated some common concerns surrounding young people’s engagement with digital culture. I place this community event in the greater context of academic discourse surrounding young people and digital culture.

Intergenerational relationships between adults and children in contemporary Western culture are often characterized by dual emotions. On the one hand adults desire for their children to do well in life—to be successful and safe—while on the other hand they remain anxious about their safety and success. I explore the ways in which these adult desires and anxieties are manifestations of living in contemporary risk society. I introduce the concept of moral panics, and then further discuss them as they relate to young people and their engagement with digital culture. I examine the ways in which panics surrounding the Internet are both similar to and unique from panics that existed around previous introduction of new technologies. Panics surrounding new technologies are intensified, for example when juxtaposed against a current collective cultural

nostalgia for a simpler and more innocent childhood. Lastly, I situate my research within the larger research context, conclude the chapter by unpacking stereotypes of the ‘digital generation’, and explore the complexities and contradictions that characterize this ‘transitional generation’.

Chapter Four - Surveillance, Privacy & Resistance

In Chapter Four, I employ ethnographic narrative vignettes and interview excerpts from field research to portray the variety of ways in which young people’s engagement with digital culture calls into question and challenges traditional understandings of privacy. Tensions arise for both adults and young people regarding what constitutes appropriate social privacy norms for online spaces, and problematizes previously negotiated norms. From these stories and excerpts I theorize the possible significance and implications of evolving conceptualizations around privacy. In this section, I endeavor to convey the ways in which participants both understood and experienced privacy. As young people negotiate friendships, experiment with group interaction and find communities in which they wish to participate they struggle to deal with everyday peer interactions. These have become increasingly complicated as they now occur in both offline and online spaces. Today participants are faced with the challenge of engaging in social interactions with peers who may hold very different ideas about what social and privacy norms are appropriate in online spaces. While young people are struggling with traditional challenges of growing up, they now also have to deal with issues of growing up online.

Within the subculture of childhood there has emerged a distinct sub-culture of digital childhood. As the research for this dissertation progressed it appeared that social

forces were attempting to insulate young people at an increasing rate in response to the boundaries of childhood being challenged through digital culture. Digital culture challenges the boundaries of childhood by affording young people access to adult culture and technological tools that are changing the way they interact with their peers. The possibilities for young people to publically play with identity and collectively construct their personal identities have expanded with their increasing access to both public spaces and peers through digital engagement. In this study, throughout the participant's experimentation and collective play with identity a theme of authenticity emerged. This chapter concludes with a discussion about the ways in which young people manage information, which provides a form of power and is used as a way to both build community and to delineate the boundaries of communities.

Chapter Five – The Spaces of Young People's Play

This chapter explores the spaces of young people's play, particularly focusing on the ways in which digital culture transforms previous play and communication experiences. A series of ethnographic vignettes reveal the varied and complex relationships that participants have with technology, highlighting the ways in which they use it to both resist and re-negotiate power imbalances with the adults in their lives. Participants redefine everyday social norms, trying to decide which types of communication technologies and practices are appropriate in a variety of circumstances. It is evident both that context influences choices and that, social norms are developing and becoming standardized in response to the adoption of technology.

Culture emerges and evolves through play as individuals creatively push the boundaries of their play spaces illustrating how play can serve as a form of resistance or

subversion. The young people in this study lack autonomous play spaces and attempt to reclaim the type of play as described by Huizinga (1967) through the use of digital technologies in everyday spaces of home school and city. Additionally they find new spaces for autonomous play in digital spaces. Spatial definitions are contested as young peoples use of both digital and city spaces are theorized.

Chapter Six – Conclusions; Discussion of the Dominant Themes in the Research

This concluding chapter provides some final thoughts and analysis of the findings raised throughout the research, including some reflections on the degree to which adults are personally invested in young peoples engagement with digital culture. Themes of risk, the future of privacy and the role of trust in young peoples everyday lives are revisited in the context of the broader research project. Finally, the ways in which new social norms emerge around digital technologies is discussed, ending with a look ahead at future research directions.

Chapter Two: Methodology & Contextualization of the Field Site

In the following chapter I discuss the research process that shaped this study. I begin by outlining how early research inspired and focused this project, and how the research questions evolved through the course of the study. I explain how participants were recruited and characterize them, portray the evolution of the research, depict the field site and provide the details of the data gathering. I use an ethnographic vignette to set the scene for a subsequent discussion surrounding my relationship to the study participants. Important challenges in the research process are explored—for example, I examine how my position as a parent potentially impacted the research—how it created tensions within and created unique opportunities for my conversations with participants. The vignette also serves to illustrate the use of narrative stories in ethnographic field research, and I use it as a springboard to further examine the importance of 'story' as research data, analytical tool and literary device.

This chapter also situates the research within a broader theoretical framework to explore the development of academic thinking on young people and their engagement with new media. I conclude the chapter by highlighting some of the prevailing concerns emerging within the current literature, such as play, space, the commercialization of childhood, identity and privacy.

Beginnings: Early Research with Young People and Digital Culture

In the process of studying young people's play and communication practices both on and offline, over the last six years I have interviewed, conducted focus groups and engaged in participant observation with 20 girls and 8 boys between the ages of nine and

16. Some of these young people have been interviewed several times for different projects and in different settings. My work with this group has fuelled a variety of conference presentations, papers and book chapters and a co-edited book on a range of topics that emerged from my observation of their play[6].

When I began my research in 2005, the group of participants consisted of six girls between nine and11 years old. I brought them to the university lab where we played on computers and they showed me all of the websites that they visited. This process generated an extensive list of websites, however, through further participant observation I discovered that they focused on a few core activities. One of the most popular activities the girls enjoyed was building their own websites on the Piczo platform; these were the precursors to the Facebook profiles they created later on. The websites reflected their personal interests and were filled with pictures of themselves with friends. They included images from popular culture: favorite singers, celebrities, television shows, movies and fashion.

The girls lingered on sites like *Neopets* and *Webkins,* and they played flash games like *Bejeweled*. One of their favorite activities was playing on doll sites; this play became a focal point of research and resulted in two co-authored conference presentations.[7]

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[6] See *Growing Up a Particip*ant on Page 5 for a more extensive discussion of this work

[7] *"(Dis) Embodied Bodies? On Girls, Avatars, & Identities*" for the *Re-Viewing Bodies: Embodiment, Process and Change Conference* at Trinity College, University of Dublin, Ireland. 3-5 August 2005 and *Virtual Dolls/Paper Dolls: Cyber Spaces + Material Spaces = Tween Spaces*? for the *Childhood and Youth in Emerging and*

Watching the children move through phases of play (for instance, becoming immersed in doll sites and then losing interest and becoming consumed with Webkins) revealed that young people seem to collectively transition through online play stages that are targeted to their interests at various ages. The girls moved on to console video games, which generated intriguing insights about the changing nature of and the role of media in children's play; this research was presented in another conference presentation[8] and in a book chapter[9] with Sandra Weber.

Other important themes emerged from this early research around gender and performance in video games.[10] A favorite digital game that the girls played was called

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Transforming Societies International Conference, /Childhoods 2005/ at The University of Oslo, 29 June-3 July 2005.

[8] "When is then? Where is t/here? Who is me? Questions of time, space and embodiment in children's experiences of videogames" for the *Playful Subjects: technology, agency and computer games conference* at the Play Research Group in the School of Cultural Studies at the University of the West of England, Spike Island in Bristol. May 13-14 May 2005

[9] Play spaces, childhood and video games. In S. Weber and S. Dixon (Eds), *Growing Up Online: Young Peoples Everyday Use of Digital Technologies,* New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan

[10] *"Girls' Play: Context, performance and social videogame play*" with Kelly Boudreau. Presented at Women in Games @ DiGRA: Breaking New Ground: Innovation in Games, Play, Practice and Theory, Brunel University, West London, United Kingdom *and "(Some) Girls Just Want To Have Fun: Player performance, creativity, and social*

Dance, Dance Revolution (DDR) (Konami, 1998). This game combined music, dance and performance: As the girls danced on a floor mat designed to register players movements, their moves were matched with the dance steps projected on the screen. The girls would watch each other perform, offering advice and encouragement, and dance along with the player. When *Guitar Hero* (Harmonix, 2005) was released the girls played together in a similar fashion, using a plastic guitar controller to perform. These two games revealed that girls were indeed avid video game players and used game play to inspire imaginative play that moved beyond the traditional gendered roles of girls play.

As I struggled with issues of methodology and the challenges of researching young people's online interactions, I was inspired to organize a conference on negotiating research methods in cyberspace[11]. I wanted to see if other researchers were managing the same methodological and ethical issues that I was encountering in my work. This conference gave me with the opportunity to present on a panel with a group of scholars who were also researching with young people who had personal connections to them. In 2007 I co-edited (with Sandra Weber) a book on young people's engagement with technology[12]. While I do not include all of the research data from these projects in this

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video game play" also with Kelly Boudreau presented at the Canadian Game Studies Association Conference. Ottawa, ON, Canada in 2009.

[11]*Trials and Tribulations: negotiating research methods in cyberspace* at Concordia University, Montreal, QC, Canada in November 2006.

[12]Weber, S. & Dixon, S. (Eds.). (2007/2010 Revised Edition). *Growing up online: Young people and new technologies*. London: Palgrave

dissertation the evolution of my understanding and analysis of young people's engagement with digital culture has emerged from this ongoing research. Through participating in this extensive research the approach for my doctoral research emerged. It became evident that there was a need for an in-depth study of the varied digital technologies that young people used that would encompass all of the spaces of their lives. It also became evident that young people's voices were too often missing from discussions, so it became a priority to design the methodology for this project in such a way as to foreground the words and the experiences of young people themselves. Through my work as a consultant to the video game industry I had come to realize that girls perspectives in particular were often neglected and so while not designing my study specifically around gender, a goal was to ensure that girls were well represented.

The Evolution of Research Questions

The research questions for this dissertation initially focused on everyday uses of technologies, specifically looking at the range of technologies used, access to a variety of technologies, frequency of use, how technologies are used and why particular technologies are chosen for specific purposes. I developed questions that addressed the social, emotional and practical consequences of choosing between a variety of media possibilities, rather than focus on issues of constraints and affordances. For example, I wanted to know how young people decide which mode of communication to use with friends, versus parents or teachers?

Additionally, I constructed the research project to explore how young people create private and public spaces of play and sociality using digital technology. I wanted to discover whether digital spaces supplement or replace traditional play spaces. Do

young people distinguish between public and private spaces in their play either on or offline? Do they distinguish these places through the types of information they share, the way they communicate, and through the people they choose to share the media with? Throughout the research I attempted to capture the variety of ways young people use digital technologies to create spaces for particular purposes (like play), to create a sense of belonging and to explore the negotiations and representations of self.

Use of new technologies render existing social norms visible and result in possibilities for change. The choices people make impact social norms and this new reality alters the relationship between technology, communication and society. As the fieldwork progressed, however, it became evident that it is impossible to examine the role of technology in young people's lives without considering the context in which the fieldwork occurs. The consequences of the respondent's geographical, social, economic and cultural position resulted in their having a high degree of access to new media and immersion in digital culture. Therefore, the dissertation reflects the experiences of a very specific group of young people situated in a particular context. I soon realized that as Behar (2003) explains in her article *Ethnography and the Book That was Lost*, we embark on field work "to find the stories we didn't know we were looking for in the first place" (p. 16). I embarked on my fieldwork to find stories about the role of digital culture in the lives of young people and I left with a broader, richer story about what it means to come of age in a very specific time and place.

Choosing Participants

After years of observing, interviewing, playing video games and surfing the Internet with participants, I chose to focus my dissertation on girls between the ages of 12 and 16. I decided on this age range for two reasons: the first being that it was the age of my core group of participants at the time of my writing. All of my previous research had generated new questions about this group, and I wanted to include a series of exit interviews with them, so it made sense to focus my analysis on the most recent data. The second reason was that these particular participants were beginning to have some autonomy in offline space: they now had greater freedom to socialize, go to the park, to the movies and to use public transportation. They were also experiencing more independence online—belonging to online communities, creating social networking profiles, owning cell phones, and so on. The older participants had begun working with me when they were nine or 10 and had simply grown older through the course of my research process, which allowed me to observe the evolution of their engagement and play with digital culture in conjunction with their social and intellectual development.

The core group of participants come from middle and upper class families (eight girls from Westmount, four girls from the Plateau) and reflect, what marketers refer to as, the 'early adopters' of technology: They have access to and use the latest tools, and are deeply immersed in digital culture. From school, to play, to family and social interactions, digital technologies permeate every aspect of their lives, mediating their friendships, family relationships and civic and community involvement.

I recruited the primary participants of the study through personal contacts. The secondary participants (those moving in and out of the field settings on a transitory basis—perhaps showing up a couple of times to play video games and to chat) were

friends and acquaintances of the primary participants.

Protecting Participants' Identities

When researching young people, protecting respondent's identities is particularly important. In order to do this I fictionalized the details of some of the situations to camouflage participants while preserving the significance of the event. It was necessary to do this to a much lesser extent than I had initially anticipated. Because of the commonplace nature of the stories and the fact that stories were repeated over and over I was able to change small details while leaving the significant events intact without compromising participants privacy. In her groundbreaking book on auto-ethnography, communications scholar Caroline Ellis (2004) writes that ethnography typically deals with the dramatic or out of the ordinary; however, I deliberately sought to research the banal, mundane, everyday aspects of digital culture in young people's lives to illustrate their immersion in it.

Acknowledging Gender

The initial intention of my research project was to study both boys' and girls' engagement with digital culture; however, the research group quickly became dominated by girls. The girls tended to interact primarily with other girls (even the ones that attended co-ed schools) and I became intrigued by the complexity of their relationships. I decided to keep the data I had on boys as part of a general body of field notes, because boys played an important part in the girl's lives—they interacted digitally with male friends, boyfriends, brothers and fathers. Still, the girls engaged with other girls online to a much greater extent than they did with boys. As a result of this, the

dissertation does portray a gendered version of young people's interactions with digital culture.

The girls in this study are born into middle class and upper class families with well-educated mothers who have strong aspirations for their daughters to have access to above average educational and life experiences and to achieve professionally. As a result, the activities that they participate in are carefully chosen to contribute to future professional success. The aspect of social class influences the participants access to and use of technology.

In her article "Coalescing: The development of Girls' Studies" (2009) Mary Celeste Kearney explores the historical marginalization of the experiences of girls in studies of youth culture. While feminists have recently (beginning in the 1990's) begun to research girls they are still under represented in youth research (Kearney, 2009). We have few accounts of the experiences of girls as they navigate digital culture.

Traditionally feminism has focused on adult women as the ideal subject and marginalized girls as 'in a state of becoming'. Girls have been researched primarily in relation to how they are socialized into adult women. Kearney describes a movement in the most recent study of the sociology of childhood to research girls interactions in their own environment and as a specific demographic. This frame of analysis reflects the intention of this research, which was to take care to consider the participants as I would any other group of individuals situated in a particular context. The objective of the ethnography reflected in the methodology was to respect the unique position of the participants as digitally immersed and to foreground their knowledge and experiences. That being said it's important to a acknowledge the reality that, "Girl's today have more

agency than those of previous generations but even the most privileged contemporary female youth remain disenfranchised because of their age" (Kearney, p. 21). While the aim of the research is to be careful not to foreground participants status in respect to age and gender, it is very evident from the analysis of the ethnographic data that their position influences their experiences of digital culture. Intergenerational power relations weave through their stories and examples of resistance to their position as youth and girls abound. Throughout the dissertation I refer to the 'participants' or to 'young people' because the *girls* participating in the research are *young people*. While acknowledging the gendered nature of their experience I did not foreground gender in the design of the methodology.

The Field Site

The start of any ethnographic undertaking requires that researcher define the boundaries of the field site, delineating the spaces that will be covered in the study. The 'space' my research topic covered was vast; young people's engagement with digital culture encompasses most of what they do both day and night, online and offline. The digital media aspect of the research problematized and challenged traditional notions of boundaries between spaces: public and private, work and play, home and school, local and global, childhood and adulthood, physical and virtual. The ways in which young people use and experience digital media such as instant messaging, texting, social networking and gaming shape the constructions of these boundaries, influencing social norms regarding presentation of self, communication, uses and understandings of public and private spaces. In constructing the field site for this research I drew upon Jenna Burrell's 2009 article, *The Field Site as a Network: A Strategy for Locating Ethnographic*

Research, in which she proposes the field site as a heterogeneous network. Burrell argues that ethnographers are currently questioning the standard notion of the field site as spatially bounded and containing an entire culture (Gupta & Ferguson as cited in Burrell, 2009). In other words, ethnographic research no longer predominately occurs in isolated, geographically remote spaces where field sites are naturally bounded by outsiders and insiders. Digital culture, mass media and globalization are complicating field sites and as a result requiring ethnographers to re-think the role of boundary construction in defining field sites. Burrell utilizes the work of Marcus, author of, *Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography*, to outline potential research foci that provide the possibility of incorporating fluidity into research design. Marcus (1998) describes techniques of constructing ethnographic research projects that follow the object of study through various settings. Marcus suggests that the ethnographer, “follow the person,” “follow the thing, “follow the metaphor,” “follow the plot, story or allegory”, “follow the life or biography” and “follow the conflict”. Each of these strategies serves as a framework to “multisited” ethnographies, which provide a conceptual character that can be fluid across spaces (p. 90).

The primary framework of my research is on the participants (follow the person) and the theoretical concepts that are generated through the empirical research. Writing and theorizing on technology quickly becomes obsolete as new technologies continuously evolve young people rapidly adopt, appropriate, alter and discard technology. Therefore, a key factor in the design of this project is that the study examines the participants’ uses of a variety of digital media rather than focusing on a particular artifact such as a computer, cell phone or game console. The subject of the study is the participants and the

varied and multifaceted ways that they use the digital medium to engage in social interaction, create networks, communities, and experience spaces. Further, I explore how the participants interpret or understand these uses in regards to public and private spaces and then theorize the implications of these uses and understandings.

Context becomes key when examining the role that digital culture plays in the participants' everyday life. Access to technologies varies depending upon the degree of accessibility of infrastructures (in some contexts the participants lost internet access or cell phone signal due to geographical location), access to hardware and software, intrusion of adults (as monitors and gatekeepers at home and at school), and the participants' ability to resist and evade restrictions. Patterns of use vary according to what else is happening in the participants' lives: They opt in and out of social networking spaces; have their cell phones confiscated; go on vacation and are unable to use their cell phones because there is no signal; make friends from far away places who become an integral part of their everyday lives (through text or interactions on social networking spaces); play a newly released video game around the clock; are trapped inside because of inclement weather and become immersed in Facebook to continue interacting with friends; abandon Facebook to meet those friends in 'real space' as the weather breaks, etc. Individual young people's circumstances, preferences, values and lifestyle all influence the role and use of digital culture in their everyday lives, and it is this range and variety of contexts and use that constitute the stories and analysis within this study.

In the research process I encountered a formidable challenge: Attempting to capture the actions and interactions of a group of people in many spaces at once—physical space (gathering data as it occurred in domestic and city spaces) and cyberspace

(through online interactions and cell phone use). Other scholars have voiced this difficulty:

> In recent years, the chorus of voices challenging an assumed division between online and offline has grown (Henriksen 2002; McLelland 2002; Leander and McKim 2003; Carter 2005; Wilson 2006). Miller and Slater (2000) suggest that alternately, "we need to treat Internet media as continuous with and embedded in other social spaces" (p. 5). Their advice for an ethnographic approach to the Internet is to start from a site offline rather than within its virtual spaces (Burrell, 2009, p. 186).

Accordingly, I began to interview participants offline, asking about online practices, and inviting them to bring me online with them and to share online experiences and play spaces. Participants were generally excited to take me online to explore a variety of sites or to play games and occasionally continued to email or to show me YouTube videos and links to websites they thought might be of interest to me in my research.

Gathering the data

When contacting participants to schedule formal interviews I always asked participants where they would like to conduct the interview, offering suggestions such as their house, my house, the library, the local coffee shop or if the weather was amenable the park. I began formal interviews by explaining to participants that they are the experts and that there are no right or wrong answers. I explained that I was most interested in what they thought was relevant and interesting about their engagement with digital culture. This allowed them to lead the interview, get off topic and share stories and experiences about what they felt was most significant. Because of this, the interviews

were characterized by a continuous free flow of information and stories from participants with occasional questions or prompts from me. This style of interviewing is what Lofland and Lofland (1995) refer to as unstructured or intensive interviewing:

> the intensive interview seeks to *discover* the informant's *experience* of a particular topic or situation. Among other contrasts, the structured interview seeks to determine the frequency of pre-conceived kinds of things, while the unstructured interview seeks to find out what kinds of things exist in the first place (p. 18).

Lofland and Lofland explain that classic participant observation is a continuous back and forth process of watching, inquiring and listening – which is often simply another version of intensive interviewing. The ethnographic method interweaves these processes and involves continual interaction between researcher and participant often lasting over months or even years frequently resulting in mutual personal involvement (p. 19). An advantage of the one on one interviews and discussions was that the participants spoke to me in complete privacy with no time limitations. We often met to continue the interview several times because the discussions often ran up to two hours a session. The participants were free to contact me with additional information or insights and most of them did so, often seeking me out to add comments and stories over a span of several years. Because I was interviewing friendship networks, different people would sometimes tell me dissimilar versions of the same events. I attributed the differences and contradictions to differing perspectives, rather than think of them as an effort to intentionally deceive me. It was interesting to hear participants tell me an opinion or a story privately in great detail, and then to later hear them discussing more generally with

peers, as we all sat together at the park, at a café, or around my kitchen table over an after school snack.

In their discussion of the data gathering process, Lofland and Lofland emphasize the importance of "mucking about ", whereby the researcher becomes a type of "human vacuum cleaner, sucking up anything and everything she comes upon that might even remotely prove useful" (p. 71). This process of intense immersion in the field site, gathering data from multiple sources, enabled me to write a much richer account than if I had solely drawn upon interview notes. I took notes as close to verbatim as possible during the interview process; sometimes the participants would sit quietly and watch or think while I typed up notes. Sometimes it felt like they were dictating their stories and thoughts to me. After the interview I would review the transcript, cleaning up my typing and adding my own observations, analysis and comments.

Within the past decade there has been an impetus to think carefully about the ways in which research with children is being undertaken and particularly about the ways in which both generational perspectives and power differentials may affect the research process (Hill, 2006).

> At the same time, the research or consultation process itself is a form of engagement between adults operating from certain agencies within specific roles and children situated in particular settings and contexts. It embodies the individualized intergenerational relationships between one or more researchers and children, while also reflecting broader relations between the generations (Alanen as cited in Hill, 2006, p. 70).

This is particularly worthy of consideration when the topic under study is digital culture where the intergenerational divide is already so emphasized by media and where the very nature of digital engagement potentially disrupts the traditional balance of power. Because of this I readily acknowledged the participants' distinct position; while acknowledging my role as adult and researcher, I recognize their unique position as individuals who are immersed in a very particular time and place in the evolution of digital culture.

Methodological Issues: Research Challenges

Managing the fluidity of friendship groups

When I planned the ethnography and chose the participants I did not consider the transient nature of the friendship groups. While a few friendships remained stable over the course of five years, there was fluidity to the people who engaged in the participants' play and social interactions. This reality caused shifts in the boundaries of the study in ways that I had not anticipated. The participants changed schools, fought and made up, fought and did not make up, made new friends, joined new clubs and activities, went on vacations, and billeted exchange students. All of these activities brought new people in and out of their lives, some of whom became part of the study by virtue of being part of the texting, gaming or networking that the participants engaged in.

My data gathering was comprised of participant observation and interviews in everyday settings, so that I might make sense of, and interpret, digital activities utilizing the perspectives that young people bring to them. I found it to be increasingly relevant then, that the research occurred in the everyday spaces that the participants occupied, as

opposed to organized school or after school care spaces. The intention was to focus on how digital sociality and play fit into the context of their overall autonomous play and social activities. Researching the participant's intimate, daily interactions inevitably exposed me to some sensitive material. By including the following vignette, I discuss the issues around hearing and 'un'hearing contentious stories.

Evaluating Sensitive Data

Ethnographic Vignette: Afterschool Conversation

The four girls burst into the kitchen, tugging off snowy boots, dropping backpacks, parkas, hats, mitts and scarves on the floor beside the kitchen table. I smell the cold air wafting off them as they descend on the pile of vegetables I'm chopping for soup. They have walked home from school on this crisp, cold, sunny January day. The walk home is easier than the early morning walk up the mountain. The walk down is a social process as they chat with friends along the way; sometimes, meeting students from the other private schools in Westmount. They congregate on street corners, chatting and laughing as they wait for buses - huddled together shivering. If time allows and they have no tutoring appointments or piano lessons, they stop for lattes or hot chocolate at Second Cup or bring friends home to do homework together. The girls chat about their day as they sit at the kitchen island munching on the carrots that I'm dicing. I put the kettle on for tea and my 15 year old daughter begins to slice banana bread for an after school snack. "Did you hear Abbey in French class? She was so funny when she did her oral" Jayde observes. "What happened? What did she do?" Ann asks. She

> doesn't attend the same school as my daughter and Jayde but she knows Abbey. Most of the girls at the local private schools are acquainted with one another and so she is interested in hearing about the day's events. "Shanly, you're going to love this" Ann exclaims. "It'll make up an entire chapter for you!" The girls laugh, "Wait until you hear this." They begin to recount an incident that occurred on the school computers involving a 14 year-old girl and some pictures that she had intended for her boyfriend at a neighboring all boys private school. (January, 2010)

Within moments of hearing this story I realize that this is not data that I will use. I will never write this conversation up as field notes. The details of the story are too specific and the identities of the people involved would be immediately recognizable to themselves, to teachers, to many people within the small Anglophone, private school community. I talk to the girls about the situation at length. They analyze the circumstances from all angles and I listen, asking questions about the motivation for the behavior and the consequences of the choices. I'm aware that this incident will be a topic of conversation and gossip amongst many of the private school students and parents and it saddens me that the student involved will be the focus of a great deal of, most likely, unwanted attention. I've interviewed seventeen and eighteen year-old girls for other research projects who express regret for similar situations, often telling me that these events follow them into college.

Some of the young people that I've interviewed are friends of my daughter, some are friends of her friends, some are children of my friends and colleagues, and still others are friends of their children. Most of the data has been gathered during formal interviews,

in which case participants have been informed about the project and provided consent, as well as their parents, have been informed about the project and given their consent (See Appendix A for consent form sample). Many of the participants know me well, often having been a part of my life in some capacity for many years as I've volunteered and participated in their toddler play group, summer camp, elementary and high schools. I've read to them at the library, cheered them on during swimming lessons, bandaged scraped knees and dispensed popsicles at soccer practice. This influences the dynamic of the interview process. They happily share the details of their lives, pleased to have a captive audience. The participants often ask when I will need to interview them again. I am often surprised by their candor. When I feel that the stories are too personal I don't use them in my writing but I can't 'unhear' them and so they do inform my perspective and my theorizing, whether overtly or unconsciously.

I learn more from the participants than I would from interviewing complete strangers because they interact with one another and with me over extended periods of time. They keep adding relevant material to their interviews and stories, and as a result the data becomes richer and evolves over time, as they think through what they've told me or as they experience new events. The participants come back to me after a day, a week or a year to share new thoughts and experiences and I return to them as I write to ask for clarification or to ask new questions. This provides a different perspective than that of an interview setting where the researcher only gets one chance to ask the questions. In a sense, these kinds of interviews spill over and last much longer than the other more formal or delineated interviews, which I conducted.

The Parent as Researcher

Carsaro (as cited in Adler & Adler, 1998, p.19) discusses some of the challenges that adult researchers face when they study children. It's difficult to infiltrate social groups and to assume a participatory role within children's culture because these roles do not occur naturally; adults don't typically interact with young people on an informal social basis. Research on children is often conducted in schools or institutional settings because this is where children are most accessible. However, such formal settings require researchers to delineate the roles and relationships, often resulting in the reinforcement of existing power differentials or in creating awkward or contrived interactions.

> Children's behaviour in schools is very much affected by the expectations and customs of that institution, which shape how they perceive an external researcher or consultant. Many writers have commented on how the nature and content of the communication in school-based studies have been shaped by children transposing expectations about school tasks to research tasks and about teachers to researchers (e.g. Buckingham, 1994; James et al., 1998). Outsiders are often treated like teachers (e.g. being called 'sir' or 'miss') and communication patterned on the classroom (e.g. putting hands up to be 'allowed' to speak)" (Hill, 2006, p. 83).

Adler and Adler (1998), ethnographic researchers of childhood, suggest that the ethnographic perspective of the parent-as-researcher (PARS) is often overlooked. They propose that,

> Parents can readily gain entry to the world of children through their own children. They can then capitalize on this "complete membership role" (Adler and Adler 1987) by opportunistically (Reimer, 1977) making the

> community of youth to which their children belong a focus of study. This approach offers several advantages over more conventional ethnographic roles and relationships. First, it is a naturally occurring membership role with which children are totally familiar. Second, it spans children's participation in a variety of settings (p.19).

Some of the advantages of the parent as researcher role are the accessibility of the participants. They can be observed in multiple settings going about their daily lives, they have unlimited access to the researcher. The relationship that I have with the participants is pre-existing and because of this they are comfortable revealing information they might be hesitant to share with a stranger. Challenges of being a parent who engages in research emerge from role conflict that I experience as I struggle to negotiate my position as concerned adult with that of objective, neutral researcher. There are implicit power imbalances in any ethnographic relationship as well as in any adult child relationship; however, both of these imbalances become intertwined and compounded when a parent becomes a researcher (Adler & Adler, 1998). My instinct was to exclude my daughter from the data gathering process so as to minimize this conflict. However, she would watch me interviewing peers and ask why I didn't want to interview her. Eventually I did conduct a formal interview with her and while the data is not explicitly re-counted in my dissertation, her insights have had a profound influence on shaping my perspective and analysis.

When the researcher is close to the respondent, the nature of the access is unique. In the instance of Amy's posting controversial photographs of herself online, I heard the story recounted from multiple perspectives as it was occurring, rather than hearing a

reconstructed version. I also heard the same event recounted from multiple sources, including Amy's parents, friends, enemies, and from other local parents and students who did not know Amy but who were discussing the photographs at a local coffee shop. I was able to view people's "initial, instead of reconstructed, emotional reactions and the way they individually and collectively forged their responses" (Adler & Adler, 1998, p. 30). I was able to witness the phenomenon of 'Sherbing'—students socializing and gathering in the main street of the village—on a variety of occasions, over an extended period of time. I was a part of this story in my everyday life as I attempted to run errands and negotiate the crowded street. However, I viewed the event from multiple perspectives as participants recounted their own unique versions of 'Sherbing'. Ellis (2004) discusses the importance of researchers recognizing, disclosing and employing their personal relationship to their work.

> Many feminist writers advocate starting research from one's own experience. Thus, to a greater or lesser extent, researchers incorporate their personal experiences and standpoint in their research by starting with a story about themselves, explaining their personal connection to the project, or using personal knowledge to help them in the research process (pp.47-48).

I deliberately situate my own position within my research, attempting to acknowledge both the strengths and weakness this brings to the research process.

Ethnography and Story

According to Krizek (1998), as he reflects on being socialized to write as an academic in *Lessons: What the Hell are we Teaching the Next Generation Anyway?* ethnography is not only characterized by the way fieldwork is carried out - through participant observation, interviewing, focus groups, collecting case histories and so forth - but more significantly by the written result of the fieldwork process. "Ethnography must always involve recoding experience. As Barthes (1972) and Clifford (1986) remind us, ethnographies necessarily decode one culture while recoding it for another. For them, "ethnography is always about writing" (Krizek, 1998, p.92). Krizek refers to Van Maanen (1988) who maintains that the culture that one is studying must be reflected in the written work, not in the fieldwork. However, ethnographic reports often fail to evoke the human experience and emotion that they seek to convey and the researcher's position is frequently absent in an effort to maintain an objective distance. "As ethnographers we experience life but we write science" (Krizek, 1998, p. 93). Krizek calls upon ethnographers to include themselves in their work, incorporating their own position and perspective in their writing. For the ethnographer, it is through the process of writing that meaning is both made and imparted.

Ellis (2004) provides further insight on ethnographic stories suggesting that, "Stories told in traditional interview situations are useful, but not inherently superior to stories told in other situations" (p. 61). The data that is gathered as participants recount their stories to me while chatting in my kitchen or in my car as I drive them home late at night from a movie or a party informs my thinking. If I decide to use information or stories shared by participants outside of a formal interview situations I will return to the

respondent and ask them if they would like to retell the story or provide the information again knowing that it will be used as data for my dissertation. I am aware of the power imbalance inherent in my position as adult researcher entering the world of childhood. Although I am unable to alter my status as adult I attempt to mitigate the imbalances by returning again and again to my participants to clarify their positions. I try to follow their lead in interview situations.

Analysis and interpretation through writing stories

Within the field of ethnography there is a significant amount of emphasis on the way in which the research is written up. The researcher is confronted with a myriad of impressions, documents and field notes and is then faced with the task of making sense of and disseminating what she has learned. The researcher must interpret all of her data and create a text, what John Van Maanen (1988) refers to as 'tales of the field'—the stories we tell one another. The methods for making sense of experience are always personal. The researcher is always situated in a specific space and time—therefore life and method are inextricably intertwined. The researcher as writer becomes bricoleur, carefully sifting through and piecing together the accumulated data, creating meaning from experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The participants recounted the stories that comprise my raw field data. The ethnographic vignettes as they appear in this dissertation are my accounts of participants' stories. It was a challenge to decide how to tell a story, to choose the perspective that most richly conveys the experience. Sometimes I recount the participants' stories verbatim, as they were told to me. On other occasions, when several respondents told me

similar versions of the same event, I write the account as my own version of the story, one that relates my multiple hearings (see for instance, describing a fellow student's controversial photographs on Facebook and describing their own, their peer's or their parent and teacher's reactions to the photographs).

After writing the initial draft of the ethnographic chapters for my thesis (Chapter 3, 4 and 5), I returned to the field, asking the participants questions regarding their interpretation of the stories. I gave two participants versions of the three ethnographic chapters asking them to read and comment on the content. I specifically asked them to write their own comments in the text of the chapters, agreeing or disagreeing with the analysis, asking questions, providing their own stories, analysis and commentaries.

I was careful to reproduce the participants' wording when recounting the stories (which appear in this dissertation as ethnographic vignettes), and to maintain organization and order in my notes so that it was clearly indicated which interpretations were mine and which were the participants. This dialogue with the girls about the interpretation of their stories is a noteworthy feature of the interpretive process. Throughout the research process, they resisted, confirmed, commented, and re-interpreted the stories and analysis and it is through this continuous interplay that I was able to understand their viewpoint and create meaning. In *Telling Tales, Writing Stories* Mitchell and Charmaz (1996) suggest, "Facts call out interpretations; interpretations become facts. Realities and impressions answer each other, reciprocate. Last one up claims expertise, authorship, but only until the next telling" (pp.160-161).

In the first draft of this thesis, I wrote the ethnographic vignettes as verbatim as possible from the participants' interviews and from my field notes. I attempted to keep to

the ‘facts’. However, when my supervisor read the first draft of the chapter he made an observation about a vignette that led me to understand that I had not conveyed the context of the story properly. He interpreted the context as exciting and fun whereas the participants had told me that their playing with cell phones during class was a response to the boredom, repetitiveness and seeming endlessness of a typical high school grammar class. I realized that I had conveyed the facts but had lost some of the most significant meaning of the field notes. I went back to the vignette and added the details that I hoped evoked the banality of the context in which the play occurred. In her book *The Ethnographic I,* Ellis (2004) stresses the importance of getting a meaningful story over superficial accuracy. Stories can be accurate in terms of recounting the details of a conversation without truthfully conveying the essence of the experience (p. 66). According to Ellis, “ validity means that our work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in the readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible” (p.124). My adding of contextual details to the vignettes in this final report, such as those designed to create a sense of boredom in the example given earlier, is intended to create the greatest degree of verisimilitude possible.

Ethnographers who tell stories; Theoretical framework

In my research I draw upon the methodology of prolific ethnographer and sociology professor Gary Allen Fine. Fine (1987) has conducted series of ethnographies with a specific focus on the culture of small groups, exploring a range of diverse topics such as the teenage culture of role-playing games and pre-adolescent male little league baseball. Taking note of Fine’s methodology, Sassatelli (2010) explains that, “Fine’s originality depends on his ability to find places where, by speaking of small fragments of

reality, it becomes possible to speak of broad cultural borders (p. 81). My own work draws upon Fine's (1987) methodology by exploring the culture of small friendship groups and their communication and interaction practices as mediated by digital culture in order to provide a lens with which to theorize the role of technology in the process of growing up.

Fine's ethnographic style is characterized by his exploration of the ways in which small groups make sense of their common experience. He theorizes from the small group to the larger culture by mapping the connections between the culture of small groups (examined through the interactions of group members) and larger social structures. For example, in his book *With the Boys: Little League Baseball and Preadolescent Culture* (which won the 1988 Opie Award for the Best Scholarly Book in the field of Children's Folklore and Culture), Fine investigates the American male preadolescent through the observation of the world of Little League baseball. Fine tells the story of how boys learn to work, play and are socialized into their adult roles as "men" through their involvement in little league. What is most significant about Fine's work in relation to mine is that he examines the way in which small groups affect and give meaning to our shared experiences. Works like Opie's *The People in the Playground* (1993) provide insight into the typically unobserved world of the child, not for the purpose of using these insights to educate or to better socialize young people to function more successfully in society but to capture an experience, to paint a portrait of fundamental human behaviors within a particular experience and then to consider what that image might mean in a larger social context.

Fine's work (2007, 1989, 1987, 1983) emphasizes participant observation and the importance of "being on the scene" for an extended period of time. My role as parent as observer enabled me to immerse myself in the scene as a participant observer being privy to everyday interactions of participants. According to Fine, interviews are not the core of the research process but are used as a supplement to participant observation. It is only by being in the social scene that the ethnographer has access to the everyday gossip and rumor, which constitute valuable data. Fine suggests that it is through gossip and rumor that people make sense of shared experiences:

> It is through gossip and rumor that one can gain what is, in effect, a map of the social environment in which one lives and works. Through these forms of communication, people are attempting to assess the social relations within their community (Fine as cited in Sassatelli, 2010, p. 79).

Fine's ethnographies are imminently readable, interlaced with stories and field notes that evoke the scene for the reader. Fine discusses the importance of providing "verbal pictures of taken-for-granted scenes as well as provide explanations. These pictures are to be found where people talk and act in ways that permit us to gain an understanding of concepts on which we wish to build explanations of the possibility of social order" (as cited in Sassatelli, 2010, p. 90). The ethnographer searches for a group of people who talk about and are immersed in the issues being researched and then observes the way in which the interactions of the group members are positioned within and linked to broader social structures. The ethnographer then paints a picture for the reader illustrating the scene, which is what I attempted to do through the stories (Fine uses the word tales) that are interwoven through my dissertation.

In his 2001 book *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, David Bell contends that cyberspace is created through our stories; the collective stories that we tell about cyberspace, the material stories, the symbolic stories and the experiential stories combine to create a shared vision. However, individual stories are also important because each person has their own stories, which shape their personal relationship to technology, influencing individual understandings and use of technology (Kennedy, 2003). In this dissertation I ask young people to share their stories with me: stories about the technologies that they have, that they desire or that they reject. For example, these may include stories about how having a cell phone can enable a young person to arrange to meet friends after school; how texting can be a crucial means of communication facilitating the organizing of offline social interactions in neighborhood space; alternatively, how texting can be a means of virtual communication -- texting throughout the night can be a process of constantly feeling connected to one's peers. Some young people have expressed a feeling of panic at the thought of giving up their cell phones: one participant dramatically proclaimed, "I'd rather cut off my arm!" Not having access to a cell phone would result in a feeling of isolation or social exclusion. However, other participants have reported that they either refuse to carry a cell phone or continuously conveniently 'forget' to charge their phone to avoid the feeling of being continuously tracked. To these young people not having a phone represents autonomy. I have collected the stories about what digital culture symbolizes in individual everyday lives. A game space can represent fantasy or escape from the mundane, a social networking space a sense of community, a private space to experiment with representations of self, or conversely perhaps an intimidating, overwhelming space of social pressure.

Drawing upon my experience doing field research with young people for other research projects, I have noticed that the stories that are told about digital media are often shared amongst social groups. Stories can function as a part of sociality and play. Stories and rumors spread quickly and become a part of a social group's collective history, becoming the stuff of urban myth and legend, fueling panics on the part of the adults on the sidelines. These stories shape the role and perception of what digital culture means in young people's everyday lives, both to the young participants themselves and to larger adult society. These stories have inspired my selection of readings and the themes with which I chose to code my field notes. As a result, I have woven these stories throughout the theoretical definitions, explanations and examples in order to illustrate the concepts under discussion.

Rhetorics Around Young People and Digital Culture

A plethora of publications reflecting research on young people and digital culture currently exist; it remains a popular and contentious topic. In these texts, every facet of young people's engagement with digital culture is analyzed: Scholars ask broad questions about the ways in which young people construct knowledge, share information, communicate, form communities, and perform identities through their interactions with digital technology. They examine how online spaces change our ideas about play, sociality and the role of young people in the larger public spheres of society, how social norms are altered or evolve, and how young people understand and experience the realms of public and private in these places. From the discussion of these broad concerns, increasingly focused questions emerge. New research explores, for

example, how computers might be used in schools for formal learning, how computer games might be used to enhance learning both in and out of the classroom, how online chat and text messaging change the ways in which language and writing are used, and how online spaces create community that can supplement or replace offline communities. The range of topics and questions that extend from inquiry into young people's use of digital technology is extensive, and demonstrates the intense and persistent interest in this emerging field. This chapter concludes by situating the current literature within a broader context of the evolution of research in young people's digital engagement.

Childhood's End or A Brave New World? Early Perspectives on Youth and Digital Engagement

Initially, most studies of children's or young people's use of popular media addressed social and cultural issues, though not usually from an educational perspective (Sefton-Green, 2004). Research was often driven by a series of adult concerns about the changing nature of 'childhood' (Buckingham, 2000; Elkind, 2001; Meyrowitz, 1985; Postman, 1994;Valentine & McKendrick, 1997) and did not explore questions regarding how to use children's play with technology to maximize learning. During the 1980's and 1990's, however, scholars began to discuss childhood as a social construction rather than as a biological stage[13]. This route of inquiry prompted complicated questions regarding children's access to technology: If childhood is a biological stage then clearly children's

[13] This view is reflected in the media studies literature on children where there is an intense focus on better understanding the changing nature of childhood and the role of new media in this process.

exposure to information and ideas should be controlled in response to their cognitive and emotional development. However, if childhood is socially constructed determining how to regulate access to information and ideas, particularly as young people are autonomously engaging with digital culture, becomes more complex.

As technology use escalated and digital media increasingly permeated young people's lives, adults grew more concerned about their affects on youth. Accordingly, research agendas were influenced—studies began to focus on the ties between technology, notions of risk, and (alternatively) notions of opportunity for young people (Livingstone, 2003).

While the Internet affords users freedom and possibility, it is also considered a potentially risky space for youth. Henry Jenkins (2004) uses the terms "Digital Generation" (as a utopian discourse) and "Columbine Generation" (as a discourse of risk) to describe these opposing perspectives on young people and their relationship with technology. These two diverging positions are significant, as they continue to characterize much of the literature that surrounds youth and digital media today.

Many authors in the field discuss young people's engagement with digital culture in the context of prevailing mythologies that surround technology. Each new type of technology gives rise to a set of mythologies inspired by the hopes and fears that it engenders as it emerges (Mosco, 2004). This is no less true of the Internet than of technologies that came before, however, a unique set of mythologies exist that are particularly related to the Internet and children's use of it.

In the early eighties, literature emerged emphasizing the negative impacts of electronic media on children and on the very institution of childhood[14], creating a mythology of media and childhood's end. This perspective was epitomized by Marie Winn's work (1981; 1983; 2002), which suggested media was destroying childhood, and David Elkind's 1981 book, *The Hurried Child* suggesting that we are forcing children to grow up too quickly. Perhaps the most provocative of this genre, however, was Neil Postman's *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1994), in which Postman argued that media was eradicating childhood altogether. An opposing perspective emerged, however, to counteract these dire predictions: the myth of the 'cyber kid'. This invention is related to both the Digital Generation myth and a Utopian discourse—it purports that children have an essential aptitude for technology and that they are the epicenter of the information revolution; the ground zero of the digital world (Katz 1997). The cyber kid mythology reflects the rhetoric of young people as leading the way into a brave new world of technology (Tapscott, 1998).

As the 1990's drew to a close, these two radically opposed mythologies—that new media posed a threat to children and the very existence of childhood, and that new media provided a utopia of children's empowerment—dominated the discourse. Historically, this is a typical pattern: As new media are introduced, moral panics surrounding childhood erupt. At the same time a utopian perspective regarding the technology emerges to counteract the hysteria. As the medium is incorporated into daily

[14] These moral panics may have been indicative of a growing anxiety about the changing nature of childhood, however, and broader concerns about social change (Sternheimer, 2003).

life, however, a more balanced approach to the media is established. Though it seems contradictory, this process initiates important questions regarding children's real engagement with digital media, and how discourses reflected in the academic literature and policy approaches are constructed.

In her 2003 article, "Children's Use of the Internet: Reflections of the Emerging Research Agenda", Sonia Livingstone suggests that the study of children's Internet use is relatively new. When a new form of media is introduced and research is emerging, she notes, the research agenda is often driven by policy concerns, which are in turn driven by public anxieties and moral panics. Livingstone observes that these anxieties and panics further complicate the already sensitive issue of researching young people in private spaces such as the home (Livingstone, 2003). Researching the ways in which new media is assimilated into the lives of children, therefore, requires a unique perspective that counterbalances perennial anxieties surrounding the protection of children. Researchers in the field are continually asked to re-examine age-old concerns regarding young people and their use of technology, and must point to ways in which each new medium is similar to or unique from the mediums that precede it.

These types of questions can be useful as they encourage scholars to situate the examination of new media in the larger context of general media use. At the beginning of the year 2000, for example, studies emerged to provide a more balanced perspective to the debates surrounding youth and digital culture. David Buckingham's *After the Death of Childhood* (2000), in particular, provided some equilibrium to these issues. In the recent literature, more sophisticated and nuanced analyses of children's media use are emerging. These tend to use qualitative research techniques, which incorporate the

child's perspective on their own experiences, thereby reflecting a greater understanding of children and young people's actual use of media.

New Research Approaches to Youth and Digital Media

Qualitative Research

While the media effects debate is a crucial issue with a long and laden history, there is a telling lack of research exploring the everyday experiences of young people outside of this discussion. According to Buckingham in his 2007 literature review on new media**:**

> Mainstream communications research has generally avoided the experimental approaches employed in relation to games, tending instead to use large-scale questionnaire surveys to map patterns in access and use (e.g. Center for the Digital Future, 2007; Lenhart et al., 2001; Livingstone and Bober, 2005; Mitchell et al., 2003). Given the rapid pace of technological and cultural change, such studies often have a fairly limited shelf-life, and need to be frequently updated. Furthermore, a great deal of this work is essentially descriptive. For example, when it comes to potentially harmful or offensive material (such as pornography or 'hate sites'), we do know a fair amount – at least from self-report data – about whether children are likely to have encountered such material, and in very broad terms how they feel about it. However, we know relatively little from this research about how they interpret this material, and almost nothing about its effects, for example on children's attitudes or behaviour. (Buckingham, Burn, Whiteman. & Willet, 2007, p. 35).

Concerns over the potential effect of media on young people tend to provoke emotional responses to the issue and generate research funding but once the utopian discourse and the moral panic abate a broader range of questions emerge. Additionally, while large scale quantitative research is critical as a means of recording patterns of use it is also crucial to investigate what that use *means* in people's everyday lives:

> Researchers in Media and Cultural Studies have tended to rely on smaller-scale qualitative research. The focus here has been on how families or specific groups of children interact online, and make sense of what they encounter (e.g. Buckingham and Willett, 2006; Facer et al., 2003; Holloway and Valentine, 2003; Weber and Dixon, 2007). The questions here focus on issues such as identity construction, peer culture and play; and on the social or domestic contexts in which the Internet is used. (Buckingham, Burn, A., Whiteman.N, and Willet, R., 2007, p. 36).

While it is crucial to gather data on patterns of use it is the smaller, longitudinal ethnographic research projects that incorporate the perspectives of young people themselves that reveal the complexities and details of young peoples' everyday experiences with digital culture. This is the research gap that my work is designed to partially contribute.

Persisting Panics

While qualitative studies mean to address everyday use and provide more nuanced research, for use by educators and policy makers, preoccupations with risk and danger in research concerning young people's relationship with digital media persist.

For example, The *UK Children Go Online* project (2005) was an extensive initiative that examined the potential risks and the opportunities that the Internet poses for young people between the ages of nine and nineteen. This was a large, national study of young people and their parents looking at how the Internet influences or is influenced by social factors such as family life and peer interaction. The project focused on the opportunities for education, informal learning and literacy as well as communication and participation that the Internet can provide for young people. The research particularly looked at issues of the digital divide. Several publications have emerged from the research project, such as *Taking up Online Opportunities? Children's uses of the Internet for Education, Communication and Participation* (Livingstone & Bober, 2004).

Much of the new research surrounding young people and new media technologies continues to be framed in a discussion of danger and risk. *Risks and safety for children on the Internet: the UK report* (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, & Ólafsson, 2011) outlines some initial results from a large scale, qualitative study designed to reveal the balance of opportunity versus risk experienced by UK children while using the Internet. The survey sample includes 1,032 nine to sixteen year olds, and a parent. The objectives of the survey were to evaluate the level of risk to young people while interacting online, and the level of their coping skills, along with parental concerns and supervision of young people online. Other publications focused on risk include Livingstone and Ólafsson's article "Risky Communication Online" (2011), which examines the ways in which young people might feel more comfortable online than off, and raises concerns about potential dangers online. Sonck, Livingstone, Kuiper and de Haan (2011) prepared a report *Digital Literacy and Safety Skills* as an outcome of their research into risk and

safety. Research into online safety breeds a new field of writing, curriculum and websites incorporating information designed to keep children safe.

Buckingham's (2008) recent work counters the risk discourse by emphasizing the banality of young people's Internet use. He suggests, "The technologically empowered "cyberkids" of the popular imagination may indeed exist, but even if they do, they are in a minority and they are untypical of young people as a whole" (p. 15). He further explains that recent studies indicate the majority of young people's everyday Internet use consists of mundane forms of communication and information retrieval. To create multimedia productions requires up to date software and band width, which middle class youth are more inclined to have access to[15]. Therefore, it becomes important to engage in a range of ethnographic research projects that incorporate various socio-economic and cultural perspectives in order to have a broad picture of young people's use.

Diverse Approaches

Critical research has also emerged from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's grant-making initiative in the area of digital media and learning. The 2005 project has grown to encompass diverse areas of research relating to educational reform and technology development. One outcome of this initiative is a six volume series featuring key research (Ito, M. et al, forward 2008). The goal of the MacArthur series is to focus on how young people's engagement with new media technologies influences the ways in which learning occurs:

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[15] The group of young people involved in my project have access to a wide range of technology, both at home and at school.

> This book series is founded upon the working hypothesis that those immersed in new digital tools and networks are engaged in an unprecedented exploration of language, games, social interaction, problem solving, and self-directed activity that leads to diverse forms of learning. (Ito, Mizuko et al, 2008, para. 2)

The MacArthur project is comprised of a broad range of scholars from diverse academic backgrounds who use a range of methodologies to examine young people, digital media and learning. It reflects a series of separate and diverse research projects, which have been brought together to examine the relationship between digital media and learning. Ito explains:

> The defining frame for this series is not a particular theoretical or disciplinary approach, nor is it a fixed set of topics. Rather, the series revolves around a constellation of topics investigated from multiple disciplinary and practical frames. – The series as a whole looks at the relation between youth, learning, and digital media, but each book or essay might deal with only a subset of this constellation. (Ito, 2008, para. 3)

Despite the assertion that the goal of the initiative is to move past discussions of the positive and negative effects of digital media on youth, it does prove difficult to break free from utopian and moral panic discourses. These concepts are inherent to the social and political climate that surround the scholarship and shape the idea that some type of 'new' and productive learning is occurring as young people engage with digital media. This kind of research also propagates the idea that adults need to understand how this learning occurs in order to intervene and maximize the productivity of young people's

engagement with technology, potentially exporting it into more formal environments for maximized productivity.

The MacArthur project aims to discover how digital media influences young people's learning both inside of academic institutions and in informal environments. This differs from my research project, which is not designed to examine issues of learning (although there may be instances of learning that emerge during the course of the field work) but rather, to explore experiences of play and sociality.

In her chapter "A Rule Set for the Future", series editor Tara McPherson explains the focus of the book *Innovative Uses and Unexpected Outcomes* (2008) is geared towards digital learning and unanticipated social encounters. She explains how these themes are embedded in larger social systems, including the family, schools, and peer groups. The work means to move beyond typical discussions of positive or negative outcomes from young people's engagement with technology and simple accounts of digital media and learning as either utopian or dystopian. Instead, the volume situates current issues of digital media within an historic continuum in order to point to what is new or unique. The utopian and dystopian frameworks McPherson outlines are powerful forces that shape the context and environment in which digital media is used – it's important to look beyond digital media itself as the central force shaping young people's lives and consider the broader social and cultural environment. To this end, my ethnography situates the experiences of the young people within this framework. Through my research and analysis I examine how these utopian and dystopian discourses shape adult desires and anxieties, provide the means and rationale for adult surveillance, *and* afford young people with opportunities for autonomy.

Dominant Themes

Young Peoples experiences of Play and Space

Drawing upon works in the field of Play Theory, such as Huizinga (1967), Callois (2001/1958), Sutton-Smith (1997), I explore the role of play in the lives of the study participants. There has been significant literature within the field of child studies that addresses the ways in which autonomous play is missing from the lives of young people in contemporary Western society, due to adults' increased monitoring and regulation of their time and space. The need for children to have their own private spaces for play is prevalent in the literature (Cloke & Owen, 2005; Sobel, 1990; Ward, 1978; Ward 1990). The desire on the part of adults to protect children from harm through surveillance is a central characteristic of growing up in contemporary Western society; however, continuous monitoring limits young people's free play and social interactions changing the ways in which they experience domestic, school and community space (Fotel & Thomsen, 2004). Play has been framed as a defining feature in the lives of youth. Through interviews and participant observation I explore the ways in which young people understand play. Often the play the participants describe is subversive, it occurs collectively and even when adults are involved in the play sometimes their participation is unwitting. The participants use the tools at their disposal to engage in play whenever opportunities arise, sometimes covertly utilizing play as a means of resistance to adult surveillance and control.

Much of the previous research that I have done on young people and video games has been focused on young peoples' perceptions of spatiality, particularly looking at

how technology alters historical constructions of space[16]. One of the conclusions that emerged from my MA thesis was that young people perceived virtual spaces as fluid with, or contiguous to, everyday spaces. My work examined the ways in which young peoples' access, or lack of access, to community space affected the ways in which they used technology to construct spaces of sociality that were fluid with their offline lives. Seth Giddings chapter "I'm the one who makes the lego racers go" in *Growing Up Online* (2007), is based on a micro-ethnography of his two boys, in which they replicate the gravitational pull represented in a video game in their own offline play. Giddings suggests, here, that virtual representations of space may influence offline perceptions. Chapter 5 of this dissertation explores issues of how young people struggle to negotiate the function, position and meaning of on and offline spaces in their everyday play and social interactions. Understanding the geographies of the spaces of the participants' lives is key to understanding the role of digital culture. The spaces of home, school, parks, neighborhoods and the degree of access that the participants have to spaces in their school and community influence the ways in which they use digital culture to communicate and play. This issue is explored more fully in the discussion of 'Sherbing' in Chapter 5.

The Commercialization of Childhood

There are increasing concerns with the role of the market and the commercialization of young people's culture (Buckingham, 2007; Cook, 2004; Chung &

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[16] See Dixon, S. (2005). *The Heterotopic Spaces of Childhood*. Unpublished master's thesis, Concordia University, Montréal, Quebec, Canada.

Grimes, 2005; Cross, 2004; Dale, 2005; Giroux, 2001; Grimes & Shade, 2005; Kapur, 2005; Kenway & Bullen, 2001; Lindstrom & Seybold, 2003; Linn, 2005; Quart, 2004; Schor, 2004; Seiter, 1993; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1997; Zelizer, 1994). Adult apprehensions center around whether or not young people: realize that the sites they play on are in fact designed and operated by commercial interests; recognize when they are being marketed to; and understand how their private information might be mined, aggregated, shared and stored. Ellen Seiter's (2005) work looks at the potential of the computer as a tool for children's learning. Her book *The Internet Playground: Children's Access, Entertainment, and Mis-Education* is based on research she conducted over a four-year period. She taught journalism using computers, to children eight to twelve years old at two public elementary schools in San Diego. Seiter discusses the digital divide, comparing the students from the two schools: one in an affluent area with excellent resources and one in an area with limited resources. Seiter's work is an ethnographic study of children's play on the Internet, which, like much of the research on young people and digital media takes place in a formal educational setting. This context provides the optimal research setting for a study on the ways in which children may or may not develop literacy skills through using the Internet however, her study did not explore young people's unsupervised uses in domestic spaces. In the course of her study, Seiter also makes a significant observation: young people are often unaware that the online spaces they socialize and play in are commercial spaces, and they do not recognize when they are being advertised or marketed to.

Additional concerns arise around the degree to which commercial interests influence the ways in which young people form identity[17]. In her article "Consumer Citizens Online: Structure, Agency and Gender in Online Participation", Willett (2008) explores the relationship between consumerism and identity using a case study of a group of 11 and 12 year old girls designing dollmaker sites in an afterschool club in London. Willett cautions about, "over-celebrating the agency of individuals" (p.51). She explains that material objects are used in youth subcultures as means to categorize individuals based on race, class, gender and age. Commercial products from popular media create categories that youth then adopt as visible symbols of their social position, youthful identities are constructed through style and consumption. By affiliating oneself with a popular brand of clothing or pop star young people align themselves with other young people who share similar backgrounds and interests. Willett points to the work of McRobbie (1991), who suggests that girls recreate consumer trends, and research by Weber and Mitchell (2008) who use the term bricolage to describe how girls appropriate commercial images to create home pages reflecting their individual identity. Willett (2008) identifies the tensions that exist within the research, suggesting that while online spaces are important for young people's personal expressions of identity, they are not free of market influences. The degree to which young people are constructed as passive recipients of ideas and images, dupes of marketers or conversely celebrated as active and

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[17] While the commercialization of childhood through marketing in digital spaces is not the focus of my research, the prevalence of market forces in the spaces of childhood certainly plays a role in the ways in which children experience space and particularly digital spaces.

empowered agents in the process is an ongoing and essential tension in research with young people and digital media. Young people struggle with these tensions continuously as evidenced in the data from the dissertation fieldwork.

Identity

David Buckingham, begins the timely collection *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media* (2008) by discussing the current and evolving meanings of identity. He reflects: "A traditional, functionalist account of socialization would see this in equally normative terms: the young person is a passive recipient of adult influences, a "becoming" rather than a "being" in their own right" (Buckingham, p.4). In my work, I do not consider young people to be in a process of socialization to appropriate adult behavior, as implicit in the assumption of young people as being in the process of becoming is the idea that some sort of intervention is required. My dissertation aspires to capture an experience of time and place for a small group of young people in order to theorize about what is occurring in the larger culture in which they are situated.

Buckingham also asserts:

> Some recent research has suggested that contemporary youth cultures are increasingly diverse and fragmented, and that they are best seen, not as a matter of self-contained "subcultures" but in a more fluid way, as "scenes" or "lifestyles" to which young people may be only temporarily attached. (2008, p. 17)

This conceptualization of young people as belonging to scenes that are fluid similarly describes the group of young people that I study. They belong to this particular Westmount scene situated in a particular historical cultural, economic, linguistic and

political context that shapes their collective experience growing up but it is a stage that they will pass through.

However, Buckingham adds that by theorizing the concept of identity as fluid, or in a continuous state of creation by young people themselves, we neglect to acknowledge the pressures that young people face to conform. On the one hand, fluidity suggests young people have the opportunity to play freely and explore possible identities, while on the other hand they must play within the constraints of online spaces. Buckingham points out that in constructing technology as the primary force driving social change neglects the consideration of the social and historical factors that also create change. Technology has helped to make individualization possible but the way that individualization is enacted in everyday society is part of a broader postmodern shift.

Buckingham additionally notes, “there has been relatively little research on the more mundane, even conformist, cultures of young people who are not members of such “spectacular” or oppositional groupings (or indeed on affluent middle-class youth)” (2008, p. 5). My research helps to fill this gap by examining the everyday digital media practices of middleclass young people. The respondents in my study can be described as early adopters of technology. They are economically, educationally, socially and culturally privileged, which contributes to and shapes the ways in which they use, experience and understand digital technology.

danah boyd’s (2008) dissertation, *Taken out of Context; American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics* focuses on how people negotiate a presentation of self to unknown audiences in mediated contexts; particularly how American teenagers socialize in networked publics like *MySpace*, *Facebook*, *LiveJournal*, *Xanga* and *YouTube*. Her

chapter “Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics” (2007) in *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media* focuses on the ways in which “teens engagement in social networking spaces provides insights into identity formation, status negotiation and peer-to-peer sociality”(boyd, 2007). boyd’s work on social networking spaces and identity formation is relevant to my research because many of the participants in my ethnography use social networking spaces, and like boyd, I too examine the ways in which digital culture may impact identity formation. However, my project is much smaller in regards to the number of participants. In this study I focus on a small group of young people, examining their social interactions in digital culture and in everyday unmediated social spaces over an extended period of time. Boyd’s study reveals the diverse roles that social networking spaces have in teenager’s lives. Her work explores young peoples’ concerns surrounding privacy and identity and the choices that are continuously being made as they struggle to maintain an autonomous social life apart from the watchful monitoring of adults.

In “Gendering Facebook: Privacy and Commodification” (2008) Shade and Cohen found that young women felt pressure to participate on Facebook in order to have any sort of social life and to communicate with friends. Opting out of Facebook is in essence opting out of your peer cohort; the participants in Shade and Cohen’s study experienced peer pressure to participate on Facebook. This echoes the experience of some of the participants in the ethnography for this dissertation; however, other participants chose not to join social networking spaces. While still others opted in for the sole purpose of managing their online identity; they felt if they did not participate on Facebook peers would construct their identity for them - without their input, consent or

sometimes even their knowledge. These tensions are explored further in chapter 4 of this dissertation. Additionally, Shade and Cohen's findings suggest that while social networking spaces provide opportunities for young people to align themselves with political concerns—they are not viewed by young women as effective tools for collective political mobilization. An in depth discussion of Facebook as a space for young people to be politically engaged can be found in Chapter 4.

Privacy

Issues of privacy are addressed within the academic literature on young people with regards to commercialization, safety, risk and the changing nature of privacy. Privacy is difficult to define, and historically, definitions of privacy have been contextual (for example, legal definitions of privacy are different from domestic notions of privacy). Definitions of privacy are difficult to agree upon because it is a conceptually abstract notion (Bennett, 1992; Gross, 1967; Post, 2001; Thomsan, 1984). Technological evolution complicates the process and notions of privacy are increasingly in flux (Solove, 2007). Author Ferdinand David Schoeman (1992) suggests that, "Given the socially hyperactive role privacy plays in contemporary controversies about personhood, there may be some benefit in not striving for verbal precision in defining privacy (p. 11). Inferring that perhaps ambiguity leaves some room for negotiating conceptualizations around privacy according to the context.

Many studies reveal that young people have a different conception of privacy due to the nature of their online interactions—because they readily surrender personal information, and conduct intimate conversations in open spaces, for example. Additionally, there is a rapidly expanding body of literature that addresses the issue of

privacy and surveillance, and the ways in which (as a response to technological intervention in daily life) definitions of privacy are becoming increasingly complicated and contextual.

In his chapter, "Growing Up Digital: Control and the Pieces of a Digital Life" in *Digital Youth, Innovation, and the Unexpected* Robert Heverly (2008) notes,

> There is little, if any, explicit recognition among young people that digital media may not only be used by them, but in fact, may use them. That is, when young people become the subject (or object, if you will) of digital media, they are used by it; when a digital media artifact—a digital media file of any type, for example video, audio, still image, text—that features them is created, part of them becomes entangled with the digital media and forms the substance of it. (p. 199)

Young people employ digital media tools to record images and information about themselves, which they then broadcast to the world without considering the long-term implications, he observes.

To Heverly, there are additional privacy concerns related to issues of control: Who regulates and legally controls digital media artifacts once young people are embedded in them? We must consider both the negative and positive effects of young peoples' use of digital media technologies, he suggests:

> We must also consider what these technologies do to and with our children as well as what our children do to and with these technologies. In other words, where children are entangled in and become a part of digital media artifacts, we must consider the nature, importance, and future potential of

> that entanglement when thinking about the creation of and control over those artifacts. (Heverly, 2008, p. 201)

In his chapter, Heverly includes a story of an underage girl who shares some explicit photos with her boyfriend. When the relationship dissolves the boyfriend distributes the photos electronically and the underage girl loses control of the images. He uses such stories of young people as *objects* of digital media artifacts throughout his work to complement the analysis. These anecdotes stem from everyday experiences with technology reflected in the news, online, and in schoolyards, and they shape our collective understanding of the risks surrounding digital media. He explains:

> These examples are a mix of truth and fiction, but each is rooted not in hysteria, but in some reality of digital media. None is intended to be hyperbolic; they are all offered as examples of the reality that this chapter later takes up (p. 202)

With these examples, Heverly points to the ease with which images can be produced, distributed, categorized and stored online, noting how effortless it is to find potentially compromising personal data over time, and how this poses additional risk to young people. He stresses the need for greater clarity and consistency in the laws meant to protect children from themselves, noting, “where there is a potential for negative effects, especially long-term negative effects, the solution most societies have chosen is to insulate children from them in whatever ways are possible” (p. 211). This approach only casts young people as powerless victims of their own immaturity.

Heverly’s work is valuable for providing pause in a climate that often valorizes young peoples’ use of digital media. His research highlights the potential consequences

of young people's media use, and problematizes the permanence and persistence of digital data. He reminds us that youth (as less mature users of technology) require special protection under the law, and he identifies a need for programs to educate young people about the risks of becoming embedded in digital media.

Burkell, Steeves, and Micheti (2007) support the call for new approaches to education, finding that children are unlikely to read 'long and boring' privacy policies. The authors note that adults simply assume young people don't comprehend or value privacy issues because they willingly provide their personal data online. However, while the young people participating in the research acknowledged they were uncomfortable with online surveillance, they felt powerless to resist—if they refused to comply with commercial demands, they wouldn't be able to partake in a rich online world. The authors raise the crucial point that young people need to be informed about the type of information being collected, how it is stored and used, who is collecting it and who has access to it in the future. While young people might still agree to surrender their personal information – they will do so knowing and understanding the consequences of the trade-off.

In the article "I've got nothing to hide' and other misunderstandings of privacy", Solove (2007b) addresses a common refrain in the popular discourse surrounding privacy rights. According to Solove, a significant percentage of the population respond, "I've got nothing to hide" when faced with questions about Internet use and privacy violations. The problem with this declaration of innocence is that it justifies increased surveillance of people in online spaces: the thinking is, that if you have done nothing 'wrong' you have nothing to worry about and should not need privacy. The 'nothing to

hide' defense is one of the primary arguments made when balancing privacy against security. While this assertion carries some wait, Solove suggests that it is a deeply flawed response that threatens the value of privacy because it is based on the presumption that privacy has to do with hiding something bad. In order to deconstruct the 'nothing to hide' argument, therefore, privacy needs to be reevaluated taking the context into account. While the notion of privacy has evolved over time and is still in a state of transformation, Solove concedes, when individuals say they want privacy today, they simply want to be able to control or conceal information about themselves that others might use against them.

Solove draws particular attention to the practice of privacy violations, and the power inequities they cause between individuals and organizations. While bureaucracies assume increased power through online interactions, individuals often become more vulnerable, and assume risks in the form of errors, lack of transparency and accountability. Through the process of random data mining, organizations collect seemingly innocuous amounts of information. While we may be unconcerned about revealing *some* personal information online, Solove cautions, the process of combining and aggregating any amount of data can reveal details we'd rather conceal. Additionally, the aggregation of information allows governments and companies to predict the future behavior of individuals and make decisions on the probabilities of future outcomes. They make decisions that affect people based on actions they may *potentially* take.

An equally troubling issue lies with the way organizations employ *exclusion*, a practice that conceals their identity from users. Generally, individuals are not told who is collecting their data online, what they are evaluating, and how they intend to use the

information. This climate of concealment is problematic for many reasons, but is particularly troubling because it results in people being unable to correct errors in the data. The reality of 'secondary use' is another area of concern: Often online users provide information to one organization for a specific purpose, which is then stored and used in the future by a different organization without the user's consent.

In his work, Solove struggles with the varying conceptualizations of privacy in online environments in an attempt to shape a static definition of the term, but he inevitably concedes that the more pressing issue is to understand and address privacy problems and violations. Philosophical discussions regarding a workable definition of contemporary privacy will continue, but meanwhile, we need to figure out how to live in a world where actual privacy is continuously being problematized.

Difficulties arise when people are forced to make decisions about privacy that entail balancing their individual privacy rights against the collective good of society. What's good for the individual does not always serve the best interests of the community, and sometimes we must trade individual privacy rights in order to protect others. For instance, citizens may agree to having surveillance cameras on street corners if they believe that those surveillance cameras will keep the streets safe for children to walk home from school. They may also agree to curfews and security patrols in their neighborhood parks if those rules make the park a secure space for young people to play.

Solove notes that because we are social beings, it's impossible to extricate our own well being from the well being of others. He refers to John Dewey's (1936) argument that individuals are given rights to privacy because doing so benefits society as a whole. If individuals were not provided with space outside of society, community would become

overbearing and intrusive – people need a separate space in which to develop and thrive. Solove argues that maintaining individual privacy has a collective social value; protecting individual privacy rights benefits society as a whole. He also references the work of Robert Post (2001), by suggesting that the promotion of individual privacy rights is in itself a form of social control that emerges from within society, and is a means by which society enacts social norms surrounding appropriate behaviors within a civil society.

These issues are of crucial importance in discussions of young people's engagement with digital culture, because they are the ones on its front lines. Decisions that adults make regarding online privacy rights, laws and social norms will have the biggest impact on the young people who are currently being forced to negotiate privacy decisions on a moment by moment basis. Young people's engagement with technology occurs within specific geographical, social and cultural contexts therefore use must be examined within these circumstances in order to truly understand the influence of these overarching social structures. Focusing solely on technology neglects to examine all of the factors that influence the changing role of young people in society; for instance, identity is constructed, interactions occur in both digital and physical spaces, the role and meaning of play and the conceptualization and decision making concerning privacy are all aspects of contemporary young people's everyday experiences that are influenced by technology while simultaneously being complicated by the contexts and social structures in which they are situated. The challenge of my research is in capturing and mapping the multiple forms of digital engagement practiced by participants in the everyday spaces of their lives, integrating and making meaning of them. In the following chapter the moral panic and risk that is so symbolic of growing up in contemporary urban spaces is

explored in relation to the ways in which it impacts young people's experiences of digital culture.

Chapter Three: Risk, Moral Panic and Nostalgia in the Everyday

It was just beginning to get dark as I dashed out of my house and darted across the street to the Atwater Library in Westmount. It occurred to me that it was finally beginning to feel like spring after a long and particularly harsh and snowy winter. I walked up the library stairs, unsure of what the evening would bring. I was attending a talk sponsored by University of the Streets Café entitled *Data-mining, young people and privacy: What are the trade-offs to posting your stuff online?* The organization is affiliated with Concordia University, and provides a space where people from diverse backgrounds (usually outside of the academic sphere) can meet in order to discuss issues of interest to the community.

I entered the stately heritage building where the talk was being held and asked the woman at the desk for directions. She pointed to an alcove where four or five people were sitting around a small wooden table. The room slowly began to fill up. The attendees appeared to be an eclectic group of varying ages. University students mingled with grandparents while bohemian looking artist and community activists found seats beside suburban parents. Eventually, there were approximately 40 people packed into the space.

A moderator introduced the guest speaker, who had been invited to briefly introduce the topic of privacy issues online. The speaker began by recounting his own experience with Facebook, outlining his antipathy towards the social network space. He explained that he initially became opposed to Facebook because he had become frustrated with his inability to remove his online profile. He expressed the opinion that deleting

information from Facebook was an unnecessarily complicated process. He was also against Facebook's "ongoing privacy violations".

The speaker argued that in reality, social networking sites are not 'communities', but exclusive clubs, because one must join these online spaces in order to participate. He suggested that MySpace, for example, was "an elitist club for white, middle class Western kids". Because the term 'community' denoted a space that was freely accessible to everyone, he concluded, social networking spaces as they exist now are generally incompatible with the ideology of the Internet as an *open* community.

Another point of contention for the speaker was Facebook's insufficiency as a viable agent of social change, because members did not utilize the site as a vehicle for social activism. While some activists' organized events through Facebook, this was not generally how the site was used.

As the presenter concluded his anti-Facebook polemic I waited in fascination to hear the reaction of the audience. The comments came rapidly, as audience members interrupted and spoke over each other, struggling to be heard. The conversation veered widely off track, as people expressed opinions that had more to do with societal fears about young people's general engagement with digital media than about Facebook's privacy policies.

The attendees of the talk vehemently expressed three concerns in the subsequent discussion. The first being that young people were revealing information online with no awareness of the consequences—they were all dupes of marketers, fraudsters and pedophiles. This assertion was disputed in turn, by a younger audience member who worked with youth. She felt that young people generally knew that their data was being

mined, but that they perceived the exploitation of their privacy as the price of participation in online culture. The second concern (which audience members seemed to agree with unanimously) centered on the idea that online social interactions were not 'real', and that communication is most valuable when it occurs in 'real' time and space. Many participants worried that young people did not understand this important distinction. They felt that online relationships carried more risk for young people who were still struggling to learn appropriate ways of interacting offline, and who had not yet developed the social, intellectual and emotional maturity to negotiate online spaces. Thirdly, the general consensus seemed to be that online interactions were negative and damaging for young people, and were resulting in a generation that was lazy, antisocial, desensitized to others' emotions and politically disengaged.

As the discussion drew to a close, I thanked the commentator and hurried out of the library – relieved to be outside in the cool night air. I felt confused and disheartened by the entire experience—I had not expected such a one-sided reaction. Naively, I had thought that there would be a thoughtful and nuanced exchange about the ways in which digital culture forces us to re-think the social norms surrounding privacy. During the public discussion I attempted to interject, suggesting that perhaps there were some positive aspects to young people's engagement with digital culture, but the moderator had, in fact, chastised me for this contribution, scolding, "That's irrelevant to the discussion." I hadn't really anticipated adults' intense response to young people's interaction with digital culture. The participants' perspectives at the town hall meeting were discordant with much of the academic writing that I had become so immersed in.

A disjunction between the ‘university of the streets’ understanding of young peoples’ engagement with digital media and the perspectives of the more traditional academics that inhabit the ivory tower of the universities was clearly evident. Additionally, these perspectives appeared to be at odds with young people’s own characterizations of their digital engagements. The inevitable response is that – both perspectives are a part of young people’s digital engagement and that the reality lies somewhere in the middle. However, I wonder if both of these perspectives are wide of the mark and that the experience from the viewpoint of young people is something else entirely. I decided to set out to try to understand these conflicting viewpoints.

Risk Society and Childhood

Intergenerational relationships between adults and children in contemporary Western culture are often characterized by dual emotions. On the one hand adults desire for their children to do well in life—to be successful and safe —while on the other hand they are anxious about their safety and success. These desires and anxieties on the part of adults are manifestations of living in contemporary risk society: “ ‘Recent social theory has conceptualized risk anxiety as a social state engendered by an increasing lack of trust in both the project of modernity and expert knowledges’ (Gidden’s, 1990, 1991; Beck, 1992)” (Jackson & Scott, 1999, p. 86-87). Perceived risks to children and childhood are not directed at a specific group, such as the lower classes, but are, rather, indicative of a universal and pervasive sense of anxiety about children and the general state of childhood. Jackson and Scott propose that adults’ anxiety concerning childhood is symptomatic of their more general anxieties about a changing and increasingly

unpredictable world; adults transpose these anxieties onto childhood. In today's 'risk' society (Beck, 1992), adults magnify risks related to children and childhood (Jackson & Scott, 1999). The construct of childhood (James & Prout, 1990; James, Jenks & Prout, 1998) and children themselves are deemed to be at risk from both external forces (technology, new media, changing social structures) and internal forces, as young people challenge the structures and roles previously ascribed to children and childhood. Jackson and Scott (1999) suggest that maintaining a pervasive sense of risk around children and childhood serve to construct and maintain the boundaries of contemporary childhood. Adults are required to monitor and regulate young people in order to keep them safe from the perceived dangers prevalent in post-modern society. This reaffirms young people's position as innocent, vulnerable and powerless while simultaneously reasserting adult positions as authorities and protectors.

Concepts of risk and nostalgia are intertwined. There is a perception that we currently live in a risky world filled with pollution, emerging diseases, crime, and technological and environmental disasters, all of which are a result of the process of modernization itself. They hold this perspective in stark contrast to their remembrance of childhood—a past they often romanticize as being simpler, more wholesome. It's not necessarily true, however, that children who lived in previous eras faced less risk, rather, the contemporary parent finds themselves engaged in a continuous process of risk assessment. Parents must gauge whether or not it's safe to allow their children to walk to school, play unsupervised on the computer or have a profile on a social networking site. They must weigh these choices in terms of risk, and manage the anxiety they produce individually:

> At the same time, individualization renders each parent uniquely responsible for their children and encourages them to invest in their children's childhood as part of their own life project (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Beck-Gernsheim, 1996)". (Jackson & Scott, 1999, p. 89)

Keeping one's children innocent (e.g. sheltered from media) and safely sequestered within the boundaries of childhood reflects parental competence—for example, a worldly child may be perceived as the measure of a parent's failure to create and preserve a safe and secure childhood. A good parent is meant not only to guard against existing risks but also anticipate potential risks. However, here lies the tension between risk and desire: Adults must continuously balance their desire to protect their children (e.g. from dangers posed by technology) with the desire to prepare them for the future. Protecting children from undesirable online content or contact via the Internet must be done without limiting potential future gains in an information-based economy. Adults want young people to master technology and new media—but incrementally, in developmentally appropriate stages (a process which allows adults to maintain their role as gatekeepers). For young people, taking risks provides opportunities to resist and transgress the adult-imposed boundaries of childhood.

Moral Panics and the Governance of Children and Childhood

The stakes are high when it comes to the construction of childhood (James and Prout, 1990; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998) and the maintenance of boundaries. Adults have much invested personally in maintaining the institution of childhood. In his book *The cute and the cool; Wondrous innocence and modern American children's culture*

(2006), Gary Cross argues that adults have transposed the wonder that they perceive as missing in grownup workaday lives onto childhood. Adults experience the natural, innocent, pure and wondrous vicariously through children.

Nikolas Rose describes childhood as,

> the most intensely governed sector of personal existence. In different ways, at different times, and by many different routes varying from one section of society to another, the health, welfare and rearing of children have been linked in thought and practice to the destiny of the nation and the responsibilities of the state. (1999, p. 123)

In this century, children have gained increasing social, but not political rights. By recognizing the child's social rights, authorities have been able to legislate parental and societal obligations towards the child. Children are now viewed as citizens in the making, and education is considered not only a personal right for the individual child, but a collective obligation to create good citizens for the nation. Rose suggests that giving rights to children is less about a desire for social justice on the part of government, and more about putting the control over how children are socialized into the hands of authorities in order that they can create good workers, soldiers and citizens. Authorities engineer moral panics as a means to create opportunities for adults to intervene and assume greater legislative control over the ways in which children are monitored, regulated and socialized.

> The apparent humanity, benevolence, and enlightenment of the extension of protections to children in their homes disguised the extension of surveillance and control over the family. Reformers arguing for such

legislative changes were moral entrepreneurs, seeking to symbolize their values in the law and, in doing so, to extend their powers and authority over others. The upsurges of concern over the young – from juvenile delinquency in the nineteenth century to sexual abuse today – were actually moral panics: repetitive and predictable social occurrences in which certain persons or phenomenon come to symbolize a range of anxieties concerning threats to the established order and traditional values, the decline of morality and social discipline, and the need to take firm steps to prevent a downward spiral into disorder. Professional groups – doctors, psychologists, and social workers – used, manipulated, and exacerbated such panics in order to establish and increase their empires. (p. 125)

Currently, digital technologies provide unregulated terrain, in which children may potentially gain political rights as they interact on equal footing with adults in global public spheres. Online spaces, therefore, are becoming sites of new moral panics regarding children's safety, and are generating governmental imperatives to protect and regulate young people.

Surveillance and the social construction of normality

Rose (1999) proposes that 'experts' (reflecting a compilation of scientific, academic, therapeutic and institutional knowledge that constitute the contemporary field of psychology), have constructed 'normality'. Yet, this notion of normality has not been scientifically constructed through observation of the 'normal' child but rather, through

intervention with an examination of children who are deemed as problems or deviants. Therefore, according to Rose "normality is not an observation but valuation" (p.133). What serves as 'normal', is what is productive for the state. The child who can be socialized into an adult that will function most efficiently as a worker and a citizen is the model for normality. Experts construct normality through what Rose refers to as 'technologies of the self'. Individuals are enabled, through a set of criteria and techniques provided by experts, to develop into normal, well adjusted and personally fulfilled citizens. Citizens of liberal democracies are educated towards particular choices in the construction of a self – these choices are presented as benefiting the individual and the state, we freely choose from a range of prescribed possibilities, technologies of the self as the ways in which individuals are, "enabled by means of language, criteria and techniques offered to us to act upon our body, soul, thought and conduct in order to achieve happiness, health, wisdom and fulfillment" (p. 11). Children draw upon the knowledge, content and experiences that occur through digital interactions as structures of the external world and they use this information and these experiences both in the understanding and the representation of self. Rose examines the evolution of the idea that child-rearing practices contribute to adult character structure and that children's early socialization contributes to the development of adult personality. This additionally raises important questions regarding how one's childhood socialization in technologically-mediated spaces might contribute to adult character development. For instance, what might some of the consequences be of surveillance real or perceived, in regards to understandings of privacy and of what constitutes a private and/or public self; more

specifically, does surveillance affect individual character development or personal and collective understandings of privacy.

Rose's work (1999) details how governments gather large amounts of information on children's individual behavior in order to establish social and developmental norms. He describes difference amongst individual children as being categorized and classified for the purpose of regulation and discipline by authority. Experts provide citizens with a framework of social behaviors and norms that add up to normality. The intimate personal revelations that occur in online spaces such as social networking spaces, blogs, game worlds etc. provide massive amounts of previously uncollected data that may be integrated with materials and records from other sources. Governments could theoretically use data collected online for classifying and controlling youth. Marketers already sell young people particular identities using information derived from such data. Young people use images from advertising to construct their sense of identity, and influence how they represent themselves in their own constructions of identity and representations to peers (Willett, 2008).

Online interactions and postings render ephemeral phenomenon into stable forms: the thoughts, feelings and observations that may previously have remained unarticulated by youth, or, if articulated, hidden in the unseen spaces of private diaries, or existing as secret intimate exchanges, are now recorded for posterity. The radical, activist or incendiary opinions young people share, their identity play and exploration, are all rendered tangible, and can be mapped and analyzed. This raises questions about the consequences of materializing previously ephemeral data: Might young people use this information to construct norms, or might external forces such as the consumer market use

this information to construct norms? Might this information fuel moral panic surrounding young people and technology?

According to Rose, moral panics surrounding young people embody greater social anxieties regarding threats to the established order and traditional values. Panics develop around young people's interactions in online spaces and tensions increase, as adults attempt to regain control over youth by re-establishing social norms surrounding appropriate content, behavior and information in these spaces. Stories of intergenerational conflict emerge, as young people gain unprecedented autonomy and begin to establish their own norms in online spaces that resist adult control. The process then becomes cyclical, as adults increase their efforts to circumvent this resistance, utilizing technology for greater surveillance and control.

Moral Panics

According to Stanley Cohen (1972/2002), moral panics occur when circumstance, phenomenon, or a group of people comes to be viewed as a threat to the values of a particular society. In contemporary society, the media often assumes the role of moral entrepreneurs, instigating moral panics through their reporting of news and events. Moral panics are often intrinsically bound up with 'for the children politics'. The idiom 'for the children' is an appeal to emotion that is often used to elicit support for a particular argument. People generally feel the need to protect 'innocent children' so they become emotionally invested in issues that are framed as a threat to children and childhood.

That young people are often the catalyst around which moral panics emerge stands to reason, since the term is attributed to Cohen's description of the press initiating a panic around youth subcultures in the 1960's. In Cohen's description, the authorities of

a small seaside town and the press constructed local youth as a threat to social order. The story was picked up by national newspapers and consequently, a widespread moral panic regarding 'out of control' youth emerged across the nation. The ways in which panics spread has evolved over time—from the gossip of small communities, to the strategic reporting of facts by mass media to the viral dissemination of panic via the Internet. 'For the children' arguments are designed to appeal to emotion rather than logic. Connecting a social, cultural or political issue to childhood plays on the emotional, romantic and nostalgic connection that most individuals feel towards children and childhood in Western culture. This play on emotion infuses the issue with an urgency and significance that it otherwise might not warrant, as people feel an instinctual need to protect the innocence of children and the sanctity of childhood.

Moral panics, young people, and surveillance

Young people as a group, along with the time and space of childhood and adolescence, have come to be constructed as a locus of risk. In contemporary liberal democracies, Peter Kelly (2007) author of "Governing Individualized Risk Biographies: New Class Intellectuals and the Problem of Youth at-Risk", suggests that in contemporary liberal democracies the moral panic around youth at risk is the focal point of debate amongst academics, media and policy makers. Concerns about children's engagement with new media, and recent school shootings have provoked an additional moral panic concerning disaffected youth, gaming culture and online threats, and have led renowned media scholar Henry Jenkins (2004) to brand this generation of young people "The Columbine Generation". This moral panic echoes previous moral panics focusing on young people, although this particular generation's panic is intertwined with

concerns regarding new technologies. This representation of young people as aggressively deviant promotes the idea that they are out of control *because* of their use of new media (e.g. video games and their interactions in online spaces). When incidences of teen violence or misconduct occur, society inevitably blames popular culture and technology as the cause. We look to the perpetrator's online practices—checking their blogs, social networking profiles, and the games they played—searching for clues that might help us understand their behavior.

The mistrust of youth is becoming institutionalized; it is becoming a part of society's collective cultural definition of youth. Society regards young people as risky because they are often viewed as unruly, lacking inner discipline, self-control and judgment. This is what Kelly (2007) refers to as the institutionalized mistrust, surveillance and regulation of young people. This fear, both for young people's safety and for the safety of society in response to anxieties about young people, is generated in part by media. For example, when media focus on the potential of sexual exploitation of young people online, this generates adult anxieties that encourage preventative regulation and surveillance to avoid potential risks (Potter & Potter, 2001). It might be suggested that perhaps commercial interests cultivate this culture of fear in order to sell products. When media generate fear regarding technology, the response by adults who have the responsibility for protecting young people appears to be to counter these fears by employing technology to monitor and control their charges. They attempt to do so with products designed to help keep young people safe, such as software filters, GPS phones, etc. The rhetoric of 'care' justifies the reality of 'control'. "However, at-risk discourses and techniques also promise potentially endless justifications for the surveillance of

populations of youth" (Kelly, 2000, p. 469). Boyd (2007) suggests that moral entrepreneurs invoke fears regarding youth in an effort to garner support for the surveillance and control of young people in public spaces.

Contemporary surveillance techniques take on an increasingly high-tech commercial character. It is no longer enough to watch young people ourselves; we are increasingly solicited to employ technology to help us. Entering the key words 'children and safety' into a search engine results in a bombardment of advertising: from books on safety, to nanny cams, net nannies, GPS tracking devices, and cell phones. These devices either describe ways in which to monitor Internet use or employ the Internet or other technologies to monitor and control young people's physical bodies or their data. There is a profitable industry devoted to keeping children safe and under control through technology.

When the culture at large begins to accept the idea that young people need protection from the dangers posed by society and the dangers they pose to themselves, government intervention and the social regulation and surveillance of young people seems justified. Young people become targets for increased surveillance in public spaces (both online and offline) because they are deemed to be the greatest risk, by adults in general and in particular, by educators, security people and police.

Moral panics and new technologies.

There have been a variety of moral panics that have inculcated society over the past few decades, many of which have used 'for the children politics' to elicit additional concern from the public. These panics, which are outlined in Barry Sandywell's article "Monsters in Cyberspace" (2006), have centered on a variety of issues: There are

environmental concerns to worry about, such as the depletion of the ozone layer, pollution, clean water and sustainable food sources. Additionally, we are inundated with information about health risks, epidemics and pandemics such as SARS, HIV and H1N1. Acts of global terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the erosion of public space and the decline of civility are also meant to keep us up at night. These panics cultivate a culture of anxiety and a sense of ever-present risk.

Sandywell also analyses moral panics and the Internet, arguing that public concerns about cyberspace and computer mediated communication have now been added to our catalog of risk. The panic associated with cyberspace, and the consequences to communication, social and cultural life are similar to previous panics that arose around other technologies. As has been evidenced historically, any instance of rapid technological transformation will evoke a similar reaction (Sandywell, 2006; Mosco, 2004). However, Sandywell (2006) suggests that both the utopic discourses and the moral panics around digital culture are overstated. Accelerated rates of change in relation to information communication technologies have altered social norms and as a result of this the concept of risk is magnified.

Sandywell proposes that one of the concerns surrounding the Internet is that it is reconfiguring boundaries. The Internet further erodes borders previously breached by telegraph and telephone. Historically, the ways in which we enter into and maintain relationships and communication are irrevocably changed by technology. As new information technologies, such as the telegraph and the telephone, were introduced they were met with both enthusiastic supporters (who view new technologies as means of progress and potential) and depreciators (who view new technologies with fear, distrust

and suspicion, suggesting that new technologies undermine traditional ways of doing things and reinforce existing inequalities).

Detractors of new information technologies argue that not everyone has access to them, which results in unequal opportunities. Some people control the space via their technological access and proficiency, while others are controlled by the space. The young people in my ethnography are unique, both from previous generations of young people and many adults, because they have both access to technology and proficiency with it. Accordingly, they have significant opportunities to locate information, to create, to produce, to communicate and to control their engagement in the public realm. They are immersed in technology and are early adopters of it, and therefore, they embody the notion of risk. We fear for them on the front lines of digital culture and are afraid *of* them because they demonstrate an expertise and comfort with digital culture that seems at odds with their status as child or adolescent.

Fear of the Internet

Technologies such as the telegraph, telephone and television set the demise of distance in motion but the Internet resulted in the true annihilation. Previous panics around information technologies were largely focused on the technological object itself, while panics generated around media-convergent information communication technologies of the digital age create compound, multifaceted panics that come to define the viral risk consciousness of a postmodern age (Sandywell, 2006). Utopian discourse suggests that we are in the midst of an information revolution on a global scale that will transform the nature of humanity. More moderate perspectives see digital culture merely as an extension to previously existing forms of communication and information exchange

(e.g. the internet extends the range of communication but it doesn't change the ways in which we communicate). Whether social norms are being extinguished and reconstructed, or whether they are subtly evolving, it seems that there is widespread agreement amongst media, policy makers, scholars and the general public that digital culture is creating an impact.

Because of the ways in which multiple forms of digital technologies have simultaneously evolved (e.g. mobile phones in conjunction with surveillance technologies), moral panics have become complex and intertwined; resulting in what Sandywell (2006) refers to as a postmodern viral panic. He suggests that the Internet itself becomes both the object of the panic and the vehicle of the panic. The viral nature of the Internet lends itself to the risk mentality characterizing contemporary society. The more connected we all are, the greater the perception of exposure to risk. The more young people, in particular, communicate, socialize, and access information online, the more information they share online, the more they are constructed as 'at risk'. Their risks may manifest as: over-sharing of personal information, surveillance, data mining and identity theft, cyber-bullying, de-sensitization to other people's feelings, downloading and copyright violation, intellectual property theft, fraud, online romances, sexting and cyber stalking. Moral panics around technology and young people are unique from previous moral panics around youth because they are primarily directed at middle-class instead of working class youth—since middle-class youth are more likely to have greater access and engagement (Potter & Potter, 2001, p. 44)

Cyber panics are similar to moral panics in general, in the respect that although they may be unrealistic or exaggerated the consequences of the panic are very real.

Sandywell (2006) discusses the process of reflexive modernization, which is characteristic of risk society. Progress is thought to be achieved, not through original creation but through the process of reorganization and reform. Accepted social norms are increasingly interrogated, and we are forced to renegotiate the existing structures of community, family and the processes which constitute our everyday lives because there is a belief that new technologies alter every facet of life. For instance, face-to-face interactions are replaced with virtual communications, as we enter an era of "disembodied cyber co-presence". Young people no longer hang out in their neighborhoods, local parks, or shopping malls, instead they hang out online. Community and intimate relationships are no longer embedded in everyday life but are artificially constructed, as young people increasingly engage with others in global communities, while they sit at home alone in their bedrooms or basements staring at a computer screen. Relationships with other people are no longer embodied; engagement is no longer about one's physical or personal experience, but is reflected in the disembodied exchange of online information. As a result, relationships become empty, meaningless, transient and fluid, as deep, substantial, sustainable relationships are eroded. There are new concerns, for instance, that the weak ties of social networking spaces are taking precedence over the deeper bonds of friendship traditionally established in offline spaces. Adults worry that young people share artificially constructed selves with hundreds of friends rather than engaging in 'real' exchanges with the people who share their communities and everyday lives.

Visions of cyberspace as unregulated and uncontrollable intensify the moral panic surrounding online relationships, because they suggest that anyone, including young

people, can enter these ungoverned spaces and abandon all previously acculturated social norms and moral conventions. It has been suggested that the potential anonymity of the space promotes transgressive behaviors and as a result adults are both afraid for and of young people's unsupervised engagement online.

As we use new technologies that are empowering, we may also experience a general sense that we are simultaneously being monitored and surveilled through them. However, we have no real knowledge of exactly which entities are tracking our clicks and collecting and storing our data, nor what they may do with the information once they compile it. Whether it is governments, corporations or yet unnamed global organizations, we maintain a sense of being continuously surveyed as we surf the web. As a result of this unease, adults similarly experience anxiety regarding young people's immersion in a digital culture that many may feel they do not understand and cannot control.

Nostalgia for a lost childhood

During the course of the research for this dissertation, many of the young people that I interviewed and spoke to expressed a sense of nostalgia, not necessarily for their own childhoods, but for an elusive childhood experience that they never encountered. In the introduction to her book *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), Svetlana Boym describes nostalgia as the longing for a home that has ceased to exist or has never actually existed. In essence nostalgia is a feeling of melancholy inspired by loss. This feeling of nostalgia on the part of contemporary young people struck me as anomalous, because the childhood they often described was one that they had only seen portrayed through media, or one that their parents had described experiencing. They expressed a pervasive, collective longing for a romantic, idealized childhood represented both in popular culture

and academic literature. A childhood where children run through the streets of the neighborhood after dinner playing hide-and-go-seek and capture-the-flag until their parents call them in to get ready for bed. A childhood where they ride their bikes freely to the local swimming pool, their parents seemingly unconcerned about dangers from bullies, traffic or strangers.

The young people I interviewed did not experience a childhood like this, because today children are more likely to be monitored and have more restrictions placed on them by adults for their safety. Sports are more likely to be played on a team supervised by an adult coach, rather than in the streets. To have a child ride a bike unsupervised, anywhere, is apt to result in a charge of unfit parenting. Disappointment with the current experience of childhood has resulted in a flood of books within academic literature that lament the loss of childhood, from Postman's *The disappearance of childhood* (1994) to David Buckingham's After *the death of childhood*: *Growing up in the age of electronic media* (2000).

In *Connecting Popular Culture and Social Problems: Why the Media Is Not the Answer* (2010), Karen Sternheimer proposes that the nostalgia characterizing the framing of childhood and the changing nature of children's play doesn't merely reflect a yearning for one's own childhood, but rather, a collective looking backwards in response to a rapidly changing environment. The pervasive sense of risk that characterizes contemporary everyday lives pervades adult perceptions of childhood. Childhood represents our own idealized pasts but also symbolize our concerns about the present and hopes about the future. We have much invested, both personally and collectively as a society in our representations of childhood (Sternheimer, 2010).

The theme of nostalgia pervades discussions of childhood. Digital culture has complicated the boundaries that previously existed between private (domestic spaces) and public spaces, and in doing so has opened up the previously protected sphere of childhood to the public realm. This disruption has resulted in a re-thinking, not only about boundaries between public and private spaces, but also between child and adulthood. Adults demonstrate intense nostalgia for idealized representations of past childhoods, particularly the Victorian childhood, in which the children (and women) were ensconced in private spaces, removed from paid labor, knowledge, immorality, and sexuality (Boym, 2001; Coontz, 1992). Within the context of contemporary society, technology and media threaten to expose children to these social realities. Technology, therefore, threatens the bourgeois concept of the home as a safe haven removed from the public sphere.

An additional principal of bourgeois ideology was the notion of decorum and 'respectability'—the idea of appropriate public behavior (that certain behavior and information ought to be kept to the private sphere). This resulted in a rigid separation of public and private spheres with sexuality firmly ensconced in the private realm. Those who aspired to middle class standards firmly maintained these divisions. New media and digital technology now complicate these divides because they provide access to the larger public for women and children. Livingstone (2005), in writing about children's relationship with digital culture as it influences their access to public space, argues that

> staying at home is framed, to a significant degree, by the meaning of 'going out' an option ever less available to many children and young

> people. Especially for parents of younger children and girls, going out is widely perceived to be risky while staying home is safe (p. 2).

Young people use digital media to circumvent this regulation and containment because it affords them the opportunity to transform private space into public space. The Internet provides access to a larger outside public, bringing previously withheld information and interaction into the private spaces of childhood. Young people can interact online within the realm of commerce, with a community of peers, and with strangers, from computers situated in the family room or their bedroom. This enables young people to participate actively as citizens (albeit often through consumption) and allows for a repositioning of young people socially: enabling them to interact with peers autonomously, to experiment with identity, to access information and experiences they would otherwise be prohibited from, and providing opportunities to push social norms and transgress boundaries. Children use technology to explore identity and self-representation in ways that earlier generations might not have had the opportunity to do, consequently pushing previously established boundaries between public and private.

Adults seem to have a collective personal investment in maintaining the institution of childhood, as evidenced by work in the anthology *The Secret Spaces of Childhood* (2003). In this collection, Goodenough suggests, “Childhood is thus both a chronological stage and a mental construct, an existential fact and a locus of desire, a mythical country continually mapped by adults in search of their own subjectivity in another time and place” (p. 5). Western notions of childhood are generally intertwined with quixotic ideals regarding free access to space, time and privacy. However, a

dichotomy exists between these images of romance and nostalgia and contemporary commercial realities. Historically, romantic Victorian notions of childhood were only for the middle class. Working class children were denied this experience of childhood. In Western urban culture, parents struggle to retain their roles as the gatekeepers of childhood, fighting to shelter children from the perceived violence of video games, superficiality and materialism of popular culture and the perceived inauthenticity of technologically mediated communication and relationships. The moral panics that are entwined with childhood may not be completely unwarranted, but the anxieties may be intensified and complicated by related fears surrounding technological innovation, social and cultural change, changing economic and family structures, all of which have contributed to a radical re-thinking of the social constructions of both adulthood and childhood.

Previous Moral Panics surrounding Media and Young People

There has been a long history of moral panics surrounding young people's engagement with media. In his book *Media and Youth: A Developmental Perspective* (2010), Steven Kirsh outlines some of these panics through the millennia, beginning with Socrates' trial and execution in response to his use of rhetoric and consequent influence over the youth of the day. In the late eighteen hundreds, Kirsch relates, moral panics developed over the popularity of novels, which were thought to cause young people to become over excited and to lose touch with reality. Newspapers were believed to cause rapid shifts in attention (perhaps similar to attention deficit disorder of today), presumably due to the variety of the content and brevity of the stories. Comics were blamed for promoting violence and deviant sexuality, and film was said to encourage

negative values and generally promote delinquency. From the 1950's onwards, television was viewed as a threat to young people's general health and wellbeing, and as a result, numerous studies were conducted to determine the effects of television on young people's physical, psychological and emotional health. In the past 20 years, video games have been the primary focus of moral panics around young people. However, the Internet currently rivals video games as a site of contention. As Kirsh concludes, "For hundreds of years, the message was simple: Media is powerful, and media is bad for youth" (2010, p.3).

Current discourse surrounding young people's engagement with digital culture includes both positive and negative perspectives. Parents and educators take one of two positions in regard to young people's engagement with digital culture, viewing engagement on the one hand as a waste of time (anti-intellectual and antisocial), or, on the other hand, as sources of new cultural production, positive identity exploration, and learning (Castell & Cramer 2008; Jenkins 2009; Seiter, 2005; Stevens, Satwicz & McCarthy, 2008).

The following chapter provides a window into young peoples' multi-faceted engagement with digital culture which will be portrayed and theorized through ethnographic narrative vignettes and interview excerpts. The variety of ways in which young people's engagement with digital culture calls into question and challenges traditional understandings of privacy are analyzed.

Chapter Four: Surveillance, Privacy and Resistance

Fieldnote: Interview with Alexia

Shanly: What do you consider a violation of your privacy?

Alexia: I hate when people pick up my phone and read my texts, not like my friends, but other people who aren't really that close to you.

Shanly: What if your parents read your texts?

Alexia: That would be an extreme violation of my privacy (August, 2010).

One of the primary concerns expressed by the adults (as was demonstrated at the University of the Streets Café town hall meeting described in Chapter Three) was that young people do not have a clear understanding of the concept of privacy and therefore do not make considered decisions regarding what types of information should remain private and consequently are not protecting their own information and privacy. The implication of this way of viewing young people's engagement with technology results in one of the more current, pervasive, controversial and provocative moral panics surrounding the Internet and childhood: the fear that young people are at risk through the violation of privacy norms. There is considerable ongoing research in the major areas of concern regarding online safety and risky youth behaviors, such as sexual solicitation and Internet-initiated sex crimes involving minors, online harassment and cyberbullying, youth access to problematic content, and youth-generated problematic content (Beigler & Boyd, 2010).

While concerns regarding online safety are warranted (albeit sometimes exaggerated by mass media), many of the commonly encountered, everyday privacy issues faced by young people are less sexy and dramatic than the behaviors outlined

above and therefore less likely to be researched. Issues stemming from privacy understandings and the constructions of new social norms surrounding private and public spaces are pervasive and, one might argue, profoundly impacting young people's everyday lives. Intergenerational conflicts are often based on the assumption that young people are unable to comprehend traditional social norms surrounding privacy. Assumptions arise as adults attempt to impose the social norms that apply to offline spaces to the online spaces that young people occupy. This assumption disregards the idea that social norms around privacy are currently, and continuously, in the process of changing, or if there is an acknowledgement of change, the change is viewed as problematic rather than as an inevitable evolution in response to technological and social transformations. In the following chapter, ethnographic stories and interview excerpts from field research are employed to portray the variety of ways in which young people's engagement with digital culture calls into question and challenges traditional understandings of privacy. From these stories and excerpts the possible significance and implications of evolving conceptualizations around privacy are theorized.

Privacy from the perspective of respondents

Most of the young people I interviewed expressed the belief that privacy was not a major concern in their online interactions or their everyday lives, although there seemed to be a contradiction between what respondents said they felt about privacy and the privacy they expected to experience. For instance, Anne insisted that she didn't particularly care about privacy: "It's not an issue, there is nothing on my Facebook profile that I would not want my mother to see" (Anne, field notes, July 2010). When asked if her mom was her 'friend' she responded with a resounding "No". She would not

mind if her mother saw her profile but she was extremely emphatic about not *wanting* her mom to see her profile. “It’s just that it would be socially awkward, she wouldn’t understand, I’m not doing anything bad it would just be too weird. It’s not a problem if she does see it – I just really, really don’t want her to” (Anne cringes and shudders dramatically at the possibility). Anne echoed what several of the respondents expressed– a desire to protect their privacy from the adults in their lives. This is perhaps a typical adolescent desire, however, online identity play and social interaction complicate this objective in new ways.

There is a contradiction between not really caring if the adults in their lives were privy to their digital identities and interactions and the almost visceral distaste that was evident at the thought of the adults in their lives delving into their digital spaces. One respondent, 13 year old Zoe, explained that her mother was a friend on Facebook but that it had been done as a tradeoff. Zoe was only allowed to have a Facebook profile on the condition that her mother was a friend. I asked Zoe if she would have added her mother as a friend voluntarily without the ultimatum and Zoe responded that she would definitely not have chosen to do so. “This is my space, to hang out with my friends, it’s like bringing your mom to hang out with you” (Zoe, 2009). Zoe’s mother had a house rule regarding her right to supervise and control all media. She had veto power regarding all television shows, films, websites and reserved the right to check email, and texts at any time and for any reason. She had a list of Zoe’s passwords and had gone through Zoe’s emails and phone texts in the past without Zoe’s knowledge. Zoe was being bullied at school and her mother was concerned and had wanted to determine whether the bullying had carried over into online spaces. When I asked Zoe how she felt about her mother’s

actions she responded that she really felt like her privacy had been violated. Although she understood that her mother's actions were motivated by concern, she would have preferred that her mother believe her when she had told her that she was not being bullied online. While she expressed appreciation that her mother had been so supportive and sympathetic about her social problems at school, the fact that her mother had checked her Facebook profile and read her email and cell phone texts had resulted in a tension in their relationship. Zoe revealed that she is very careful about her digital interactions because she is aware that anything she says might be read at a later date. She is both careful about what she writes and deletes texts and messages frequently. Zoe's in-school harassment did not extend to her digital spaces and therefore, to Zoe's relief, her mother did not intervene publically in these spaces. Zoe expressed "If she had posted on my Facebook profile or had contacted the school about something online it would have been socially disastrous – I would have been finished – a complete reject instead of just a partial one " (Zoe, field notes, 2009). The aversion to having adults participate in online social spaces is very common. While some of the young people interviewed secretly shared content with their parents, such as friend's profiles, pictures, emails and texts, the idea of publically sharing or being seen to share information with adults was viewed with reluctance.

Privacy Contradictions Complicate Sociality

As technology changes and evolves so do the social norms that guide our actions. Technology and the policies surrounding specific technologies evolve to address privacy

concerns. Simultaneously, young people's engagement with technology changes how individuals determine what constitutes private information.

According to a 2006 study entitled *Internet and Family Life* conducted by Pew, an American research institute,

> 66% of teens use these privacy controls to limit access to their profile. Gone are the days where my friends could see everything I posted on my Facebook page. Now, I am given the opportunity to choose not only what content is public, but who has access to that content (West, 2009, para. 1).

This suggests that as young people become more implicated in digital spaces and practiced at interacting in them they become more apt to protect their privacy, conforming to norms regarding acceptable levels of sharing and behavior in offline spaces. However, multiple contradictions arose within my research, complicating the issues of young people and privacy. While the Pew research suggests that young people expect to have control over their privacy and information, "We have reached the era where digital natives now expect this level of control over their personal information" (para. 3). My respondents expressed a much more conflicted view about their privacy both online and offline. They said that they did not care about privacy and that they didn't care what people thought of them, however, they did not think that parents, teachers or future employers had the right to check their online activities. They did not want their parents to touch their cell phones, read their text messages or look at their email. They were fiercely protective of their digital communications and preferred it when the computer was in a private location rather than in public family space. The most affluent of the respondents had their own laptops, which their parents and siblings were not

allowed to touch. One of my respondents messaged me a request to join the Facebook group: *I hate when my parents watch me while I am on the computer.* This fierce desire for autonomy and privacy was expressed regarding both online and offline space and was particularly complicated by their position as 'children' or young people.

Despite the Pew findings, danah boyd's work (2007) suggests that much of the current research indicates that young people do not use privacy settings in online spaces such as Facebook. This might be because using privacy settings defeats the purpose of many young people's online interactions, "We want our cake, and we want to eat it too-we want to share our content online, and we want to control who we share it with" (West, 2009, para. 2). Young people want to be as visible and accessible as possible to peers and as removed and concealed as possible from adults – parents, teachers, marketers and researchers (boyd, 2008). The implications of this desire present interesting questions for my own research as young people attempt to create hidden spaces for autonomous social interactions. How and why these spaces are created, what transpires within them, how social norms are shaped, and the inter-generational tensions that emerge are all significant questions for research.

Complex acts of sociality, simultaneously public and private, emerged during my fieldwork as several of the respondents explained that while they were infamous online, creating mini celebrity identities in SNS and chat rooms, they remained relatively hidden from parents and teachers by creating alternate names and identities. They also counted on the protection of an underground subculture in which young people were unified in their desire to keep adults out. If the technological affordances cannot protect privacy in the ways young people perceive to simultaneously allow freedom to participate and

privacy from unwanted surveillance, they will attempt to create ways to ensure their own autonomy and privacy.

Definitions of Privacy

The next section of this chapter explores definitions of privacy both past and current, examining the ways in which technology and digital culture influence contemporary social norms surrounding privacy for young people. It further describes the changing norms regarding public and private space, the nature of the surveillance and monitoring of young people, relating these to developing notions of public and private space, social norms around privacy, and the development of self.

Postmodern definitions of privacy are inherently multi-dimensional, fluid and contextual. This may be a result of some of the confusion and contradictions that are being experienced both individually and inter-generationally as described in the above discussion regarding the respondent's expectations regarding privacy. Examining the historical development of the public and private spheres reveals how past constructions of these spheres influence contemporary understandings. The intervention of technology complicates the public/private divide and challenges bourgeois distinctions; particularly as young people increasingly adopt technology as a means to circumvent regulation and control.

Developing a working definition of privacy in order to theorize changing privacy norms is complicated by the variety of opposing definitions. Individual disciplines define privacy in ways that facilitate the analysis of the research question relevant to the discipline. There are legal, policy, psychological and sociological definitions, amongst

others. The degree to which social norms and understandings surrounding privacy are currently in a state of transformation is evidenced by the ambiguous and often contested characterization of privacy by policymakers, the media, commercial interests, adults and children. The question arises as to whether it is even viable to attempt to articulate a contemporary sociological definition of privacy given the complexity surrounding identity, privacy and social norms relating to the public and the private. It might be suggested that due to the continuous negotiation of boundaries regarding privacy that young people are currently navigating, definitions of privacy are by necessity increasingly nuanced, fluid, contextual and shaped by the realities of everyday life.

Ideas regarding what constitutes private or public domains may change across time and culture; however, historical conceptions influence current understandings. A distinction going back to the Greeks contrasts a "public" men's sphere of work and governance with a "private" women's, children's and servant's sphere of home and family (Arendt, 1973; Habermas, 1991). A dichotomy was produced between spheres, as the private realm became the domestic sphere, the focus of the material issues that constituted the base necessities of everyday life. The domestic, private sphere was distinguished from the public sphere; the public sphere being conceptualized as the superior sphere of personal fulfillment and human freedom (Fairfield, 2005; Marx, 2001). Man [*sic*] could only reach his full potential and be actualized as an active political entity within the public sphere, whereas the private sphere was understood as a space of necessity and inequality inhabited mostly by women. These notions of private and public spheres have important implications for contemporary understandings of the meaning of

public and private, particularly with regards to the social construction, realization and performance of self.

The influence of these conceptions remains evident as some of the conflicts regarding notions of social norms around privacy emerge because children, and particularly female children, are still expected to remain in the private domestic sphere. Access to technology, such as the Internet and cell phones complicates boundaries, enabling those typically removed from public spheres to circumvent historical boundaries.

In contemporary understandings the importance of the private sphere has increased, particularly in regards to classical liberal politics where the individual takes a central position. In direct opposition to the ideals of ancient Greece, the private sphere has become the realm of genuine, meaningful, values to be found in the self; values that privilege individual fulfillment, intimate relations and the family. In his book *Public/Private,* Fairfield (2005) suggests that, in contemporary times the private sphere would no longer be associated with the less important aspect of the self; instead it would be accorded a significance with respect to socialization and the development of norms.

In modernity the role of the economic becomes complicated because while the private sphere still includes economic matters it assumes additional weight and protection from the state. The public-private dichotomy primarily serves as the separation between the ‘household’ and larger organizations, which embody the general or collective social interests (Slater, 1998). Digital culture complicates the separation of the domestic, private sphere because it enables young people to enter the public economic sphere both as consumers and as producers. Slater argues that, “The onset of both Western modernity

and its public sphere is often identified with the separation of 'public' finances and institutions in the form of 'the state' from the 'private' coffers and household of the monarch" (p. 138). This shift in importance of the private sphere has resulted in contradictions because both economics and childhood are relegated to the private sphere. The right of individual pursuit of profit is protected by the state under a liberal political ideal; however, it must coexist with the oft-times conflicting ideal of young people as needing to be protected from the commercial realm.

Western culture has projected a wide range of values onto the private sphere. Individual fulfillment is meant to occur within the private sphere through intimate and familial relations. It is believed that our truest and most authentic self is developed and expressed within the domestic sphere and then practiced in our intimate relations with others. This romanticizing of the private sphere is similar to the veneration that has occurred in relation to the notion of childhood. The concept of childhood has become idealized in Western culture and constructed as a social institution that is at risk from media and technology (Buckingham, 2005; Postman, 1982). This viewpoint has extended to suggest that children themselves are in danger and must be continuously regulated and protected in multiple realms: in private domestic space, in public space and in digital space (Jenkins, 1999; Laumann, 2006; Walkerdine, 1998). Increasingly, there is a movement to protect children in digital spaces – from others, such as strangers and marketers but also from themselves, from the damage they may do to their own construction of self, representation and control of identity, information and privacy.

Fieldnote Vignette; The Headmaster's Office

One of the respondents, Amy, recounts being called out of math class and escorted to the headmaster's office one crisp autumn afternoon. A quiet student, she had absolutely no idea what she was being called down for. She was slightly nervous as she walked through the winding hallways of the school but not overly concerned, as she was not aware of having broken any school rules. Entering the headmaster's office she was shocked to see both of her parents and the guidance counselor waiting for her. She had absolutely no clue what this was about; she did her homework regularly, she didn't cut classes, she considered the possibility that she had an overdue library book but this seemed extreme even for an elite, prestigious, private high school. The headmaster requested that she take a seat and launched into a carefully prepared speech about the reputation of the school and the unique privilege of those students attending the school. He explained that students attending the school were being groomed to be future leaders and must comport themselves as such at all times. Evidently two senior boys had brought Amy's Facebook profile to his attention. There were pictures of her in her bedroom smoking a joint in her school uniform. The headmaster was concerned about how her conduct reflected on the reputation of the school as evidently these photos had become the object of gossip amongst the school community. Students and staff from rival private schools eagerly jumped on the photos as yet another example of the loose conduct and overall quality of the school, which had recently been involved in several minor scandals. Public school students and parents delightedly used the images as an example of how wealthy, privileged private school students were wild and out of control. Although many students were

viewing the photos and sharing them, it was the talk and the gossip about the photos that was most damaging, because even people without access to Facebook were discussing the pictures—and in relation—the school. (field notes, November 2008).

Young people's engagement with digital culture has enabled them to access a wider public than ever before at increasingly younger ages. In previous times a 14-year-old girl like Amy would not have had access to such a wide public forum without the supervision of an adult. Part of the conceptualization of Western childhood from its very inception was to shelter young people. Childhood by its construction has historically attempted to remove children from the public spheres of paid labor, economics and sexuality, attempting to create a time of shelter and innocence for young people to grow, learn and develop. Engagement with mass media and digital culture has destroyed the boundaries of childhood allowing both the larger world to come crashing in and young people to break out of the bounded space of traditional childhood. The adult reaction to Amy's pictures reflects the anxiety that characterizes intergenerational relationships – in response to the changing nature of childhood and adolescence. When offline behavior moves online, concern is often expressed not only regarding the behavior but also regarding the breach of privacy and potential consequences. Amy smoking a joint in her bedroom is a different situation than Amy making that information publicly accessible. From Amy's perspective the audience was her peers.

I asked Madison, a close friend of Amy's, why Amy had posted the pictures. She responded that the pictures reflected the 'real' Amy, "that's who Amy really is" Madison explained (Madison, field notes January, 2009). I asked her to clarify further. "The real Amy is the Amy as portrayed online – the Amy in the plunging black camisole, she's a club-going hipster, she's cool and edgy. This is how she wants people to see her" (Madison, field notes, January, 2009). She further explained that in posting the pictures of her true self, Amy was being courageous, she was flouting the rigid expectations and limitations imposed upon her by her circumstance as 14 year old girl in a particular social class.

A student, aware of the controversy at the school, explained that the type of girls who posted images that provoked adult condemnation and general gossip were 'tough' girls, the type of girls that bullied her friend Ashley and forced her to move from public school to private school. According to Jess, (field notes, July, 2009) they were the girls that were outgoing and popular in a very specific celebrity culture kind of way. They were the girls that 'nice girls' lived in fear of. If they turned their attention towards another girl either online or offline they could make life difficult. They were the mini celebrities of the online social circle as well as the school. They created and cultivated drama and sought attention from their peers – both online and off. Jess spoke of them with a mixture of distaste and respect. She explained that although she found the ways they behaved both "tasteless and unoriginal" she respected that they had "the courage to be themselves - even if being themselves was obnoxious" (Jess, field notes, July 2009).

There are contradictions in the respondent's interpretation of the situation. On the one hand they respect and valorize peers who flout convention and publically rebel

against what are perceived as the rigid restrictions of childhood, girlhood and socio-economic class, while on the other hand renounce them for being unoriginal followers and posers. In a previous interview which I had conducted with Jess and her friend Anne (field notes, July, 2009) they had spent a significant amount of time discussing the ways in which these same girls post pictures imitating celebrities, accusing them of posting provocative pictures solely to get attention, to get talked about and to become mini celebrities in their own right. Jess and Anne insisted that the images were unoriginal and contrived, the poses copied from celebrities and then replicated by all of the girls in the clique until they become a standard pose. They laughed as they perfectly imitated a popular pose, lips pursed in a sexy pout, head tilted provocatively, fingers in a gangster V. They further bemoaned the overabundance of mirror shots taken alone in the bathroom or bedroom as being cringe worthy. Their complaint was that these types of representations portray young girls as mindless, shallow, self-absorbed followers and therefore unfairly reflect upon all young girls. In the opinion of Jess and Anne adults judge them (young people in general) unfairly on the basis of the most outrageous types of online behavior – adults are concerned with the extremes while in Anne's opinion most young people's activities are fairly boring.

It would appear that the expression of online identity is an extension of an offline identity that is enacted in the subculture of these young people. The participants attempt to keep this subculture, and by extension aspects of personal identity, separate from adult culture; this is the story of childhood as a subculture. The subculture of childhood has existed since children were constructed as separate and removed from adults; however, social and cultural shifts combine with technological innovations to alter the

circumstances and affordances of children.

Subculture of Digital Childhood

Social forces are insulating the culture of childhood at an increasing rate. As young people push against the boundaries, adult culture pushes back. The culture of childhood is more and more constructed as a unique culture that belongs in a specific time and phase of life. Increasingly, concerns arise that children are not being properly socialized into adult culture and therefore social ties are accelerated – the boundaries are pulled tighter and children are held closer. This process is enacted through surveillance and control, web cams, cell phones, surveillance cameras in schools etc. As a resistance to this surveillance, there is a push towards autonomization of culture on the part of kids as they pull closer together as a group and separate further from adult culture, thereby creating a rift characterized by some as the biggest generation gap since the rock and roll era (Frontline, 2008; Nussbaum, 2007). As kids have closer, tighter, more intense interaction with each other they have created a separate subculture, often revolving around new media and digital culture, which is distinct from both general adult culture and digital culture of adults.

Identity Play – Developing Identity in Public Sphere versus Private Sphere

The possibilities for young people to publically play with identity and collectively construct their personal identities have expanded with their increasing access to both public spaces and peers through digital engagement. While the concept of discovering ones truest self in the public sphere might conflict with traditional adult notions about how identity ought to be constructed, the idea is not new. Contemporary

adult ideas of self and authenticity exist in opposition to the concept of self that was accepted in the era of the Greeks, when one could only truly be an authentic self, in the public domain freed from the limitations of the private sphere.

In the 1750's, Jean-Jacques Rousseau introduced the idea of the public sphere and society as a pressure on the individual, compelling the individual to conform to social conventions in regards to behavior, manners, taste, and fashion. It was acknowledged that individuals habitually don a public façade unreflective of the true private self; this façade was often enacted through conspicuous consumption. In the private realm one could develop an authentic self whereas the public realm came to be thought of as a place of display, pretense and calculation. The public realm was the realm of performance ('seeming') while the private realm was characterized by authenticity ('being'); seeming and being were separate issues and existed in discordance[18].

Lionel Trilling (1971) suggests that the defining element of authenticity is the distinction between an inner true self and an outer false self. According to Trilling, the concept of authenticity, with its inherent value judgment, emerged in Western culture towards the end of the eighteenth century and has continuously gained momentum until today when the concept of authenticity has become a defining feature of our culture (Potter, 2010). Andrew Potter, author of *The Authenticity Hoax*, suggests that we valorize the past, experiencing a sense of nostalgia for a previous era of 'authenticity'.

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[18] For further discussion of Rousseau's concept of authenticity see Andrew Potter's (2010) *The Authenticity Hoax* Ontario: McClelland & Stewart and Charles Guignon, (2004) *On being authentic* New York: Routledge.

We long for possessions, experiences and relationships that are authentic. The term authentic has come to be understood as a synonym for ‘real’. However this notion of ‘authenticity’ or ‘reality’ does not and has never existed in the ways that we have constructed it in our collective imaginations. In his chapter “Public/Private in Core Sociological Dichotomies”*,* Slater (1998) suggests that, “Increasingly, however, a culture of authenticity has arisen in which we are expected to appear (in public) as we really are (in private)” (p. 148). Previously, the public sphere was readily acknowledged to be about performance and conspicuous consumption. However, with Rousseau emerged the idea that to be an authentic individual one should ensure that one’s public self reflected ones true intimate private self. This idea of the public self needing to reflect the private self in order to be an integrated authentic human being has infiltrated contemporary ideology, to the degree that there is currently a moral imperative to be seen to be in public what we truly are in private (Potter, 2010). Potter suggests that we have come to demand both transparency and authenticity from our public figures as a demonstration of their merit and moral integrity. We expect our politicians and leaders public selves to mirror their private selves and we demand that they be accountable to the public for even the most intimate details of their personal and domestic lives.

This might be a key factor in the inter-generational conflict around contemporary issues of the public and private. Young people interacting online seem to be able to maintain a comfort level with the discordance between seeming and being. Their public selves are often performative, seemingly having little relation to the intimate or private selves. However, it became evident that sometimes in the process of exploring alternative ways to express varied facets of self, the self one chooses to reveal

is not always a positive representation. Respondents observed that sometimes friends who were deeply immersed in digital culture felt freer to express thoughts, emotions, information and observations in ways that were different than the way they might choose to portray themselves offline. A common observation arose several times throughout the course of my field research, which Lucy expressed quite passionately:

> Yes, I've blocked *(friends online)* – if someone is – the one time I did that was because someone was terrible to my friend Lisa (*name has been changed*) and I was so disgusted because they said things on text and chat that they would never say in person – they grow these balls – I don't know how they do it because it's so horrible and mean and disgusting (*Lucy is becoming emotional)* I said never text, chat, call me, nothing – I never ever want to hear from you again – I blocked them until I could decide what to do and then when I thought about it I deleted them off Facebook. People are so much meaner when they are not with you – sarcasm means nothing – They can't see the hurt they cause, they can't see your expression or whether you are crying or not. This person would never have had the balls to say all of those terrible things in person because she is so quiet and such a coward but somehow because she can't see you she feels she has the right to say these things (Lucy, interview, October, 2010).

Particularly interesting was the extent to which some respondents felt detached from the online interactions, as if their digital conversations were not connected to offline spaces. I was conducting an interview over lunch with two 15-year-old girls who were close friends. The girls lived in the Plateau and had travelled with one of their mothers to the

university to meet with me. Amy was very reserved until the interview was drawing to a close. She was describing her mother's concern regarding her safety in city space:

Shanly: Do you think that her concerns are warranted?

At this point Amy's entire personality changes. She is no longer a tough adolescent she becomes very emotional and looks like she is about to cry

Amy: I've actually received death threats – I could have pressed charges – The girl is completely insane - she wrote 37 texts and I sent one – she sent me a text and I did not answer immediately and then she was angry because it wasn't instant response – Kayla was acting depressed and weird, not herself but the reality is that she would never have done this face to face. She would never have the guts to say anything like this to me.

Shanly: Is it resolved?

Amy: The next day she said that, "you shouldn't have taken it seriously – the phone made me do it." But she freakin' threatened to show up at school with a gun. I could have pressed charges. She acts like nothing ever happened but I don't trust her anymore.

Shanly: So when you see her at school?

Amy: It's like nothing happened.

Bree: That happens all the time. We've also had horrible text fights and then acted like nothing happened. One time it happened on Thursday and it was so bad that no one went to school on Friday and then we all showed up on Monday and just acted like nothing had happened.

Shanly: Have you ever spoken about it?

Bree: Nope, it's like it happened in text so it never really happened. We just all prefer to pretend it never occurred but I still hate her – I'm just very civil – nothing more than that. (November, 2010)

This disjunction between how people represent themselves on and offline was a prevalent theme throughout the field research. In many examples respondents explored identity in creative and innovative ways while at other times they used online spaces to express the emotions, thoughts and feelings that they may have felt that they were unable to express in offline spaces, as Jess explained "Well it's like sometimes the nicest sweetest girls at school, the ones that every teacher loves, have this whole other personality online" (Amy & Bree, field notes, September, 2010).

This dichotomy between seeming and being is useful in the analysis of contemporary debates amongst adults and young people. Adult concerns often focus both around the potential of digital spaces to provide opportunities for young people to represent themselves inaccurately or falsely and they worry that exposing young people to an excess of information and possibilities at a young an age will cause them to become confused about who they 'really' are. The assumption is that there is an essential, innate inner self that risks being contaminated by exposure to alternatives. Amy and Jess, amongst other respondents that I've interviewed, have consistently explained to me that their online profiles, blogs, photographs, communications are not 'real' in the ways that adults think they are. Amy insists, "Adults just don't get it – it's not real, it's not serious, it's so not a big deal – every kid knows this. It's just not that important" (Amy, field notes, July, 2009). There is a sense of frustration on the part of the young people I interviewed regarding their perception of adults' inability to 'get' this concept. What

Amy is trying to impart is that much of young people's focus is on discovering themselves, discovering what they like and dislike, what type of person they will become – discovering their selves and then putting that self out into the world and seeing what response it evokes.

This fits in with contemporary Western definitions of childhood and adolescence, which are constructed as in the process of becoming. There is a perception, supported by educational and psychological literature, that the developmental purpose of childhood and adolescence is to provide the time and space away from the pressures and responsibilities of adulthood in order to allow young people to discover who they are (Erickson, 1959). This is perceived as a time and space for exploring tastes, talents and values and for developing the social skills required to interact with peers. This is accomplished in a variety of ways in everyday life: hanging out on the street after school interacting with peers, at parties, while engaging in after school activities - inevitably making choices about whether to work on the school newspaper or play soccer. Digital engagements provide a space for a different type of identity play because the possibilities for pushing boundaries and taking risks with how you construct your 'self' are greater and from the perspective of young people the stakes are lower. As Amy insists, "It's not serious, it's just fooling around" (field notes, July 2009) and as Anne explains, "it's a space for us, what we post is not meant for parents and teachers – it's meant for our friends" (field notes, July 2009).

For the most part, from the perception of the young people who comprise this study, the type of music, the images, the ideas that are shared represent a conscious construction of who you are at a given moment, or who you might like to be – it's a

performance of self shared with the world that is not necessarily tied to a permanent fixed identity. In the article "The Construction of the Virtual Self on MySpace" the authors suggest that young people use websites to solicit feedback from peers regarding their online identity performances (Salimkhan, Manago, & Greenfield, 2010). It's a process of production and creation versus a process of discovery. It doesn't make it any less 'real' but it's an aspect of self at this particular moment and while it emerges from offline identity it is not always experienced offline. For example, Jess views herself as an artsy, bohemian, intellectual and from her perspective her online music tastes reflect this projected identity. As she shows me the edgy indie music she is currently sharing through her music blog, she is listening to country music. When I ask her if she would share her country tastes online she vehemently responds, "hell no!"(Jess, field notes, November 2010). Although she really enjoys some country music, she does so in the privacy of her own bedroom and would never share this preference with a wider public – despite adult perceptions that young people don't comprehend the notion of privacy, Jess is adamant that certain information is indeed private.

Potter (2010) suggests that contemporary understandings of authenticity are in keeping with Rousseau's notion that the "inner true self is not so much discovered as it is invented, which makes the distinction between fiction and non-fiction irrelevant" (p. 138). The constructed self must be believable; it must resonate with the spirit of the individual even if the actual facts are not accurate. In the example of Jess's musical tastes, the spirit of the self she feels most accurately represents her inner self is best reflected in the alternative indie choices she shares online, not by the new Taylor Swift CD she is actually listening to in her room. Authenticity is not about actual, hard

physical reality but rather about a more subjective, version of an inner or higher truth. Potter goes on to suggest that in order to be accepted as authentic the representation of self does not have to be true but it must be heartfelt. Therefore, if Jess's audience believes that Jess is consciously posting indie music to construct a version of herself as a cool hipster for an ulterior motive they will view her as a poser and will not 'buy' her version of 'self'. However, if her friends feel that no matter what other music Jess listen's to privately, essentially she truly is a cool hipster at heart her actual listening practices become irrelevant and her version of self is accepted as authentic. The true inner self must be reflected in the outer self: any inconsistency results in a fake therefore, "invention in the name of art is authentic; invention in the name of profit is fraud" (Potter, 2010, p. 140).

The notion of childhood and adolescence in Western culture ties into the idea of authenticity as the need to know oneself before one can engage in meaningful connections with others. However, the process of total self disclosure is viewed not so much as the process of self discovery that digital immigrants undertook during their own adolescent identity process—seeking to uncover the truth of some innermost self - but rather as a process of self creation—seeking to publically, collectively, playfully, socially construct one's self. "Rousseau recognized that the making of an authentic self is a group effort" (p. 140). Potter goes so far as to suggest that the trend towards disclosing every intimate detail of one's self online is the ultimate realization of Rousseau's aspiration of a completely transparent self. Potter describes the current process of total disclosure as a massive experiment in authenticity. However, this only holds true if everything that young people post is a true reflection of self. The young people I interviewed are very

adamant that they don't want to be held accountable to their online representations of self which can be light-hearted and playful or uncharacteristically aggressive or assertive, continuously evolving and serve a variety of functions that change constantly according to what is happening in their lives. The self is a fluid, evolving, shared project.

Fieldnote: Interview with Jess

Jess is talking about Facebook profiles that bother her:

Jess: Some of the more 'artsy' people construct their Facebook profile to have artistic photos more than just photos with their friends and sometimes it just comes off as pretentious. They can spend all day doing their makeup and getting dressed up just to take photos and the comments are like, Oh wow, the butterfly on the top of your head is so cool'

Shanly: *I chuckle*

Jess: *Laughing and shaking her head* No I'm really not kidding – this girl photo-shopped a butterfly onto the top of her head – or like they will be sitting alone in a dark room with a shaft of light falling on them with the caption "this is my mood today" and people will comment "love your use of light" or "what camera lens did you use – was it the sigma 500mm super?" A lot of people I know get their friends to take their photos, they themselves are not artsy, they get other people to make them look artsy –

Shanly: Is there a problem with this?

Jess: No, not a problem really. And I really don't want to sound mean – really not - but I feel like people make fun of them a little – I mean it's fun to go see their profiles because its just really unique photos – like abstract

> photos but then sometimes you just laugh at them because it's so phony. Some people think it's really artistic and beautiful – others think that it's kind of loserish. I mean just think about the hours – and I mean literally hours – I've been there - of getting the costume on, hours of searching for perfect locations, hours of taking literally hundreds of photos and then hours of photo shopping them – people think its kind of pathetic – but I guess it's just a different use of your profile. Some of them think that they are really artsy but they are also copying each other, they all have the same photo pose, the same artsy picture and yet these are the people who make fun of the girls with the peace sign duck lipped photos - but they are really all the same only artsy and pretentious in their artsy world (Jess, field notes, July, 2010).

Jess's analysis raises the question as to whether the public persona created by these artists is any less 'real' or 'true' because it is constructed to serve a specific function. Jess's concerns seem to reflect uneasiness about the authenticity of the person behind the post. Is the person who is posting genuinely interested in art or are they feigning an interest with an ulterior motive, perhaps in order to fit in with a particular artsy cohort? The authenticity of constructed identities seems to be a preoccupation with respondents as they spend significant time surfing profiles on Facebook and watching YouTubes of other young people both individually and collectively. They sometimes share profiles of strangers with friends, commenting on the ways in which their peers choose to portray themselves expressing embarrassment, amusement or condemnation in response. Certain profiles claim a mini celebrity status as is portrayed in the following field notes.

Fieldnote Vignette; Facebook Fight

Returning to the instance of Amy's predicament, shortly after she posted her controversial Facebook photos a boy from her school posted a comment calling her, among other things, a slut. Her friends jumped in to defend her while his friends jumped in to support him. A virtual "Facebook Fight" was sounded and within two days about two hundred students became involved in the increasingly explicit debate, and countless others were lurking watching and chatting about the action. As quickly as it had begun the fight ended. Due to all of the controversy Amy decided to switch schools. However, very quickly her intentions reached the students at the school that she planned on switching to. Almost immediately a contingent of girls from the new school decided that Amy was not "the kind of student that would fit in." The girls were frank about never having met Amy and were basing their campaign solely on her digital persona. They, as many young people do, engaged in Facebook stalking, surfing the net looking for the most provocative, outrageous and controversial profiles. This is part of the reason that creating a 'sensational' profile or video is so appealing particularly for students who can feel lost in the anonymity of a big high school. As Anne says, "it gets you attention, you get noticed instantly and can become an overnight celebrity. Lots of boys just go from profile to profile looking at the prettiest girls. They're like 'check her out. She's so hot' and then they'll be like 'yeah but her nose is too big' and then move onto the next girls and be like 'Hey! What about her?' Some girls just want to be one of those girls. They spend a lot of time and energy on it." Amy did change schools and eventually several of the girls who had expressed

misgivings about her attending the new school commented to her that “she was nothing like what they had expected” The serious, studious, quiet everyday Amy was very different from her digital representation. However, three years after the Facebook incident her reputation throughout the city still precedes her. (November, 2008)

According to Niedzviecki (2009), author of the *Peep Diaries*, much of young people’s popular culture involves an obsession with celebrity culture: peering into the lives of celebrities, delighting in their problems, failures and seemingly continuous crisis. This pleasure seeps into the everyday as young people derive entertainment from peering into the lives of ordinary people—often their peers. There is also a certain thrill in being the focus of the drama, creating yourself as a mini online celebrity as occurred with Amy. Shortly after Amy moved to her new school she began to post provocative pictures of herself again and although the response was less dramatic because she was older and was already known as a mini online celebrity, there was still ensuing gossip and attention.

However, there is an ever growing ‘moral imperative’ to tie ones’ online identity to ones’ offline identity. This imperative increasingly seems to be imposed by corporate agendas, raising questions regarding the consequences to the process of identity construction when corporations insist on linking participants’ on and offline identities. This issue was recently raised in an Association of Online Internet Researchers (AOIR) discussion (July 8, 2010) regarding the CEO of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg’s, move towards pushing participants to make their data increasingly public. He justifies this position, which facilitates the tracking and mining of personal information, by implying

that this is a moral imperative. In the case of massive multiplayer online games the situation is even more complex because these spaces are often enjoyable primarily because they enable the player to temporarily suspend offline identity and experiment with other possibilities.

> Mark Zuckerberg has used the rhetoric of "openness" and "integrity" to push Facebook's default stance of making their participants' data public. There are all sorts of scary questions about a company like Facebook deciding it has the right -- even the ethical obligation -- to determine what constitutes an online identity. (Jones, July 8 2010)

If corporations like Facebook are unable to link on and offline identities, authenticity is called into question and when authenticity is questionable the surveillance and tracking of individuals is compromised. Imposing more and more identity markers on young people's digital interactions limits their ability to act autonomously, it's another means of imposing regulation and control; authenticity is linked to surveillance and social control. The tension between linking on and offline identities is an ongoing theme throughout the field notes.

The Problem of Reality

As discussed previously, many of the respondents interviewed maintain that adults just don't 'get it'. Amy insists that her online representation is not 'real'. Anne and Madison explain that the concern that adults have regarding this identity play is completely unfounded because everyone knows that what happens online is not real— "it's just playing around". Amy contends that all of her peers know that it means nothing and that "adults are blowing this all out of proportion". They find it amusing that

academic researchers are studying their engagement with digital culture. They find it hard to understand why any adult would care about something that they consider trivial, meaningless play.

However, if we examine Amy's online identity play it becomes evident that while her pictures might be viewed as a form of playful engagement—perhaps simply a way to seek attention, a way to bring a large group of kids together online interacting with herself as a focus, as a way to gain a modicum of celebrity in a Paris Hilton kind of way, it resulted in 'real' consequences. Even if Amy did not feel that the pictures reflected her 'real' self—the posting of those pictures constructed a version of reality and the constructed version of reality can potentially have very 'real' consequences. For Amy the consequences were that the reality constructed online resulted in an untenable situation offline.

Traditional bourgeois middle class ideas of decorum are often breached through the revealing of customarily private information, about the body, sexuality, sharing of personal thoughts and feelings, which often, are viewed by adult onlookers as inappropriate. Social norms typically dictate that the privacy of 'others' ought to be respected. A generation ago, social norms suggested that people should avert their eyes when confronted with something that violated privacy norms, for instance when a couple was engaged in a disagreement in public. Voyeurism was viewed as deviance or fetishism. However, these notions of privacy and the appropriate, surrounding social norms are currently changing which relates to understandings of young people as a transitional generation, as navigating shifting spaces and relationships with permeable boundaries. They endeavor to do so while adults from previous generations attempt to

guide them even as they simultaneously steadfastly struggle to maintain traditional boundaries.

The assimilation of technology into ordinary, everyday social interactions challenges the distinctions between public space as a space of social interaction, a place where young people acquire the required skills for successful functioning in society and private space as the space of individual expression. Social interactions are increasingly mediated through digital technologies, which problematize previous ideas regarding public and private domains. Communication technologies currently enable individuals to be present together without physical co-presence. Technology has influenced the ways in which we interact across time space and across the domains of public and private.

Public and Private Spheres

Livingstone (2005) uses Habermas' distinction between system and lifeworld (Habermas, 1981) to unpack the relationship between public and private. She applies four 'spheres of society'—the state, the economy, the public sphere and the intimate sphere to the analysis of children and media. Children occupy distinct roles within each quadrant – children as citizens, consumers, objects and agents. Habermas (1981) maintains that ideally the spheres should remain distinct. However, in contemporary society these spheres overlap and interweave creating tensions between public and private domains; as a result the breakdown between public and private assumes multiple forms.

At the intersection of the personal sphere and the sphere of the state issues of governance play a central role. Livingstone's (2005) analysis suggests that there is a shift between protectionist attitudes and laissez-faire attitudes depending on political climate,

and upon both parental and educational attitudes regarding children and media. Due both to globalization of media and the states desire to keep Internet unregulated for commerce, responsibility for the regulation and control of media moves from the realm of the state (or public) to the private realm. Responsibility for keeping children protected from undesirable content becomes a parental responsibility. Media literacy programs also serve to move responsibility onto the individual. Rather than government regulating content it becomes the responsibility of parents and educators to regulate children through surveillance and control and the responsibility of children to regulate themselves. Schools increasingly send home computer contracts for parents and children to sign. These contracts make it parental responsibility to control children's computer use at school, therefore further placing the responsibility for protecting children in public (school) space on the family.

Livingstone (2005) suggests that from a critical perspective this assignment of responsibility can be understood in relation to an ever increasing Foucauldian imperative to self regulation. When considered in this light, media literacy policies become about being a 'good parent' and a 'well-behaved child'. This offloads responsibility from the commercial sector onto the private realm of home and family. In regards to children and media, the intersection of the economic sphere and the personal sphere are defined by commercial profit. This makes it no surprise that, one of the defining characteristics of a postmodern childhood is the privatization and commodification of play. This is further brought about as corporations mandate the merging of online and offline identities in order to facilitate their commercial interests through the mining, sorting, sharing and

storing of individual data. Young people further enter into the world of commerce, blurring boundaries:

> As youth present themselves in these media enriched environments alongside commercial products, brands, and celebrity omnipresent on the Internet, they may be increasingly constructing aspects of their identities as images or brands, thereby erasing the line between commerce and the self" (Salimkhan, Manago, & Greenfield, 2010, Conclusions para. 4).

Privatization of Play and Space

Children's autonomous play has become privatized, occurring primarily in domestic space, it has become commodified requiring the purchase of playthings in order to keep children contained in safe spaces; these commodities tend to be digital and so children's play also becomes technified. As a result of the changing soci-economic position of children they become prime targets for marketers and an important way to reach this young yet elusive target market is through new media. This has resulted in changes in the way children are being marketed to by corporations and these changing sales techniques are also contributing to the changing nature of childhood spaces and experiences, breaking down the boundaries between the private realm of childhood and the public realm of commerce. The middle class young people who were the focus of my study were examples of this privatization and commodification of space. Their parents were very conscious of their safety in public spaces and used technology to keep them safe and to keep them entertained at home. Their access to technology and their immersion in digital culture resulted in their being exposed to significant amounts of media and their disposable income made them prime targets for marketers.

Changing social and family structures combined with fears about children's general safety have resulted in a culture of risk where children are thought to continuously require monitoring and control. Concerns about dangers posed from increased traffic result in children no longer being able to bicycle or walk freely through the streets, and fears that children are at risk from strangers result in continuous monitoring of their whereabouts. This containment and monitoring is often technological in nature. The respondents interviewed report entering their schools through access codes or having to be buzzed in through the main entrance after identifying themselves and clearing security cameras. Once in the school they are often monitored with security cameras. Also, school computers are frequently protected so that they cannot access inappropriate content; if the computers are not protected then the technical staff is often responsible for monitoring them. As stated previously it is a common perception that young people have not yet developed an inner sense of control. It is suggested that they may be a danger to themselves and to others and therefore are viewed as needing responsible adults to control them. This is exemplified by the situation of Amy; her Facebook profile was deemed to be damaging to both the school and her reputation and possible future opportunities in life. Young people are in a complicated position, adults both fear young people while simultaneously feeling the need to protect them. Young people are often viewed as lacking in self control and potentially engaging in impulsive behavior or as not being competent, lacking the wisdom and experience necessary to protect themselves. It becomes the responsibility of concerned citizens and guardians to monitor them (Kelly, 2003). This trend is further complicated as it crosses over from physical space into virtual space.

This raises the issue of care versus control in regards to surveillance. Is the surveillance and control of young people simply a necessary consequence of the proper care of children or is it an attempt to excessively control children that may inevitably result in negative consequences? The increased protection of children by monitoring them is said to be a central characteristic of modern childhood and we do not yet know all the consequences (Fotel & Thomsen, 2004). According to Neil Howe and William Strauss (2000) in *Millennials Rising; The next great generation*, the younger generation today is the most watched over in history. Time is more closely structured and behavior more highly monitored than ever before due to the availability of technologies that enable increased efficiency, multitasking and surveillance. To be a 'good parent' is to watch over your children at all times in a perpetual state of hyper –vigilance (Henderson, Harmon, and Houser, 2010).

Fieldnote Vignette; Chatting with Parents

> I can connect the inspiration for my research interest in young people and current understandings of privacy back to one very specific event. I was standing half listening to the predictable idle chat of a group of parents at a family friends barbeque. The parents were engaged in the perennial game of comparing the busyness of their respective offspring "Ashley is involved in sailing, soccer, fencing and dance – if we aren't spending our weekends hauling boats to a regatta we are off to compete in a dance competition." "I know exactly what you mean – between sailing all day and then soccer and baseball practices in the evening Trevor runs us ragged – we can hardly wait until he leaves to hockey camp in August so that we can get a night off!" This is the typical conversation of a group

of middle-class parents. The ability to provide a constant, consistent stream of organized, safe and most importantly productive play activities is the symbol of a 'good' parent (Steeves, 2010). Parents compare notes regarding the respective activities of their offspring attempting to determine whether their children are active enough, stimulated enough, engaged enough. However, the conversation suddenly veered alarmingly off course when one of the fathers randomly declared, "Our kids absolutely hate us". The conversation stopped cold. The parents glanced uncomfortably at each other, confused and embarrassed, unsure of how to respond. This is not how the game is played. The unwritten rules allow parents to either complain about how busy their offspring are with athletic, academic and culturally enriching activities, and on occasion they are allowed to slip in some discrete, offhand reference to the award, trophy or accomplishment of their child. Candid admissions regarding personal domestic relations are not typically shared publically. We glanced awkwardly at each other, the silence lengthening. "I'm sure they don't really hate you," I attempt to reassure them. "No, they really, really do" the parents both insist. "Well, I'm sure at one time or another all of our kids have felt that way," I respond. "No, they hate us all the time – it's a constant state." I'm starting to get worried and to question what exactly is going on in this household while secretly hoping that my kids don't hate me. I wonder if my kids secretly hate me and I'm just oblivious; these parents seem so sure. "How do you know they hate you?" I ask, "Do they tell you?" "No, no they don't tell us to our face but the things they say about us to their friends are just horrible!" Now I'm both confused and curious, "How do you manage to overhear conversations they

are having with their friends everyday?" The entire scenario seems highly implausible. I wonder how it's possible to eavesdrop to such an extent, how their children would not notice their parents hanging around outside the family room door everyday listening to them conversing with their peers and why their kids would be so indiscrete as to be loudly trash talking their parents within hearing range on a daily basis. "Oh no," the mom enthusiastically explains, "we have spyware on the children's computers. My husband reads their chat every night; we can even see which websites they've visited. We get a complete update of their activities regularly throughout the day so we can know what they are doing while we are at work." "It's not Spyware!" the father interjects "it's a net nanny." A heated discussion ensues regarding whether these parents ought to be congratulated on their complete and diligent monitoring of their children's activities or whether they are guilty of violating their children's trust and privacy. What followed were a series of stories from various parents divulging accounts of the ways in which they had violated their children's privacy, either secretly or with their children's knowledge, reading texts, emails, chat and engaging in Facebook stalking. (July 2008)

Niedzviecki (2009), author of *The Peep Diaries: How We're Learning to Love Watching Ourselves and Our Neighbors*, suggests that, "Most of these products 'empower' us to watch each other. In doing so, they undermine trust even among friends and family, and create further demand for services that in previous eras, would have been both morally and technology unimaginable" (p.16). Steven Kirsh (2010) suggests that by

monitoring the content of TV shows, video games, music choices, instant messages, e-mail and similar media related material parents believe that they can effectively protect their children from inappropriate media content. However, in an effort to protect young people from themselves, parents and adults engage in what may be argued is a gross violation of young people's privacy. Both academics and parents alike agree that definitions of private and public space and the very notion of privacy are very different for young people than for adults and those definitions are further complicated by their continuous fluidity and transformation. These multiple and contradictory understandings are potential factors behind intergenerational conflict and divisions. It's important to theorize the potential consequences of this inter-generational monitoring—how does this change the development of mutual trust between individuals as well as self-monitoring and self-control on the part of the child? Is there an imperative to develop self-control if there is constant control and surveillance from adults? This is the opposing concept to Foucault's panopticon (1977)—the individual controls themselves because they are aware that they are being intermittently watched but what happens if the child is in actual fact being continuously watched and is aware of the constant surveillance? Are they then socialized to relinquish the responsibility for self-control into the hands of those who monitor them? Will these children assume that self-control is no longer a personal responsibility because there will always be someone watching over them, telling them what to do and how to behave - even in their most intimate interactions with peers, and exploration of individual selfhood?

There is a range of ways in which children are both monitored and controlled in contemporary society. The first is the monitoring and control of bodies and the second is

the surveillance and control of data or information. Technology in general and the Internet in particular figure prominently in both of these scenarios. There are social and economic issues inherent in this monitoring at both the macro and micro levels. Surveillance, increasingly through the use of technologies, is justified through arguments about safety (care) and concern for children's wellbeing. Young people are watched over by parents, physicians, educators and a variety of specialists from conception in order to assure their safety. Surveillance cameras are present, either overtly as part of daycare centers policy or covertly hidden in teddy bears or toys at home, so that parents can monitor caregivers. Net nannies are installed on computers to ensure that children are not the victims of pedophiles, cyber-bullies or are not consuming too much or inappropriate media content. It is often required that children provide parents with all passwords for any password protected sites and email as a condition for participation with digital culture. This is justified as a safety precaution in case bullying or drug use is suspected or in the event that a young person goes missing. Schools provide surveillance and security with the objective of keeping young people safe from potential harm.

An additional justification for the use of surveillance technologies is for the control of young people who are deemed a risk to society. This justification was uncommon within the community of my field site. Metal detectors are not necessary at the entrances to the private schools or alternative schools that most of my respondents attend. These students are not viewed as a risk but rather as *at risk*. Surveillance cameras and security measures were directed out towards the street rather than inwards focusing on the student body. Cell phones were rarely confiscated, as is often the case at public schools, because parents viewed cell phones as essential for their children's emotional

and physical wellbeing. If anything happens at school parents want to be informed immediately so that they can intervene. Students were more inclined to use cell phones to monitor and control teachers and staff than the other way around. The idea of care was much more overt in the surveillance of the respondents while the concept of control was more evident in the consequences of surveillance than in the justification for it.

Fieldnote Vignette; Facebook Stalking

> Anne sits on her bed surfing Facebook for interesting profiles while she chats with me. "I check out what my friends are doing, friends from school, friends from camp, or I look for the most outrageous, people who post really crazy stuff and laugh at them." I wonder aloud how Anne finds outrageous profiles. She explains that friends will message her "Hey, did you check out so and so or they might tell her to check out particularly pretty pictures." Anne describes how some of her friends will spend all day doing their hair and makeup, posing and posting pictures in a competition to be the prettiest girl on Facebook – the one guys go to look at. Some of her friends have a running joke where they insert outrageous pictures of a girl that they are Facebook stalking into their chat threads. When Anne gets bored with Facebook, we move on to YouTube where we search for amusing videos, then we check out Perez Hilton's blog for some celebrity gossip after which we watch a couple of episodes of *Teen Mom* which is a follow-up to the popular MTV series *16 and Pregnant*. *Teen Mom* chronicles the challenges a group of teenage mothers face navigating their first year as new parents. Anne describes how a girl she

> went to elementary with recently gave birth to her first child. Anne followed her entire pregnancy on Facebook. At first she explains how she was almost offended that she was public about the fact that she was going to be a teenage mother However, it soon turned into intrigue, and now I almost feel like I know her, even though I haven't spoken to her since we were in grade 4. I can empathize for her, and I love looking at pictures of her and her child. (field notes, January 2011)

The watching and monitoring of other people's lives is an integral part of Anne's entertainment activities. When surveillance becomes intertwined with entertainment it becomes increasingly normalized. Young people are accepting of being monitored and tracked through technology because surveillance has become such a fundamental aspect of their everyday leisure and entertainment pursuits. Voyeurism is an amusement – one is continuously in a state of watching or of being watched. Bree aspires to be famous one day and describes how she often feels like her life is material worthy of a sitcom. She explains how much she loves humor and how the dynamic and ongoing witty banter in her family often feels like an episode of a reality television show or a sitcom (field notes, November 2010).

She imagines herself as being the object of observation. However, while Bree embraces the notion of being watched, other respondents strive to elude surveillance.

Surveillance and Re-gaining Control

As discussed previously, the Internet is a key factor in the breakdown of boundaries between public and private space; it enables young people unprecedented

opportunities to participate in public spaces and it provides the commercial sphere unprecedented opportunities to access children. However, the Internet also breaks down the divisions between public and private spaces in other ways, for instance, when adults use Internet related technologies to re-establish control over young people through surveillance. This enables adults to move into the previously private spaces of childhood and transform them into public spaces. Adults are attempting to re-gain control and re-establish their role as gatekeepers utilizing the very systems that enabled young people to circumvent the control and regulation in the first place. As described previously, technologies like nanny cams, net nanny's, radio-frequency identification devises (RFID) embedded in clothing and global positioning systems (GPS) in cell phones move responsibility for surveillance, protection and control of young people into the domestic sphere and makes it the obligation of the parent. Examples of this are abundant, for instance, increasingly parental use of software to monitor their children's online interactions and play. K.C. Montgomery (2007), a communications professor and former director for the Center for Media Education suggests,

> Their names- NetNanny, CyberPatrol, CyberSitter, SafeSurf, etc. – carried with them the promise of security and protection, the ideal high-tech tool for today's harried, overworked parents. As promoters demonstrated the new devices at congressional hearings, conferences, and trade shows, online industry leaders and government policy makers embraced them (p.58).

These software technologies are framed as the solution to controversies surrounding media effects suggesting that the responsibility for the control and surveillance of young

people belongs to parents within the private sphere. The software uses key words to block access to particular websites, while chat monitor software shows exactly what children say online, allowing parents to keep track of who their children chat with and enabling them to read transcripts of all of their conversations. All instant message conversations can be monitored and stored—recording both sides of the conversation (which actually not only infringes on their own child's privacy but on the privacy of whoever they may be interacting with). This raises questions as to whether young people have the right to privacy and moreover, whether those who interact with young people have any right to privacy. Someone playing a game online with a minor can be monitored and recorded by third parties without prior knowledge. This complicates the idea of public and private space, raising the question as to whether anything said anywhere online and in any context should be considered public space?

This type of software is often marketed to parents with the suggestion that young people are unaware of the surveillance software installed on their computers. Consequently, young people have the perception that their online activity is private and therefore act accordingly as was the case with families I spoke to. As these types of surveillance technologies become increasingly normalized in both domestic spaces and work place it would seem that young people should be socialized to view all online spaces as potential spaces of surveillance. There is a potential for a disconnection in relation to the ways in which public and private space is understood because of the ways in which young people use and experience online space. For instance, the respondents often interact in public spaces, engaging in collective identity work from a very private physical space—like their bedroom. The physicality of the private space, relaxing in a

bedroom belies the public nature, and often consequences of the interaction. Anne, lying alone in her bed late at night messaging Jess about the boy she has a crush on, has a sense that she is engaged in a very intimate exchange. It does not occur to her that her message is being mined for key words or that her parents are monitoring her communications.

Considerable intrusions into individual, private lives are justified in the name of protecting young people. There are understandable concerns about children being manipulated or exploited in online play spaces as marketers elicit information from unaware participants. In their article “You Can See Anything on the Internet, You Can Do Anything on the Internet: Young Canadians Talk About the Internet”, Shade, Porter and Sanchez Santiago (2005) confirm that often children have little understanding of the privacy implications of their online play. In her book *The Internet Playground* (2005) Ellen Seiter describes how the young people in her research were unaware that their data was being mined or that they were being advertised to as they played and interacted online. These concerns have been a crucial focus of academics in regards to information communication technologies as they endeavor to inform public and influence policy as is evidenced by the work of Chung and Grimes (2005), Seiter (2005), Livingstone (2005), Livingstone, Bober, and Helsper (2005) among others. Adults also express concern about dangers from cyberstalkers or from strangers that young people may potentially encounter online (Shade, 2007). Unease on the part of adults is increasing regarding peer-to-peer social interactions on social network sites, in chat rooms, online video game playing and instant messaging. While these spaces seemingly provide limitless potential for personal expression and communication a trail of information may be preserved for all time in a potentially infinitely public space.

In his book *The future of Reputation; Gossip, Rumor, and Privacy on the Internet,* David Solove (2007) discusses the consequences of idle, trivial information and interactions that were once scattered and forgettable becoming permanent and searchable. He examines the ways in which social acts like rumors, gossip and shaming are transformed when they move online. They become reshaped in ways that make consequences pervasive and permanent and potentially life altering. Adults understandably want to protect young people from potentially destroying or harming their own lives or the lives of others through engaging in these typical activities that are often quite innocuous and inconsequential offline. While the respondents that I interviewed were aware that their online interactions constituted a permanent online identity they sometimes expressed anxiety regarding their ability to control their identities. Lucy expressed a common concern, " I absolutely hate it when people post or forward pictures of me without me knowing about it or me giving permission and then their friends – who I don't even know – like these random people post comments about it. Like who are you anyway?" (Lucy, field notes, October 2010)

The tangible consequences of violating the boundaries and norms that delineate private and public space are clearly outlined above: information might be harvested, movements in cyberspace can be tracked and recorded, there is a greater potential for cyberstalkers, personal information can be revealed and reputations potentially permanently ruined. However, there is less discussion regarding the motivation on the part of youth to violate these boundaries and norms on such a large scale or of the consequences of growing up in an environment of pervasive surveillance, whether actual or implied. The risks to young people seem to be well explored but the consequences of

protecting young people online have been less investigated. The consequences of the protection may prove to be of greater harm than the risk.

Perceptions of privacy, the resulting definitions and the understandings about what constitutes both private and public spaces are very different between young people and adults. Young people argue that the online social spaces, such as social networking spaces, which they occupy, should be recognized as spaces of youth culture belonging to young people. In her article "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life", boyd (2007) argues that:

> Adults view this attitude as preposterous because, as they see it, since the technology is public and teens are participating in a public way, they should have every right to view this content. This attitude often frustrates teenagers who argue that just because anyone can access the site does not mean that everyone should (p. 16).

When young people argue for having online spaces in which to interact autonomously with their peers they are attempting to work out the social complications arising from the discrepancies between the meaning of public and private online and offline. This presents young people with the challenging task of renegotiating the structural boundaries of a mediated space, which as boyd (2007) describes, is a space where the term 'search' collapses all virtual walls. This generation is renegotiating understandings of public and private as they explore the many digital spaces available to them.

Gossip as Social Organization

Over the course of my field research with young people I observed that gossip serves as an important tool for bonding and community building both on the playground and on online.

Fieldnote: Interview with Jayde

> Jayde is a 14-year-old girl who has access to a range of digital technology; her laptop and cell phone are upgraded regularly. Due to the fact that both of her parents are in the tech industry and embrace technology, at work and at home, she is surrounded by technology and digital culture. Jayde is an exceptionally intelligent individual and a straight A student. She is very interested in science as well as social and political issues. When I interviewed her she admitted to spending time everyday surfing the net seeking information on topics that interested her in the realm of science and technology, politics and activism. While her parents allow her unsupervised access to the Internet they do not allow her to join communities or post comments on websites. When I asked Jayde why she was not allowed to post comments she responded that it was because her parents were aware that the internet was a very dangerous place for a young girl and that they wanted to keep her safe – both physically and psychologically - from potential bullying and pedophiles, but they were also concerned about the safety of her information. They wanted to keep her safe from identity theft. Jayde genuinely shared her parents' concerns about losing control of her data and identity – although, perhaps for

different reasons and in different ways. She recounts feeling like her privacy had been violated when a girl from school posted pictures of her on Facebook. She explained that she had been at a birthday party when the pictures had been taken. Because Jayde is not allowed to have a Facebook profile she was unaware that the pictures had been posted until she heard about it at school. She was outraged that someone would post pictures of her online without her knowledge or permission. Jayde then recounts the story of a girl she knew from school, named Sarah. Sarah was not allowed to have a Facebook profile or to go online. Her friends from school posted pictures of her on their accounts without her knowledge. Negative comments and conversations about Sarah ensued. Jayde describes how many girls were talking negatively about Sarah online without her knowledge. They were nice to her offline, during the day at school, but then gossiped and talked about her online without her knowledge. According to Jayde, when Sarah found out she was distraught because she thought these girls were her close friends; furthermore, she had no means of tracking or controlling the conversations. Many of the girls at school were following the exchanges and discussing the situation but were reluctant to inform Sarah because they were concerned about hurting her feelings. Jayde explains that she does not want a Facebook profile. "I don't want to have Facebook anyway because most of the girls from school just talk to each other. If I want to talk to them I'll do it at school or if it's a close friend I'll call them up but I really don't want to talk to them

> online. I'd never talk to people from school. If I need to share a file or work on a project I do it by email." Although Jayde clearly expresses that she has no desire to socialize online with people she sees everyday, she does however convey frustration that her social life carries on without her and she states that she feels a loss of control. That her data does identity work without her involvement, participation or consent seems unfair to Jayde. The images that others choose, the comments they make about her create a representation of Jayde, which she has no control over and limited access to. (field notes interview, August 2010)

While Jayde is very confident of her ability to use technology - she owns and uses cell phones, lap tops and portable music players—technology is an integral part of her everyday life; she is less comfortable with her ability to navigate the social aspects of digital culture. She is socially reserved offline and is even less likely to engage in interaction online.

Gossip and Power

As is evident in the example above, gossip changes as it moves from the offline world to the online world. Gossip has traditionally been associated with the idle, unproductive and potentially destructive talk of women. However, there is the potential for power in gossip. In his discussion of gossip, Potter (2010) describes it as a "tactic the weak employ against the strong" (p. 163) providing the example of the women in the French court employing gossip as a subversive tactic for resistance and power. Having access to someone's most intimate secrets gives the secret holder power, which is why

historically, Potter argues, the holding of important information has been a tactic employed by women. Secrets can be a form of insurance or protection against the powerful; the revealing of secrets can act as form of subversion, resistance or destruction. Revealing secrets through gossip can serve as a form of social leveling; the weak can bring down the strong. This is evident in the social manipulation and negotiation that occurs through text and in social network spaces. The social skills employed take on a whole new dimension when moved into virtual spaces, as everything is magnified. However, the intrigues of the French court appear to be child's play in comparison to the online maneuverings that young people today must master if they choose to participate in the online sociality of their everyday lives. Online information moves more quickly; the audience is larger, and expands rapidly.

Gossip and Shaming as Community Building

For sociologists gossip and shaming serve important social functions: they establish the social norms and folkways that serve to order and organize communities; they clearly delineate the boundaries of communities because deviation from or violation of norms results in gossip or shaming; gossip and shaming also strengthen community ties. People unite to establish what types of behavior will constitute transgression and to appraise and evaluate the behavior of others; this activity cultivates a sense of belonging, feelings of being insiders versus outsiders to the community. Every society has social norms and typically the smaller the community the simpler, clearer and more easily enforced the norms. When members of a community deviate from the established norms, repercussions ensue in the form of gossip, shaming and shunning - depending upon the degree of seriousness of the transgression. This type of social control is part of the way in

which children are socialized into their communities. Adults use shame as a means of teaching children acceptable behavior. The behavior of a child can bring disgrace to a family and good parenting is reflected by doing a good job of socializing your own children to the acceptable norms and folkways of the larger community – creating a good citizen whether in a hunter-gatherer tribe, a rural agrarian community or a suburban neighborhood.

However, as communities grow larger, understanding the folkways and norms that structure the community becomes a more complicated process—both for adults and for children. This is particularly true of Western urban communities where there is a plurality of cultures and values and, as a consequence, increased latitude regarding the range of acceptable behaviors. Adults have a more difficult time imparting social norms and delineating boundaries in a global culture. Young people are exposed to a range of values, lifestyles and behaviors outside of those that they experience in their everyday lives of school and family. Traditional adult roles as gatekeepers of information and knowledge have eroded, and as a consequence of this attrition, the power to impose social norms through shame and gossip is also being challenged. When young people share private information online or transgress what adults consider appropriate behavior adults feel threatened and attempt to regain control, seeking to apply the social norms that are deemed appropriate in offline spaces onto online spaces of youth culture.

It has been suggested that in this era where communities in which young people reside are increasingly fluid, transient and diverse, where the traditional markers of religion and ethnicity no longer hold the same meaning, it becomes more challenging for young people to determine the boundaries of their communities. Community is sought

through a process of exploration as young people seek others who share interests and values. I typically ask respondents the question, “Is there any digital media that you would like to have access to but do not have access to?” Most often the response is “an Xbox, a PlayStation, an iPhone” or else “nothing, I have absolutely everything that I want.” However, when I asked the question to Jayde, who owned every piece of technology she wanted, she interpreted the question differently and responded, “I’d like to be able to participate in a community”(Jayde, field notes, August 2010). When I asked what community she would want to belong to she responded that if she joined Facebook she would be able to communicate and develop relationships with her cousins who lived all over the world; she was adamant about not wanting to interact with the peers she associated with everyday at school online but wistfully reflected on the communities of shared interests that she would participate in, particularly in the areas of global youth activism.

Fieldnote: Interview with Jayde

> **Jayde**: *Becoming increasingly animated as she speaks* Well, if had no restrictions I would interact with my cousins. I have cousins all over the world, I have one in Africa, one in Japan, one in Amsterdam, one in Alberta. I have family everywhere. I would keep in touch with them and ask them what it’s like to live where they are, I’d ask them all kinds of questions and we would get closer. But I’d also communicate with people in completely different cultures and I would join a bunch of forums around environmental or political issues.
>
> **Shanly**: Who would you be least likely to interact with online and why?

> **Jayde**: I'm least likely to spend hours online interacting with the friends I see on a regular basis – like people from school. I see lots of fights happening because of misunderstandings about Facebook so I think that it's simpler just not to use Facebook in my everyday life. (August 2010**)**

It has become an accepted representation in Western popular culture that it is typical for teenagers to push the boundaries of their communities and to transgress against authority (Savage, 2007). This is often an aspect of play - the pleasure inherent in rebellion; it's part of exploring identity and community—asking, "who am I and where do I belong" Popular media has portrayed it as a right of passage for adolescents to transgress and push the boundaries of adult culture. In the case of the young respondents in this study, one of the ways in which they resist adult culture is to create a subculture that relies on digital culture in order to create autonomous spaces. They create their own subculture that while resisting the constraints of adult culture, has its own social norms and boundaries. However, in an era where the nature of community is increasingly fluid and transient the boundaries of community shift. The markers by which we create identity are changing. Community is often less about the physical space occupied and more about shared interests, as is demonstrated in the case of Nick, a 15 year old boy I interviewed, who built an active and autonomous social life on the website deviantART around his interest in art.

Gossip can serve as a process through which young people can work out what types of behaviors are acceptable in specific communities; it can also function as a way to attempt to understand and negotiate the, often confusing, range of choice and information available in digital spaces. Potentially, gossip helps to construct boundaries in otherwise

unbounded, uncontrolled territory/environment. Perhaps when engaging in behaviors that adults deem inappropriate or unacceptable, young people are transgressing previous social norms in an attempt to instate new social norms that are more apposite, relevant or functional - rather than pushing or destroying boundaries they are re-negotiating and re-establishing more meaningful ones.

Fieldnote: Interview with Jess & Lucy

I sit and listen as Jess and Lucy discuss Amy's profile pictures and the various possible motivations for posting, in Jess's ironically uttered words, "scandalous photos." She continues on;

> In the case of Amy it was really a desire to be outstanding – to be the 'it girl' - the girl of the moment who people talk about. Then there are the followers, the girls who imitate the 'it' girls, and finally the girls who just want to be known as the 'really hot' girl on Facebook – it's about getting a reaction – and for some people that's the whole point of Facebook - to get a reaction, cultivate a persona – some people work really hard on their Facebook profile." Lucy interjects "like Kayla, who spends all day getting ready to take pictures for her profile, she spends all of her time doing her hair and makeup and staging the perfect shot." Jess explains "but it's not just for everyone else, it's for yourself too. You can go look at your pictures when you're having a bad day and it makes you feel better. You look at your friends, you look at yourself smiling and happy and you remember those really good times. I read all of the comments from friends

and it can make you feel really good and special. I put up inspirational quotes and it's like it's this really nice space that I've created just for me. (November, 2010)

The idea that Facebook can potentially serve as a space created for *oneself* rather that as a space designed to project an image of oneself outwards to the larger world runs counter to the typical understandings by adults regarding how young people use Facebook. Theorizing and writing is often directed at issues of young people's use of Facebook profiles for performance and identity construction but there has been less discussion concerning how young people might design their profiles as a personal space to visit and hang out in. The choices one makes in constructing profiles would be based on entirely different motivations if one were constructing a profile as a personal project versus a collective exercise in identity construction.

In their article "Gendering Facebook: Privacy and Commodification", Shade and Cohen's suggest that while social networking spaces provide opportunities for young people to align themselves with political concerns, social networking spaces are not viewed as effective tools for collective political mobilization.

While personal profiles can reflect progressive, inspirational, or politically motivated concerns, aside from the ability to create issue-based groups (for instance, a global search on "women þ activism" yields ninety-nine groups), SNS are not considered proactive tools for collective mobilization. Participants could not easily identify Facebook groups dedicated to activist issues. Some noted the prevalence of "joke"

groups, and others believed people join groups just to enhance their profiles: "You can join a group but that doesn't mean ... it will ... [motivate you to do more]".

While it might be suggested that young people join issue-based groups as a process of identity creation, much like aligning oneself with a style of fashion, a brand, a genre of music or a pop icon, the participants in this research expressed very strongly their view that online spaces also provide opportunities for young people to support the creation of their offline identities as artists, writers, photographers and activists. They took their political engagement very seriously. In response to my question regarding the authenticity of political engagement on Facebook Jess suggested that,

> Joining groups might not always make you go out and do something about the issue that is the focus of the group but it will make you reflect on it for the moment. Everybody has their one cause they really believe in. There's a girl at school that sent me an invitation to join a group that denounces puppy mills. I joined because I'm definitely against puppy mills. Will I go volunteer every weekend at the SPCA like she does? No - I have my own causes but would definitely sponsor her in an event to raise money for an animal shelter. I attended a 'mob[19]' organized fundraiser for Haiti because I was contacted through Facebook. After attending the event at the community center near my house several MOB members friended me on Facebook and I joined the MOB. Since then I have attended several events. I might donate money or attend an event because someone sends

[19] The mob is a nickname for teen mobilizers – define teen mobilizers

me an email or Facebooks me which will then draw me into a cause"

(Jess, Interview, April 2011)

The young people who are participants in this study have mandatory community service hours to fulfill in order to graduate high school and many of them have a Youth and Philanthropy Initiative Project (YPI)[20] to complete in Secondary 4. Researching non-profit community groups and social issues on the Internet makes finding a place to complete community service hours or a non-profit organization to represent for YPI easier. During the *Month of Change* the participants Facebooked ideas for activities and events for Free the Children, a 15 year-old participant who lives and attends a private girl's school in Westmount suggests that, "Facebook is a good place to brainstorm because everyone can contribute and it provides a record for previous ideas and comments" (Kayla, March, 2011 Interview).

Kayla describes *We Day 2010*[21]*,*

Screens were set up throughout the event which were used to solicit

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[20]Youth and Philanthropy Initiative, http://www.goypi.org/CA/ypi-what/matter-of-fact

[21]We Day began in 2007 and is an event designed to bring youth from across North America together to engage in activism, the events feature speeches and performances from global leaders and social activists and entertainers. For more information, see http://www.metowe.com/me-to-we-is/; http://weday.freethechildren.com/about/; http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=150025785033502

> people to join Facebook groups supporting a range of social issues, people were using their phones to 'like' groups, and often 1$ would be donated to the cause because we joined. You could also text this number from your phone to donate money to *Free the Children*. People who didn't have phones connected to the Internet joined the groups after the event (Kayla, Interview March 2011).

Kayla is part of the Free the Children group at school. She explains how they recruit members through Facebook and describes how the students use Facebook to help in organizing events. For example, they organized a 'fastathon' at their school where participants had a sleep over at school and fasted together. Kayla suggests that, "First you have to be aware of an issue before you can be inspired to take action." In her article, *Bursting the bubble: Internet feminism and the end of activism* Gorman (2008) posits that Third Wave feminism embraces the Internet as a means of feminist expression. Certainly the participants in this ethnography use the Internet to explore a range of personal interests. However, she argues that while online spaces provide new opportunities for women to explore personal body issues, to express themselves and participate in spaces that they may not have previously had access to, it's very much an individualistic form of feminism. Gorman suggests that this type of exploration might result in personal growth but does not benefit the feminist movement as a whole, it's not the kind of collective political movement that will further feminist causes such as gender equality in the workplace. In contrast to Gorman's position, while the participants in this study were not exploring feminist issues explicitly they were using the Internet to engage in collective activism. Additionally, some of the organizations that they supported through

volunteerism were specifically geared towards women's issues. For instance, one of the participants volunteered at a fundraiser for pregnant teenage mothers in Montreal and two other participants volunteered at a women's shelter. They discovered these opportunities through online networks and used the Internet to research and contact the organizations. This is not to say that they might not have volunteered had they not used the Internet; however, as 15 and 16 year old girls, they may not have had the resources to easily research and explore opportunities for activism in their community without access.

Chapter Five: The Spaces of Childhood Play

Fieldnote Vignette; Sherbing

As the flood of 'tweenagers' pour out of the various private schools situated throughout Westmount and NDG, cell phones all over the neighbourhood power on. The texting and ringing begins as soon as the uniform clad students pass through the wrought iron gates of their various private schools. Parents begin phoning to hear the news of the day and to issue reminders regarding homework, sports practices, orthodontist appointments and tutoring, but students ignore parental calls as they intensely text peers both from their own schools and from other schools throughout the area. As several of the private schools are same-sex institutions (throwbacks from convents or Jesuit run schools), they call friends of friends to co-ordinate with their sister schools or with peers from co-ed schools.

On a beautiful spring day, following a harsh Montreal winter, the ultimate objective is to go 'Sherbing'. Young people spill down the mountain in their plaid kilts and navy blazers, converging from all over the Anglo West of the city, and autonomously, collectively, congregate on Sherbrooke Street flowing into Westmount Park. The various uniforms and plaid kilts distinguishing each of the schools mix and mingle as the students mill about, laden backpacks abandoned at their feet, ice creams and Starbucks' Frappaccinos in one hand, cell phones clutched in the other. As they form tightly knit clusters, it would appear from the outside that they are interacting solely with each other, a tight clique of peers, but the most remarkable communication is often occurring between the various

cliques, as they text back and forth creating intricate social networks that are enacted digitally.

Patricia stands, casually chatting amongst a group of five girls. They hover near the park benches on the sidewalk, which are strategically placed between the Dairy Queen and The Second Cup. All of the seats are filled with students in school uniforms squeezed in tight, some girls perched on other's laps, shifting and giggling. Patricia glances discreetly over at a group of ninth grade boys standing a few meters away. She texts Tanya, who is perched on Katie's knee on the benches; "Check out Nathan – he thinks he's so hot." Katie glances over at Nathan and texts Samantha, who is sitting with a group of boys and girls at the Dairy Queen: "Patty still so likes Nate". Then, without missing a beat texts Patricia: "Totally and he's so not hot". Nate texts Samantha a "hey". Samantha smiles slightly and texts "hey" back, then seamlessly sends a text across the table to her best friend Tara: "Nate's texting me – he's so over Patty and so into me!" Tara texts her older brother who is standing in the crowd of boys with Nate: "Hey tell Nate that Samantha and I are heading over to the park – we'll be hanging out near the pond."

The texts fly from group to group, down the street, in and out of the cafés and ice cream shops and across the park linking them together in complicated webs. Quips and one- liners are exchanged as the kids playfully, digitally "poke" one another, sharing confidences and gossip, arranging directions and plans, creating a chaotic hodgepodge of playful communication and interaction. Cell phones are an essential means of communication as they create opportunities for a

> continuous back channel of communication. Anne explains that they also serve as props in social interactions. If you feel left out of the conversation, instead of standing awkwardly looking like a 'loser', you simply appear disinterested in the current conversation and busily text while attempting to appear totally engrossed in the obviously more exciting conversation that is going on elsewhere. Additionally, you can always fake a call or a text from a parent in order to get away from an awkward social situation, "Damn! My dad just texted me, he's stuck in traffic, I have to go pick up my sister from her tutor and bring her home – Sorry guys – gotta fly" (April, 2009)

Cell phones are considered to be mandatory safety gear, according to the participants. As young people leave the house or car, parents inevitably inquire, "Do you have your cell phone?" They are essential devises for the tracking and control of young people today as they navigate public space. 'Good parents' ensure that their offspring have cell phones with them at all times, and one way to guarantee that they carry their cell phone is to make sure it is the trendiest cell on the market. Young people have complex relationships with their cell phones, simultaneously resisting and embracing them. Kayla 15, lives with her grandmother in lower Westmount. She is the one respondent who is economically disadvantaged. She describes her desire to own a cell phone but explains that it is an extra bill that her grandmother can just not afford. When I ask why she wants a cell phone she responds that it would make her feel safer. She often stays after school to participate in extra-curricular activities and explains that she would feel safer if she could phone her grandmother when she is navigating the city, "I would

be able to call her if anything happens, just to be able to ask her what to do" (Kayla Interview April, 2011). Kayla admits that she would also use her phone to text her friends and boyfriend and shares her plan to get a cell phone as soon as she gets a job. Other participants describe sometimes opposing parental control and exerting their independence by 'forgetting cells', ignoring parent's calls, or allowing their phones to lose charge as an excuse not to answer or to avoid having to account for their whereabouts.

It has become a serious act of rebellion on the part of young people to go AWOL for a couple of hours after school. A violation that in the case of Nathan was punished by his having his cell phone confiscated for two weeks. Nathan explains that because his parents pay his phone bill, from their perspective, when they call he is obligated to answer the phone. However, Nathan doesn't understand the connection, "the reason I don't always answer immediately is because sometimes I just can't – I mean I've got a life." When I asked Nathan how he felt about being without his phone for the week he expressed his opinion, "It's so unfair! Now I can't talk to any of my friends, no texting, zero communication, I'm completely cut off. I'm basically in total isolation." According to Nathan, since he does not have his cell phone he has to come directly home from school, hockey practice and math tutoring because his parents have no way to monitor his whereabouts and to ensure his safety. I ask Nathan if he will use the landline to talk to friends. He looks at me in horror, "absolutely not!" he responds. When I ask why not he explains that it would just be " too weird, beyond lame" However, he will still be able to communicate through Facebook but that limits him because he has to be at home with his laptop. When he has his phone he is able to text continuously and check his Facebook

account while walking home from school, waiting for the tutor, moving around the house, doing chores, at the dinner table and so forth.

Evidently, according to participants, young people *need* their cell phones in order to communicate with peers, they are essential devises to which they must be continuously connected. Many of the young people that I have interviewed have slept with their cell phones for years, experiencing anxiety at the thought of being disconnected from peers even temporarily—even while asleep. As phones increasingly function as entertainment centers providing music, games and Internet it becomes even more essential to remain continuously connected to the rich social and entertainment environment. When I ask Amy and Jess what they think of Nathan's situation, they respond "Wow, that's totally harsh." I ask what would happen if their parents disconnected their cell to which Amy responded, "that would be an act of extreme aggression." She added, "that's basically a declaration of war."

Amongst the participants, there seem to be social norms about which type of digital communication technology is appropriate for particular social interactions. Over the course of my fieldwork I have been amazed at the complexity of the social norms that govern digital communication. In July 2009 I spent the summer in a small rural community on an island. Over the summer three of the participants that I had been interviewing came to visit. The community had dial-up Internet which was so slow that none of the local residents bothered with it. I had dial-up at the cottage but the only function I was really able to use it for was to check my email once every day or two – an excruciatingly slow process. I recently conceded to having a phone installed at the

cottage because the cell phone signal was so intermittent.

Fieldnote Vignette; Losing the Connection

As we were driving from the airport to the cottage Amy groaned in frustration. She complained of intermittent phone signal. She was attempting to text her friends to let them know exactly what she was doing. Having traveled with Amy before I was well aware that she continuously texted her friends through the day and the night in order to let them know exactly what she was doing at any moment, also sending pictures to let them know what she was wearing while doing it. Given that during the school year she attended a private school with a uniform, posting and sending pictures of outfits is a way in which she might be able to define her identity through fashion. When she was traveling she maintained continuous contact with friends who were often also traveling.
This sunny morning she groaned in frustration as she struggled to connect with her friend who was doing a student exchange in Thailand and her boyfriend who was at his summer cottage on Nantucket Island. She giggled nervously "I don't understand this! How do kids connect with each other without signal? How do they communicate on this island?"

This lack of signal was to create significant drama both this summer and the following summer. The girls from Montreal quickly made friends with the local kids but arranging social engagements became highly complicated. Due to the lack of signal, or intermittent, undependable signal the girls from 'away' could only text the local teenagers when they were in the village, which happened for an hour every day or two. As a result, often invitations to meet at the beach or to

> attend a bonfire arrived a day late or the girls would sit at home waiting for a text because tentative arrangements had been made but they were unable to be sure if their local friends had received their confirming texts. This sometimes resulted in miscommunication with the girls being upset because plans had been made but not followed through on only to find out the following day that the local teenagers had been waiting for them at the beach or the bonfire, having assumed that the text had been received and ignored. It made for a very frustrating summer. Only twice was a landline resorted to, both times by Jess because the arrangements had become so complicated and the events, a local dance and a large party were too important to risk missing. The ensuing phone calls, were made with great reluctance; the conversations were awkward and brief. The girls explained "It's like crossing a line; it's weird and awkward and stalkerish,'" However, evidently it's totally acceptable to text back and forth 24/7 – that's not stalkerish in the least. (July 2009)

Interestingly, the Montreal girls kept in touch with the local teenagers throughout the winter. They would text several times a day and then disappear for weeks until they had saved or earned enough money to purchase another phone card. The networks extended because when the Island teenagers returned to their high school in the local town they were able to connect through friends who had the Internet at home and therefore had Facebook. They shared cell phones with each other so often the girls were uncertain as to whether they were talking to the owner of the phone or to a friend who it had been lent to, phones were continuously passed around which also extended the

network of friends. This provides an example of the ways in which social norms evolve and then are standardized as a response to the adoption of technology. The expectations surrounding what constitutes the type of medium that ought to be used for communication is dependent upon the personal relationships involved, the context, the social situation and the nature of the information to be shared. The appropriate etiquette, or in the case of online communication, netiquette, which makes the participants feel comfortable is often in direct discordance to the social norms of previous generations.

This raises questions regarding how the participants choose from an array of communication possibilities such as, cell phone (voice or text), instant messaging, email, contact through social net working sites and so on. Of course there are limitations resulting from affordances but with an array of possibilities available questions arise as to whether mediums are chosen to strategically shape the nature of the communication experience or because of social norms regarding the appropriateness of particular mediums for specific social circumstances. What are the social and practical consequences of choosing one medium over another? In a conversation about cell phones Amy reveals that she prefers to text rather than call and is much more likely to use text to communicate.

Fieldnote: Interview with Amy

Shanly: Why do you use text to communicate more often than calling?

Amy: It's faster and easier than making a call – certain people I wouldn't talk on the phone. It's just less awkward to text than to talk. It's totally different with guys than with girls. Guys definitely don't like talking on the phone. I have some girlfriends that I would not talk to on the phone. I just don't know them well

enough – they are more friends of my friends but I would text them if we were all hanging out in a group.

She pauses thoughtfully and then continues

It's like IMing, there have definitely been some cases where talking to boys was so much easier through text – so much easier – you get asked out and you break up through text.

Shanly: Why is that?

Amy: People are too shy to do it even over the phone. I think it's wrong to break up like that but I do like having important conversations through technology (she is referring to chat, text, IM but not the phone) – they have to listen to you. They can't cut you off – through technology you can really, really say whatever is on our mind – they won't hang up on you – fights are more deep and intense and big conversations are more deep but casual conversations are so shallow and superficial. Casual conversations are about touching base and just saying like 'what's up?' Sometimes it's just to touch base so the person thinks of you – they may not answer right away but in a couple of days they will call to make plans. I'm friends with Chloe – we sit near each other at lunch – we talk on Facebook – we never ever call each other and never ever text each other – we will Facebook to get together but I've been like almost best friends with her for 2 years and I've never spoken on phone. No one does it – phoning is irrelevant – it just isn't done. It's unheard of. It's actually kind of sad. I was reading *Catcher in the Rye* and he was just calling people up and asking them to hang out – it was so cool – you could just call anybody (August 2009).

When I ask Jess and Anne about the difference between texting and talking they explain that it's easier to have difficult conversations via text. You have time to think about what you are going to say. Jess advises that "you should never text or Facebook in anger – it's there forever and then everyone gets involved – those kinds of things get out of hand really fast"(July, 2009) Anne recounts the story about how she and a bunkmate at camp had a really big fight one night. She said that they were sitting side by side, each on her own bed, texting the most horrible things to each other—"things you would just never say – it was so awful" (July, 2009) Afterwards they both erased the texts. Anne explains that she keeps, "hundreds of messages on my phone – I keep my conversations – you never know – I like to keep the cute ones from boyfriends because they are nice to read over afterwards – they make you feel good about yourself. I usually delete fights – I don't want to revisit that" (July, 2009)

Cell phones simultaneously represent both freedom and control – they enable young people the freedom to socialize and remain continuously connected to peers through text and social networking sites, the freedom to access information anytime anywhere, the freedom to organize meetings and to navigate public space with friends. Adults often feel an increased sense of security with the knowledge that young people have cell phones and as a consequence, they may allow young people additional freedom within city space. Yet, paradoxically, cell phones simultaneously limit freedom as young people are continuously tracked and monitored through the phones.

A similar paradox exists with social networking spaces. This is exemplified in the example of Amy's revealing aspects of identity that challenge social norms regarding appropriate behaviour for a middle class female on her profile. Her parents, along with

the school administration, were able to monitor her online behaviour and quickly intervene. The social networking space provided an opportunity for experimentation and play amongst peers while simultaneously providing a space for peers to watch each other, and for adults in the form of parents, school administrators, coaches, college recruiters, police and so forth to potentially monitor and regulate behaviour.

Play as a Spatial Concept

In exploring how the concept of space is significant in understanding young people's play I will argue that play is innately a spatial concept. How space is perceived, understood and experienced influences where and how people play. Conversely, the individual experience of play influences how space is realized. The social construction of space orders actual physical spaces and organizes and controls young people's place in it. Issues of freedom and agency emerge around play as adults attempt to regulate and control young people's movements through the control of play spaces. They resist this surveillance and control by seeking to play freely in private play spaces away from the watchful gaze of adults. Further tensions emerge as spatial boundaries are contested through play and traditional understandings of spatial constructions are challenged. The ways in which young people experience both physical and digital space renders them as distinct from larger adult culture, as both space and play are defining features of childhood and adolescence in Western culture.

As we have seen throughout this thesis, it is increasingly apparent that young people perceive a disjunction between adults' perception and use of digital media and their own. One of the most consistent and unvarying responses in the interview questions occurred in the second phase of the interview process. After reviewing the field notes

from my initial interviews I decided to add a series of questions regarding young people's perceptions of the similarities and differences in the ways in which they engaged with digital culture versus adults' engagement. One of the questions was, "Are there any differences between the ways in which adults use the Internet, cell phones, video games and the ways young people use them? Most of the respondents replied without hesitation, "Adults use it for work and we use it for play."

Theoretical Understandings of How Space is Socially Constructed

The ways in which space is characterized structures and organizes society, thereby ordering daily life (de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1974; Soja, 1996). Space is continuously being differentiated, defined and labeled by various groups within society, "We are thus confronted by an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next: geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global" (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 8). Spaces are further divided according to categories that organize everyday social life: spaces of work, learning, leisure, play, illness, madness and so on. The spaces that individuals inhabit in society are defined and delineated at any given moment. When we look at the space that young people occupy it reveals much about their roles and positions of within that society. Looking at the space that is allocated to play and the role of play in a society tells us a story about the role and lives of the young people in that culture.

This perspective is predicated on the theory that space is a social construction, an assumption that is the basis of Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre's (1974) spatial analysis. He suggests that forces of production produce social space. The means of production are controlled by individual capitalists and by the bourgeois as a class. In the

lives of the young people who were part of this study, social class has a role in structuring the use of space. The more affluent participants had greater access to specific public space, perhaps because their public space was viewed as safer – for instance, they were allowed to go 'Sherbing' after school. Their presence in this affluent shopping neighbourhood was welcomed and they were viewed not as a threat to public order but rather as valued consumers with significant disposable income available. However, they were not allowed to venture outside of this area which is patrolled by it's own security force. Participants who lived or went to school in areas deemed by parents as less safe were often required to return directly home after school and to remain indoors. Because there was limited access to outdoor play spaces the opportunities for socializing with peers was also limited. In instances such as this, technology often provided an alternative means of social interaction.

It is the ideologies of the ruling organizations within a society that determines how a particular space should function. Prevailing ideologies in contemporary Western society dictate the divisions that order space. For instance, the divisions between spaces of work and play suggest that work should be done in a space such as an office and that a space like a park is designated for play. Space is controlled and managed, containing its subjects and imposing rationality in the form of established order. Organizations such as state, business and family dominate and control space by organizing and dividing spaces.

Ideas of control, freedom and agency are intertwined with concepts of space and play. The freedom to engage in the type of play one chooses and to play in the space of one's choice are both freedoms that are often beyond the scope of youthful agency and socio-economic considerations further complicate this. Childhood, like space, is a social

construction (Aries, 1962) which has been defined in diverse and sometimes conflicting ways across time and culture. The social construction of childhood can serve as a form of control. In industrial societies childhood has primarily been defined by exclusion (Buckingham, 2000). Children have restricted freedom regarding the activities that they can engage in and the spaces that they can occupy. In contemporary Western industrialized countries children are defined by what they cannot do. For instance, children by virtue of their age cannot vote, cannot drive, cannot purchase cigarettes or alcohol, etc. They are also defined by the spaces they occupy such as schools, parks, day cares and camps, in opposition to spaces that are not deemed appropriate for children to occupy without adult supervision; often this includes public spaces as public space is increasingly inhospitable to young people (Buckingham, 2000; Jenkins, 1998; Sutton-Smith, 1997).

As a result of public space being constructed as inhospitable to children many academics argue that children's play is moving from public spaces of parks, streets and playgrounds to private domestic spaces due to the increasing control, regulation and surveillance of children (Buckingham, 200; Jenkins, 1998; Sutton-Smith, 1997). For example, children are less likely to be permitted to walk to the playground alone after school in search of a gang of neighbourhood kids to play with; they are less likely to congregate on the street for a game of pick up hockey until they are called in for dinner. Indeed, hockey is now more likely to be played in a league organized by adults than on the street, and schoolyard play is increasingly supervised, regulated and organized. This concern about children's use of public space is both a result of fear for our children and fear of our children. We are afraid that harm will come to our children if they are left

unprotected in public space and we also have concerns about children disrupting public space. This results in children being increasingly restricted, organized and supervised.

Children struggle to find spaces that are free to play in. Lefebvre (1974) suggests that as a society there is a collective yearning for natural space, yet natural (physical) space is disappearing. We continue to use natural space as a reference point, it is viewed as the original model, but natural space has become background space as other spaces move to the fore. He proposes that although the West has historically valued and prioritized the rational, as we increasingly become disillusioned with the political, with science and technology, we begin to long for the original, the imagined simplicity and purity of nature. “As source and as resource, nature obsesses us, as do childhood and spontaneity, via the filter of memory” (Lefebvre, 1974, p.30). We long for the real, for something that no longer exists—if it ever did. This viewing childhood through a lens of nostalgia, romance and idealism is central to the discourse that surrounds childhood. The attempt to preserve the purity and innocence of childhood serves as a rational for the control of children.

As urban public space is increasingly deemed off limits for children, more and more of children’s play and social interaction takes place in digital spaces. Spaces of childhood are viewed by adults as becoming increasingly technified, commodified, homogeneous, and global, potentially spaces that empower children, enabling increased possibilities for freedom, self-expression, political engagement, identity play and possibilities for a wider range of social interactions. However, whether one chooses to view these evolving childhood play spaces as hegemonic or as empowering or as both, it is largely taken for granted that they are often used by children as spaces for play.

Tensions have emerged as children's play moves from public space to domestic and digitalized space. This tension is a consequence of adult desire to control children's movements (under the pretext that it's for children's own safety and for the safety of society) and children's opposing desire to be autonomous.

The discourse surrounding children and public space has been focused on the potential dangers that children might encounter in public space. Similarly, the discourse surrounding online space increasingly emphasizes the risks to children and suggests that children should be regulated in online spaces. As I have described in discussions of privacy and surveillance in chapter 4, this has led to an industry of surveillance equipment and software. Net nanny's and internet monitoring systems proliferate as adults attempt to control children's online wanderings and trace their digital paths. In much the same way, technology is used to track and control children's movements in their day to day lives; increasingly children have cell phones so that parents can be aware of their location at all times, and to ensure that children are where they say they are, mobile phone service with GPS enables parents to track their children's every step. The rehetoric of care is invoked as a justification for these technological invasions of privacy, but by violating the privacy of young people, we are potentially placing everyone's privacy in jeopardy. By socializing a generation of children to believe that they must sacrifice their privacy in exchange for personal safety we compromise the value of privacy as a collective right.

It has been established that children have limited agency regarding the spaces they occupy in society, whether they be virtual spaces or physical spaces. It could also be argued that what constitutes play is also a site of debate in contemporary childhood. The

local hockey rink might be considered a play space and the weekly hockey practice might be counted as play but to the child who would rather be playing shinny on the street with his friends the adult controlled structured hockey practice at 6:00 am may feel more like duty than play. In discussing agency in regard to children's play spaces it's useful to look at play theorist Johan Huizinga's (1967) definition of play. Huizinga describes a set of characteristics of the social manifestations of the higher forms of play .The first of these characteristics is that play is voluntary. Play must be entered into freely (p. 7). . People enter into play because it is enjoyable and this is what characterizes the 'free' aspect of play. Freedom is a primary characteristic of play for many key play theorists. If children are not able to freely choose the activities they engage in and if they cannot freely choose the space in which to play can these leisure activities accurately be described as play? What adults view as children's play may be different from what children themselves define as play.

Jess explains that her extracurricular activities at school are more like work than play. She is head of the student council and explains that while she enjoys the position it's an enormous amount of work. She has trouble recruiting and keeping student council members because with all of their extracurricular activities and the high volume of schoolwork these students have to be very selective about what they commit to. Jess strategically chooses activities that will further her chosen career path, "When I held the first meeting for the student council I tried to motivate the members to take their jobs seriously, I asked how many of them wanted a career that involved public service, law, or business – lots of them raised their hands and so I said – think how good this will look on your CV when you apply for college" (field notes, November, 2009).

Almost all of the respondents voiced complaints about a lack of free time and the degree to which their 'play' and 'leisure' activities were expected to be productive and/or enriching in some way. Even free time with the computer is often expected to be intellectually or culturally enriching. Jayde is allowed to spend hours surfing the net accessing information about a variety of intellectual and cultural activities. However, she is not allowed to post online or to communicate in any way except through email. She explains how she spends a lot of time exploring organizations that provide possibilities for youth volunteer exchanges. She imagines going to build a school, dig a well, or teach English, but she expresses a desire for greater autonomy in these free explorations "I just wish that I could respond to some of the posts on the websites, engage in some of the discussion with kids who have gone on these trips and find out more about their experiences" (field notes, August 2010) Jayde sees a community of young people who have a similar interest in travel and activism, it's a community that she would like to participate in however, her opportunity to interact is limited by adult imposed restrictions. Ironically, many of these young people will be allowed to travel to other continents on excursions to engage in community service, or academic events but will be restricted regarding the degree to which they are allowed to navigate the spaces of their own communities.

Opposing perspectives regarding what constitutes play and play spaces leads young people to seek private spaces for autonomous play, away from the control and regulation of adults. Part of the appeal of agency in play is in the desire to experience autonomy. Autonomy can be described as the sense of control that young people often feel when they engage in activities that they freely chose rather than those activities that

they were required to participate in, either due to adult pressures or because they felt a sense of guilt or obligation. No one forced Jess to sit on student council but she explains, “ I needed a leadership position for my college applications. There is a lot of competition and pressure” (field notes November, 2009).

Fieldnote: Interview with Nathan

> **Nathan**: “ When you are 5 or 6 years old you start gaming and it’s really cool. When I was around 9-13 I played a lot of video games alone and with friends it’s all I wanted to do but the last year or so I just really stopped.
>
> **Shanly**: Why?
>
> **Nathan**: When you are younger gaming means freedom but eventually you see the limitations of the game and it just becomes repetitive and boring. When you’re 13 or so your world opens up. In high school you want to expand more, basically become more aware of who you are and your life. When you’re young gaming means freedom, then when you are 13-15 the Internet opens up the world – it means connections between people and opens up the world to us. On the Internet you can interact with anyone and you basically don’t even really need parents anymore – you can find out anything you need on your own. (September 2010)

Nathan’s discussion of the freedom and potential of the internet is idealistic and echoes much of the utopic adult discourse around the potential for spaces of digital media to provide opportunities for young people to engage in a greater public sphere. This raises

questions as to whether the utopic discourse surrounding the Internet espoused by young people is a result of their echoing a perspective that they have heard or is it emerging from their personal experiences. This enthusiasm about the potential for Internet to provide unprecedented autonomy and freedom in young people's lives is similar to the discourse that was being advanced by the 10 -14 year old boys that were interviewed for my MA thesis on video games. Eventually their perspective changed and as they had greater access to public space they began to see design limitations in the previously perceived 'free' space of the video game.

Is the freedom they feel online a result of the lack of freedom in their everyday lives, is it just a new way of doing the same old things that people have always done or is the freedom really a new type of freedom that young people didn't previously experience? According to young people, it's both, they can't communicate and socialize in the same ways as previously so they have found new ways to do old things but they also have unprecedented access to new spaces. They are struggling to make meaning through the use of these new ways of interacting and experiencing space, attempting to understand the ways in which it changes how individuals interact.

Secrets and Secret Spaces

Huizinga (1967) ties the elements of mystery and secrecy to his concept of communities forming through play, suggesting that engaging in secret play creates even deeper connections amongst the players. This type of autonomous private play creates the feeling of resistance to adult regulation and enables young people to form their own communities away from adult surveillance.

> The exceptional and special position of play is most tellingly illustrated by the fact that it loves to surround itself with an air of secrecy. Even in early childhood the charm of play is enhanced by making a 'secret' out of it. This is for *us,* not for the 'others' what the 'others' do 'outside' is no concern of ours at the moment. Inside the circle of the game the laws and customs of ordinary life no longer count. We are different and do things differently. This temporary abolition of the ordinary world is fully acknowledged in child-life, but is no less evident in the great ceremonial games of savage societies. (p. 12)

Huizinga's comparison of the play of children to the most sacred of rituals suggests that in both circumstances ordinary life is temporarily suspended, ordinary rules and hierarchies are overturned and the play is characterized by secrecy, for example in hazing and fraternity rituals, tribal initiation rites or children playing in a secret fort or club house. Young people's attempts to create separate private spaces of play may be interpreted as an attempt to assume agency through play and as a result gain control.

My research revealed a prevailing impression that adult's just "don't get" young people's desire for autonomous social spaces and interactions. The *adult's don't get it* refrain reoccurs throughout the interviews and observations. For example, in a conversation with Anne, a fourteen-year-old respondent, she expressed her frustration because she felt that adults didn't understand and that they were missing the point of digital culture. I asked her to explain that further. Anne elaborates, "In every generation of teenagers adults just don't get it – they analyze everything we do – they go into such deep explanations when they are not even accurate. Adults always talk about dangers and

chat rooms and like I don't know anyone who has ever done that. They don't understand that this is our space, just for us and our friends - we don't even want to talk to adults or people we don't know" (Interview with Anne field notes July, 2009). The desire on the part of some young people to have a space in which secrets are safe from adult intervention is evident.

According to Simmel (1906), the act of keeping a secret can be more sociologically significant than the secret itself. When a child first keeps a secret from an adult it's a step towards developmental autonomy (van Manen & Levering, 1996) To be able to keep a secret, the child must have some concept of a self that is separate from others. While the role of secrecy in the development of individuation and autonomy has been studied in regards to early childhood it has not been fully explored in respect to adolescence (Finkenauer, Engels & Meeus, 2002). There are two important peaks that occur in the process of individuation, the development of an autonomous self; the first peak occurs in early childhood and the second in adolescence. The role of secrets can be significant in both parts of the individuation process. The individuation process is a developmental task that is central to adolescence (Erikson, 1959; Finkenauer, Engels & Meeus, 2002).

Simmel (1906) suggests that the ability to keep information secret is a sign of intellectual and emotional maturity. Children often have difficulty understanding what types of information ought to remain secret, let alone being able to keep secrets. He suggests that being able to maintain silence or refrain from divulging specific information is a sign of general self-discipline and of a disciplined mind. According to Simmel, a society that has evolved sufficiently enables the individual to keep certain information

secret but requires greater transparency from government. In primitive or undeveloped societies the individual has no secrets, everyone knows everything about each other. In childhood the individual struggles to learn the importance of secrecy. However, secrecy is often associated with negative connotations in childhood, and with adolescents it evokes the prospect of young people withholding information that adults might want to know. In the article "Keeping secrets from parents", Simetana, Villatobos, Rogge and Tasopoulos-Chan (2010) suggest that there are three motivations for young people to keep secrets from parents – the fear of parental anger, the desire to avoid parental control or the conviction that certain information is private. Yet, learning to keep a secret may enable a young person to evade adult control and develop a sense of personal privacy (Buhermester & Prager, 1995; Finkenauer, Engels & Meeus, 2002).

There is an interplay of secrecy and revelation that arises in my field research as the respondents struggle with which information to share through digital technologies. Young people are forced to make difficult decisions that redefine the nature of privacy on a moment to moment basis as situations arise. For instance, do I relinquish personal information in order to participate in a particularly appealing online space, to cement a friendship, to please a romantic interest. Secrecy takes on new aspects as almost all of the respondents have sent private texts, emails or had private conversations through chat that have been shared without their knowledge or permission. Lucy and Jess speak about having a continuous sense that everything they say in intimate conversation might be revealed to others without their knowledge and yet they continue to engage in personal communications through digital mediums. Perhaps, because it feels most secret as the conversation is occurring, the communication of the information feels private and

confidential. Jess describes texting her friends the most personal, minute details of her day – what she ate for snack, how her math test went, the nasty comment a friend made and how she might have felt about it. In the moment of sharing she is alone moving through her day but she goes on to describe her friends passing around phones everyday at lunch, reading private texts and sharing conversations that were not meant to be public.

According to Simmel (1906), every human relationship contains varying degrees of interplay between secrecy and revelation and it is this interplay which creates a compelling tension. Secrets separate individuals but also bring them together because there is a continuous potential to uncover the others secret: “From the play of these two interests, in concealment and in revelation, spring shadings and fortunes of human reciprocities throughout their whole range” (p. 466). However, a key concern amongst adults today is that young people have not developed appropriate understanding of social norms surrounding privacy and are therefore unaware of what types of information are acceptable to reveal and what information is to be concealed. Simmel suggests that the historical progression of society is distinguished, “by the fact that what was formerly public passes under the protection of secrecy, and that, on the contrary, what was formerly secret ceases to require such protection and proclaims itself” (p. 462-463). However, what was previously an evolving process of change has become accelerated due to the ways in which the sharing of information has radically altered. Additionally, young people are deeply implicated in these changes, creating intergenerational tensions. Simmel valorizes this developing ability of young people to keep secrets:

> Secrecy in this sense- i.e., which is effective through negative or positive means of concealment is one of the greatest accomplishments of

> humanity. In contrast with the juvenile condition in which every mental picture is at once revealed, every undertaking is open to everyone's view, secrecy procures enormous extension of life, because with publicity many sorts of purposes could never arrive at realization. Secrecy secures, so to speak, the possibility of a second world alongside of the obvious world, and the latter is most strenuously affected by the former. (p. 462)

The idea of secrecy enables young people to imagine possible selves. This ability relates not only to creating personal identity but also enables them to imagine aspects of another person's character and personality that may not be immediately evident. Simmel outlines the ways in which our relationships are shaped in advance by what we know about each other. Social structures dictate that we have preconceived understandings of each other based on a variety of factors including the social roles we occupy. However, we need secrecy in even the most intimate relationships in order to maintain mutual interest based upon the possibility of uncovering hidden aspects of another person. What we know about an individual according to our unique relationship with that individual is defined by a very specific set of circumstances. It's possible that the students at Amy's new school know a very different Amy than the students at her old school knew and yet according to Simmel neither Amy is a lie or a deception;

> But there is within the sphere of objective knowledge, where there is room for truth and illusion, a definite segment in which both truth and illusion may take on a character nowhere else observed. The objective, internal facts of the person with whom we are in contact present this area of knowledge (p. 444)

Simmel suggests that increasingly with contemporary culture we don't know individuals in their entire contexts; we only know them or have information about them in so far as the boundaries of our specific relationship. Amy's teachers might only 'know' her as a student and as a result form an opinion on her as a person based on her behaviour in school. Her closest school friends might be privy to additional information, perhaps having been invited to her home or having met her family or having gone to parties or clubs with her. In this way they may have constructed an idea of an Amy who is significantly different from the teacher's Amy. Those individuals who have access to the information on Amy's Facebook profile view her as an edgy rebel while those who have a passing relationship with her at school know her as a quiet, reserved student who keeps to herself. According to Simmel, none of these identities is false; they are simply different representations of Amy. However, online spaces complicate the process as everyone is privy not only to the identity that she constructs for herself online but also to images, comments and stories that have been constructed and posted about Amy without her knowledge or consent. This information is all part of the information upon which they build their interactions with her, sometimes never having met her. Simmel proposes that there is an 'ideal sphere' surrounding every person which differs according to the context and connection (1906, p. 453).

If we understand the 'self' as something that is created as opposed to something discovered then it follows that part of the way in which this process of creation occurs is both through revelation and secrecy. What is kept secret in the construction of identity is as relevant as what is revealed. For instance, Jess reveals that she is a fan of indie music on her Facebook profile; but the fact that she listens to country music is a detail that she

prefers to keep secret in the context of her urban school life. Keeping a secret can be isolating. However, socializing the individual to be able to keep a secret and to keep collective secrets creates a social bond. A group of friends who share a secret share a special bond. Several of the respondents in this study have suggested that their inside jokes on Facebook walls provide a sense that they are accepted, demonstrating to the larger peer group that they have close friends and are not 'outcasts' or social misfits. According to Simmel (1906), the fact that a person possesses information (in the form of a secret) that others don't have access to makes that information valuable. The secret doesn't even have to be real – the fact that others think that you have a secret is enough to give the person holding the secret an exceptional position. Simmel provides as an example the common children's boast, 'I know something that you don't know' as an example of the ways in which holding secrets provide both power and pleasure.

Sharing of information is a way to form connections to peers. When a secret is told an act of trust is entered into, bond is formed and there is an intimate connection; typically sharing a secret with a single friend increases intimacy. The act of sharing a private text with a friend demonstrates a level of intimacy and trust, building a bond. However, participants complain about friends who pick up their phones and read their texts without being invited. This is considered a gross violation of privacy and assumes a level of friendship and intimacy that might not exist from the perspective of participant who owns the phone. This is an example of the way in which young people are negotiating changing social norms surrounding privacy as it applies to digital culture. It may be appropriate for your best friend to pick up your phone uninvited and read text but less appropriate for a boyfriend or parent to do so. Young people are in a continuous

process of negotiating these social rules and deciding upon the appropriate response when privacy boundaries are breached. While intimate individual privacy issues are being dealt with similar situations arise on larger scales. Social networking sites, twitter or texting enable the voluntary sharing of a lot of information with an entire network of peers – inevitably gaining the impression of intimacy and connection much more rapidly and on a much greater scale. Secrets have become a currency for attention or intimacy (Niedzviecki, 2009).

The functions of secrets evolve as societies transform. In this study the amount of information that these young people are able to share, the audience that they are able to share it with and the varied means, forms and context that the sharing of information assumes changes the nature of both the revelation and withholding of information. Secrecy in contemporary society is both complex and contextual. In contemporary society the potential for secrecy is greater, what is revealed and what is concealed is a matter of individual choice whereas in the past this was not always possible – simply due to close spatial proximity. In small, closely knit communities people know more about each other and secrets are harder to maintain. A world without secrets is a world with neither domination nor resistance. Secrets are only possible in societies where truth is valued and that have some kind of oppressive, dominant or hierarchical structure – otherwise there would be no justification to keep a secret and no entity to conceal the information from.

Play as Social Control

Sutton-Smith (1997) suggests that play can function as a potential means of manipulation or social control. He discusses the hegemony of particular games over

others: “In general the view seems to be that the more powerful group induces the subordinate group by persuasion or example” (p. 97). Play can potentially serve as a form of hegemony as powerful groups insist that less powerful groups ‘play their games’ or it can serve as a field of resistance as the less powerful beat the oppressors on their own playing field or when the oppressed refuses to engage in play. Sutton-Smith proceeds to a discussion about children’s power and play emphasizing the importance of children’s illicit play, and the power relations inherent in organized games and sports. Coaches, for example, exert control over children’s play, dictating the progression of the game: Sutton-Smith suggests that this domain of play is “an area of power crisis in parent-child relationships” (p. 113). This raises issues of the control of adults over the play of children.

During play that is organized or supervised by adults, such as in league sports, children are forced to relinquish control of their play as the adult in charge determines who plays which position and so on. During children’s free, unsupervised play, young people can be autonomous in ways that they are unable to be elsewhere (Erikson, 1950). Sutton-Smith (1997) suggests that for group play to occur children must organize themselves hierarchically, in the same way that adults do; this entails the negotiation of roles - some must be captains or leaders while others are followers (p. 114). During the course of children’s autonomous play they engage in group organization independently of adult intervention. Sutton-Smith suggests that “children’s folklore can be considered hypothetically as a series of hidden transcripts of the non-powerful segment of the population known as children. One can ask whether the collective fantasies of this childhood group represent an implicit protest against their world fate” (p. 116). The

following vignette demonstrates the ways in which young people sometimes use their aptitude with technology to surreptitiously resist power imbalances. The names and identifying features in the following vignette have been altered to preserve participants anonymity.

Fieldnote Vignette; French Class

> The afternoon sky is heavy and grey. Melissa stares out the window as the snowflakes swirl in every direction. The gloominess of the winter afternoon makes Melissa feel sleepy and the teachers endless discussion of French grammar does little to alleviate the dreariness of the February afternoon. Madame Auger displays examples of French grammar on the white board to the room full of students sitting quietly in the neat rows of desks. Shifting slightly in her seat Mellissa surreptitiously reaches into the secret pocket inside of her plaid uniform kilt and slips out her phone. Without looking down she rapidly taps the keys of her phone texting under her desk, "Say Penis" she commands as she presses 'send'. As Madame Auger demands "Répétez après moi", the sound of hysterical giggles of girls can be heard from another classroom down the hall. The girls in Madame Auger's classroom break into peals of laughter. The confused teacher demands to know what is going on.
>
> The girls are playing one of their favourite games. Before class begins it is decided that the girls in one class will be 'Simon' and the girls in the other class will follow their orders. This time Madame Auger's class got to play Simon issuing commands to the girls in Madame Boisvert's class down the hall. The texts from one cell phone in Madame Auger's classroom were sent to all the cells in Madame Boisvert's class commanding all the girls to scream 'penis' in unison

startling Madame Boisvert to such a degree that produced hysterical laughter from the girls. (field notes, July 2009)

Field note: Interview with Anne

Anne: Plus it's easier to text in class than to call

Shanly: Are you allowed cell phones in school?

Anne: Only in the locker room at recess where there is practically no signal. Teachers don't know we have them – most people keep their cell phone on them but some people leave them in their lockers. If you get caught with a cell phone you get it taken away for a week. Which I don't think makes sense because then you don't have it at home either.

Shanly: Who do you text in class?

Anne: We text each other. We have this motto "Go hard or go home" We play truth or dare in class or the other class will text us dares in class. Or if there is a sub in one class they will text us and we will sneak into the other class – texts are for playing pranks.

Shanly: What might a dare be?

Anne: A dare would be yelling out random obscenities in class – you yell as loud as you dare but you can't get caught. Or the Penis Game in class, it starts with two people or more and they say penis and then someone else will say it and it will bounce around the room – every time the teacher turns her back, and it has to go louder and louder or the bouncing click – only when teachers back is turned – click game or cough and die. Cough

and die is when one person coughs and then everyone pretends to die. Cell phones are used in class to coordinate the games.

Shanly: Do your teachers know what's happening?

Anne: No they just get really confused.

Shanly: How do they react?

Anne: Sometimes they laugh, sometimes they get angry, sometimes they are oblivious or they just decide to pretend they don't know what's going on. Sometimes we take pictures of teachers. Veronica had a mean teacher Madam Boisvert – young but really ugly, very unfortunate looking – loser –Veronica would – take unflattering pictures and send them to everyone. Even kids at other schools. Madam Boisvert never knew. Also, we play grade wide games of hide and seek. We split up in teams and then text people to see where they are hiding and to keep track of the seekers. (July 2009)

Field note Vignette; Hide and Seek

They crouch huddled giggling behind the stage curtains in the school auditorium. The entire grade nine class is playing hide and seek throughout the school. They organize the game through text messaging. The girl's text each other warnings regarding the location of the seeker as well as warnings about any passing staff or hall monitor. Of course this game is forbidden, as there are specifically designated areas where the girls are allowed to hang out during lunch hour such as the cafeteria, library and study hall. Part of the excitement of the game is venturing into strictly off-limit areas. Pleasure also arises from engaging in a collective play

that is forbidden. This rebellion both separates the girls from the adult teachers and staff and from the girls in other grades while simultaneously uniting them and distinguishing them as a cohort. They huddle in little groups giggling and texting other hiders throughout the school. (July, 2009)

Cell phones are both the toys and the tools with which to organize the game. They enable a kind of playful subversive, transgressive performance that unites the girls as a community in the 'us' as separate from 'them' manner described by Huizinga. The game is not meant to be malicious and it is not usually interpreted as such by the teachers. It is viewed as an ongoing playful prank and while sometimes the teachers express annoyance more often they simply laugh at the girls silliness. Cell phones are not allowed to be turned on during school but young people have become adept at concealing phones from school authorities. Most schools have some type of rule in place regarding cell phone use that is almost universally flouted and yet the rule remains in place. If the students are relatively discreet nothing is said. The degree of resistance that is met when parents or school authorities attempt to withhold cell phones may be one of the reasons that this rule is in place but not enforced. Additionally, cell phones have equally become a measure of security for parents in a world that has become perceived as unsafe as characterized on the chapter on moral panics.

Separate Culture of Play

As discussed previously, since the industrial revolution children have become increasingly separated from the adult world and as Sutton-Smith argues that they have developed characteristics of a distinctive subculture group. Children's play has

historically had its own hidden character and illicit nature as children gathered in secret club houses, forts, fields and back lots engaging in illicit behaviours, as males formed gangs and attempted to establish hierarchies within groups. In the last 50 years adults have increasingly attempted to contain, control and domesticate children through the introduction of playgrounds and playground equipment, enclosed school yards, organized sport activities, and so forth, and so according to Sutton-Smith (1997) children's autonomous play has had to go 'underground', becoming more and more covert and hidden from adult eyes. By definition children are supposed to be kept innocent and therefore the illicit or resistant play of children, the violent, sexual or politically incorrect play, is characteristically kept hidden from adult eyes to preserve the illusion of childhood innocence.

Nathan, 15 years old, explains how his parents went "berserk" when they encountered a YouTube video of himself with a group of friends drunk at a party. The video, since removed, was circulating amongst the students at the private school he attended. The video was brought to the attention of a parent who then contacted the school and the parents of all of the other young people involved. Nathan confides that his parents were more angry "that I was stupid enough to let myself be filmed and put on the Internet than the fact that I was drinking" According to Nathan, his parents were more concerned with the embarrassment and possible negative consequences of having his teachers, coach and other parents view the video than they were about his actual drinking. His lack of discretion was the primary issue, the fact that his behaviour was documented and displayed. The Internet provides private play spaces for young people but it also forces adults to confront and deal with the previously private, hidden, secret transgressive

play that young people engage in. It breaks down the previously maintained boundaries. The drinking that occurred in the back lot, the sexual play and experimentation that occurred in the fort or club house, the dressing up and playing with identity no longer occurs in physical spaces that often go unnoticed by adults – these transgressions increasingly are forced to the attention of adults because they are recorded and shared online. It's more difficult to avert one's eyes and deny a transgression when all of the other parents at your son's school are drawing it to your attention and the documentation is tangible, undeniable and public.

In *Growing Up Digital: Control and the Pieces of a Digital Life*, Robert Heverly (2008) suggests that young people use digital media tools to record images and information about themselves, which they then cast out into the world rarely considering the long-term implications. In a climate that often valorizes young peoples' use of digital media, Heverly evaluates the potential negative consequences of young people's use raising as problematic the persistence of digital data. He questions who should control a digital media artefact once young people are embedded in it and raises the issue of potential long-term consequences to young people. He advocates the importance of considering both the negative and positive effects of young peoples use of digital media technologies suggesting that:

> We must also consider what these technologies do to and with our children as well as what our children do to and with these technologies. In other words, where children are entangled in and become a part of digital media artefacts, we must consider the nature, importance, and future potential of that entanglement when thinking about the creation of and control over

those artefacts (p. 201).

Popular culture has become available to children through media such as television, film and internet. This ready access to information that was previously withheld from children has resulted in a disruption to traditional balance of power where adults were gatekeepers of knowledge. There is an inherent conflict between adult and children regarding the nature of childhood:

> The adult public transcript is to make children progress, the adult private transcript is to deny their sexual and aggressive impulses; the child public transcript is to be successful as family members and school children, and their private or hidden transcript is their play life, in which they can express both their special identity and their resentment at being a captive population (Sutton-Smith, 1997, p. 123).

Children's identities, as siblings or friends, allow them to define themselves within autonomous and solitary play. They define identity by the type of play they choose to engage in, such as playing with video games or skateboarding etc. and by becoming proficient and therefore gaining notice within the group. Sutton-Smith suggests that the rhetorics of power and identity clarify more about the play of children than do the rhetorics of progress. He particularly emphasizes that "children always seek to have their own separate play culture, and the proper study of childhood should begin with an acknowledgement of that" (p. 125).

While Huizinga (1967) and Sutton-Smith (1997) argue that a compelling characteristic of play is secrecy and mystery, Caillois (1958/2001) suggests that play is defined by its "spectacular and ostentatious" characteristics. According to Caillois play is

the antithesis to secrecy and mystery because play serves to eliminate mystery and expose secrets. Caillois speaks of play as resulting in the shared recognition of the skill of the player, for instance the soccer player who scores the most goals on the field, the gamer who beats the video game in front of her friends. When children engage in this type of play autonomously, it enables the creation of hierarchy within the group, the most proficient video game player has the most status within the group of gamers. There is power in being publicly acknowledged as the best player. In the case of social networking sites, the individual who creates the best identity or narrative is recognized amongst their peers. Managing one's online persona requires time, commitment and skill. Revealing private information is often rewarded by increased attention and feedback from peers. Annie and Jess discuss Facebook stalking the most outrageous profiles. The more unusual or provocative the greater the public response.

In looking at young peoples' play as it occurs in spaces created by new media there is an evident tension between the desire for both public and private play. Children's desire, as described by Sutton-Smith (1997), to create a separate, private community away from adult control coincides with the desire as described by Caillois (1958/2001) for public acknowledgement. Children continuously seek spaces in which to enact public displays within a private world and producers of technology and new media develop spaces to accommodate this desire. For instance, social networking spaces function as separate play spaces according to Huizinga's (1967) definition of the magic circle of play; inside the circle of the game the laws and customs of ordinary life no longer count. Those within the community are different and do things differently. Huizinga suggests

that this temporary abolition of the ordinary world is fully acknowledged in children's play.

That digital culture often forces adults to acknowledge and address the transgressive previously hidden play of young people and that young people are increasingly making their previously private play public, breaches the boundaries between childhood and adulthood and calls into question the meaning of childhood. If childhood is not a sheltered, innocent and protected space apart from adulthood—then what is it?

Amy and Jess attempt to explain that the interest shown by parents and researchers in young people's play is unwarranted. Amy insists, "Adults just don't get that it's not that big a deal, it's not 'real' in the way they think it is, it doesn't mean anything, it's all just jokes."

The tension between young people's desire for a private space and their desire for public acknowledgment is intertwined with the desire to be able to have a space apart from the seriousness of the everyday. Perhaps Amy is suggesting that this is a space where one can suspend the seriousness of the everyday, one can reinvent oneself continuously. As Niedzviecki (2009) suggests in his discussion of how Internet culture is altering concepts of privacy and individuality "Truth is less important than the appearance of truth" (p. 87). Explaining that what happens in mediated space creates its own kind of reality "Which doesn't mean that to succeed in the brave new world of Peep you have to be a liar. It means that you have to accept that lying isn't lying, it's creating a new you: lying creates it's own reality" (p. 87). For Amy, it's not about lying but rather about performing, exploring or playfully creating alternate possibilities of herself.

Caillois' (1958/2001) definition of play as spectacular and ostentatious also applies to these online play spaces. This is exemplified in a central aspect to the play, which is the competition to get as many friends on your friends list as possible or as many messages as possible on your wall, engaging in a public display of flamboyant profusion. A key element of the play is the ego gratification inherent in public recognition. The profiles Annie and Jess describe strive to create a public display that is as outrageous as possible in order to get the largest possible response. However, the response must come from inside the play community of young people, not from outside the play community, not from the hegemonic forces of adult and societal regulation and control. When outside forces intervene, the space is breached and young people fiercely protect the sanctity of these spaces - resisting adult intervention.

Field Note Vignette; Managing Identity

> When I was engaging in participant observation one incident struck me as particularly indicative of the degree to which these young people perceived their space as a space that was not an appropriate space for adults. I was sitting in Anne's room with Jess; the girls were showing me some of her favourite online sites and activities. After checking out StumbleUpon.com, LOOKBOOK and YouTube we eventually ended up on Anne's Facebook profile. She noticed that she had been tagged in a photo. She immediately went to her friend Sadie's profile to view the picture. She laughed when she saw that the picture was of her and Sadie and another friend at the park. They had been doing a photo shoot at the fallen willow tree - a popular spot for learning to climb, meeting friends, first kisses and wedding photos. She commented on the fact that the photo was

unflattering. “Sadie looks great” Anne moaned “but I look terrible!” She looked at the comments. One read “Beautiful”.

But the next comment was from Ashley a girl who didn’t like Anne and it read “Wow, looks like some stoners been heavy into the weed” Anne looked at her picture again. Her eyes were half closed and she did have a glazed over expression of her face. “Oh my god” groaned Anne “ I do look stoned. I can’t believe Sadie posted that picture – shit! What am I going to do? Ashley is so mean, she absolutely hates me. She thinks because she is a druggy that everyone is!” From my adult perspective the degree of concern expressed over an unflattering photo and an unwanted comment seemed disproportionate and overly dramatic but Jess seemed to share Anne’s concern. Jess suggested sympathetically “maybe I could write a post saying that you don’t look stoned – just sleepy?” Anne agreed that this sounded like a good idea so Jess signed into her Facebook account and commented on the picture “Not stoned silly – just sleepy” The girls wait. Another comment appears from Ashley “That’s one wasted bitch – she’s so obviously totally stoned” Another comment appeared, this time from Greg “What a toker” The girls look on in horror. Anne looks as if she’s about to cry. Jess responds, “Oh my god, Anne I’m so, so sorry.” The girls continue to discuss the situation as another boy they knew from elementary school joins the exchange adding another drug related comment about Anne. I ask Anne why this is important, why her concern? (I know all of the young people who are posting comments. Ashley has a reputation for being a drug user and has been expelled from several private schools, I wonder why a comment from Ashley would bother

Anne who is very popular and who everyone knows is not a drug user. I wonder why Anne would care) Anne explains trying to hold back tears, "that's not the way I want to be known" Anne receives a text from Amy *You better check your Facebook NOW.* Anne responds *I know! What should I do?* Amy is a year older and a grade ahead of Anne and Jess and therefore her advice carries weight. *Make Sadie take down the photo right away*

Jess and Anne confer—asking someone to take down a photo is extreme. The girls expressed that even if a photo is very unflattering you don't ask someone to take it down, it gives the impression that you care about your image or that you are managing your online identity. Evidently caring is uncool. After checking the comments on Facebook which are increasing by the minute and further consultation with Amy, Anne decides that desperate times call for desperate measures and actually picks up the landline phone and calls Sadie in person, an action which is indicative of the seriousness of the situation. Sadie expresses a mixture of delighted horror at Ashley's actions "Oh my god, what a bitch!" She vehemently denounces Ashley and sympathises with Anne. Anne hangs up the phone relieved and explains to me that when Sadie removes the picture all of the comments will also disappear effectively ending the communication. We sit silently watching. Another comment pops up this time from Sadie "Come on guys – Anne is so not a druggy" Jess gasps, "She's so not taking it down!" We watch as several more comments pop up some supporting Ashley in her tirade against Anne and some supportive of Anne. Anne's cell phone rings. The stakes are getting higher as more people get involved in the

conversation, texts are being sent through the social group, those who are not on Facebook log on to watch the action and pick a side. The exchange is escalating and those who are not participating in the actual online conversation through their posts are texting each other. Amy is calling Anne and urging her to call Sadie. “If you don’t make her take down the picture right now I will. I’m going to call her and tell her that I will ruin her life if she doesn’t take it down now – I will call every girl in the grade above her at her school and they will cut her cold, no one will speak to her – call her now and tell her!” Anne keeps Amy on her cell phone while she calls Sadie from her landline, she eventually is able to convince her to take down the picture without resorting to threats and the entire drama ends as quickly as it began.

When I ask the girls about the incident they explain that it’s crucial to address an online incident immediately, left unmanaged it quickly spreads out of control – a spark can ignite a wildfire that will rage out of control for hours but the repercussions can be felt for days, weeks and even years as friendships are destroyed and reputations are ruined (or made) depending on how you look at it and who’s side you are on. For Anne, losing control of how she is represented online is terrifying. “I work so hard to create a particular type of persona – intelligent, activist, artsy, cool but straight – I’ve worked hard to have people perceive me in a particular way and that can be destroyed instantly” explains Anne.

The idea these young people think that one picture carries so much weight intrigues me. They site the example of Amy to support their argument. I

ask if they would consider asking a parent to intervene, if Sadie had not agreed to take down the picture would they ask an adult to call Sadie's parents and just have her take the picture down. They groan in horror. Having an adult intervene in their online social interactions is the absolutely worse thing that they can possible imagine. Anne explains that there is nothing that could happen online that would be anywhere as bad as having a parent or adult involved in any way (September, 2010).

Evidently adults strive to control these public displays as young people post provocative images of themselves or their friends on their sites, claiming to have engaged in prohibited or outrageous behaviour. The adult perspective is that these young people don't understand the public nature of the world wide web but this case illustrates that sometimes the young people who frequent social networking spaces are attempting to create a social space that is separate and apart from the larger online community. A space where they are free to engage in resistance to the control of adult norms as described by Sutton-Smith (1997), by engaging in the theatrical, outrageous and ostentatious behaviour that characterizes Caillois'(1958/2001) definition of play, in a space that is "just for *us,* not for the 'others'" (Huizinga, 1997) inside a circle of play where the laws and customs of ordinary life no longer count. Perhaps this is an example of young people attempting to excerpt agency by creating a separate, private (albeit public) space outside of everyday space. Obviously, these young girls believed the stakes involved in managing ones online identity were high. They understood and cared

very deeply about the way they represented themselves and about maintaining control over their image.

Power and Resistance in Spaces of Everyday Life

For de Certeau (1984) the space of imagination, possibility and resistance are not situated in a space outside of the everyday but instead are grounded in the spaces of everyday life. Spaces of imagination and resistance are produced daily by ordinary people doing ordinary things in the practice of everyday life. This theory enables the exploration of the themes of both structure and agency which can be used in the discussion of children's play spaces. His work considers the ways in which individuals struggle to retain their autonomy in opposition to the 'all-pervasive forces of commerce, politics and culture' (de Certeau, 1984) demonstrating how play might serve as an active form of subversion. Looking through the obscurity of everyday practices de Certeau discovers that in the process of going about their everyday business of speaking, storytelling, reading and walking through the city, individuals have the potential to circumvent the established order. It is through the practice of everyday activities that those in society who are dominated are able to challenge the domination. It is through the telling of stories that the individual is able to define the boundaries of spaces. Moving through spaces, stories are created and in recounting the narrative, spaces and boundaries are negotiated and defined.

In his work on city space, de Certeau depicts the city as a space of order and control. This order and control evokes the structure within the city. The space is designed to organize the movement of the mass of people who walk their same trajectories every day. City dwellers are controlled as they use the sidewalks and streets built to maintain

organization but when the city dweller steps off of the sidewalk and cuts an unplanned path through the city she subverts the order. This subversion represents the agency of the individual to resist the oppression of the structure. De Certeau defines place as stable and ordered; in a place elements are placed beside one another as found on a map. A place defines a location and exists in that position alone, two places can't exist in the same spot. A space exists as a result of a series of circumstances coming together. A space is a result of time and place and emerges from the processes that occur within it. It is through narrative that a place is transformed into a space. Places exist in the abstract as potential sites for narrative to take place; they are locations that have yet to be colonized. "In short, *space is a practiced place.* Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 117). In this same way, one might conceive of the places constructed through digital technologies as becoming spaces as young people operate within them. For instance, a Facebook profile is a place to store images and information and it is only when the profile is created that it becomes a space of sociality. Similarly, the cell phone is transformed through it's everyday use, it is filled with information, contacts, games, pictures, conversations that are archived and revisited—it shapes social interactions and for the young person who uses it, it embodies a representation of identity.

In explicating de Certeau's discussion of power relationships, they are characterized by networks, which allow someone to profit. Power relationships result in 'battles' or 'games 'between the strong and the weak. The weak have actions available to them and de Certeau describes the possibilities of consumers producing their own trajectories through established ordered systems by using the "vocabularies of established

languages" (p. 34). Examples of these vocabularies would be television, newspapers, architecture, city planning etc., these vocabularies have various interests and they pursue their various agendas utilizing the established systems.

Strategies and tactics are used in playing out these power relationships. A strategy is the calculation or manipulation of power relationships. It assumes a place that the power can claim as its own. This place serves as a base for power and those outside this place constitute a threat. Tactics are calculated actions determined by the absence of a place that has been claimed. The space of the tactic is the space of the other. Tactics are tools of the weak. Those employing a tactic don't have the luxury of standing at a distance and formulating a plan but rather must take opportunities whenever possible. Tactics have no base of operations and therefore can't build strength by keeping what is won. It must take advantage of fortuitous cracks in the armour of power. However, tactics can employ the art of surprise whereas power relinquishes this possibility, as power is visible. "A tactic is determined by the *absence of power* just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power" (p. 38).

De Certeau suggests that tactics can be used in thinking about the everyday practices of consumers. Dwelling, moving about, speaking, reading, shopping and cooking all potentially serve as tactics. It is suggested that tactics circulate through ever widening spaces that are increasingly homogeneous. The power that claims space is everywhere. There is no longer an elsewhere to retreat. "The proper has become the whole" (p. 40). In applying de Certeau's theory of power to childhood it might be said that the spaces of childhood are increasingly narrowed as the public space that children occupy is reduced and yet it is noteworthy that the hegemony is still not total. Children

still find places in the city in which to play and if the city spaces are unavailable, spaces created by new media provide potential childhood play spaces. There are opportunities available for resistance from within the system. Young people employ the tools of digital culture to reassert autonomy, gain power and evade hegemony.

Proceeding from a discussion of how social control is enacted through the social construction of space it would seem evident that the ways in which space is theorized would also constitute a form of regulation. How the space of play is defined might serve to control the play experience. Spatial theorists seek to create a unifying theory that might be used to explain social space. These spatial theories divide and categorise space, often into first, second and third spaces. These divisions might be used to understand the experience of play from the point of view of the player. Perhaps the overarching relationship between space and play originates in the spatial experience of play from the perspective of the player. Huizinga (1967) suggests that the essence of play can be found in its intensity, the elemental quality of play emerges in and through the player's absorption. It is absorption that causes the player to become immersed in the play experience. Whether the experience is individual as the players lose themselves in play, or whether it is collective as the player loses oneself in a community of players, and becomes separated from the larger outside community; the experience of play traditionally implies a spatial separation or disjunction. As play evolves this definition of play as an 'other' space apart from the everyday is being challenged. Changing play experiences may be altering the ways in which young people understand spatial divisions. Young people's experience of space may be in a state of transformation as they face a unique circumstance in comparison to previous generations. Many of the respondents

spend more of their autonomous playtime in space created through digital culture than they do in the physical space of the neighborhood. Social interactions with friends from school, friends who they have met online or distant relatives often occur in cyberspace. Questions arise regarding how these changing spatial experiences might impact understandings of the ways in which space is constructed potentially changing how this generation of young people theorize space. In order to theorize children's understandings of play space I will draw upon the works of theorists who have developed frameworks for understanding spatial experience.

Play as Creative Resistance

According to paediatric psychoanalyst Winnicott (1982), play intersects with space at the very earliest stages of human becoming. Winnicott theorised a psychic space between mother (primary caregiver) and infant. He describes this space as neither psychological nor physical but rather as a third space. As the infant reaches the stage of "being a unit with a limiting membrane and an outside and an inside" (Winnicott & Winnicott, 1982, p. 2) a potential space develops between the infants psyche and the external reality of the mother. In this 'potential space' the child safely begins to realize that there is an outside of oneself, an object that is 'not me'. The child uses imagination and creativity within this space and it is through this process that play evolves. It is in this space that the individual first experiences 'creative living' and cultural experience emerges from this creative living experienced as play. This occurs in the space where continuity gives way to contiguity, where transitional phenomena originate and the infant first experiences the space outside of the internal and external spaces (p. 101). Potential space is therefore created individually on a person to person basis eventually constituting

a cultural whole: "There is a direct development from transitional phenomena to playing, and from playing to shared playing, and from this to cultural experiences."(p. 51).

Winnicott stresses that a crucial aspect of playing is that, “in playing, and perhaps only in playing, the child or adult is free to be creative"(1982, p. 53). When the individual is in this intermediate space of play a suspension of boundaries occurs. Through play the individual experiences the physical space, the psychological experience and the play experience simultaneously, contiguously. In everyday life, the individual typically struggles to maintain boundaries between the inner world and outer reality but the space of play is where these boundaries are potentially able to be fluid. Winnicott’s theory of a third space opens the theoretical doors to the possibility for space to be experienced fluidly and contiguously but his description of a third space of play nevertheless implies a separate bounded space of play and creativity.

Turner’s (1982) liminal spaces are also spaces where play and space intersect. While for Winnicott play and space intersect at the earliest moments of self discovery, according to Turner play and space intersect at specific moments of transition and becoming. He finds this intersection in the spaces between; in the spaces that are outside of the ordinary. Turner draws upon the work of Arnold van Gennep (1908) who outlined three stages in traditional rites of passage: separation, transition and incorporation. It is within the transition stage that the individuals find themselves in an ambiguous state, neither here nor there but on a threshold of becoming. This liminal state involves ambiguity and indeterminacy. Usual norms and modes of behavior and thought are open to change. “The passage from one social status to another is often accompanied by a parallel passage in space, a geographical movement from one place to another” (Turner,

1982, p. 25). Changing social roles are often accompanied by changing spaces, both virtual and geographical, but always symbolic. This transitional state enables the initiate to engage in subversive, creative and often playful activities.

With industrialization came the loss of liminal rituals and instead postindustrial society is characterized by leisure activities that are not obligatory. Turner uses the term liminoid to describe events that have features that are optional and don't involve the resolution of personal crisis. The liminoid is play that occurs outside of social or religious rituals whereas the liminal occurs within society as part of a ritual. With the separation of work and play, work became characterized by obligation, while leisure activities are considered to be entered into freely on the basis of personal choice. Liminal activities *require* the breaking of rules while liminoid activities contain an element of free choice. "Liminality may involve a complex sequence of episodes in sacred space-time, and may also include subversive, and ludic (or playful) events." (p. 27). Turner explains how during rites of initiation the novices temporarily move outside of the normative structure of the society. This transition liberates them from following the rules providing a space of play that allows the initiates to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary or to defamiliarize the familiar. This is similar to Bahktins' carnival (1941/1993) where for a delimited and bounded space and time social hierarchies are transformed and inverted. Sutton- Smith refers to this dissolution of normative social structures occurring within liminal spaces as 'anti-structure' (as cited in Turner, 1982, p.28). The spaces of play that children occupy in contemporary Western society would be more accurately described as liminoid than liminal. It is not obligatory for children to engage in disruptive or

subversive play as a religious or social ritual. Teenagers subvert social norms voluntarily rather than as a culturally imposed rite of passage.

Foucault's theory of space (1986) as presented in his article "Des Espaces Autres" describes a space of play that is bounded and separated from the space of the everyday. Several theorists, such as Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh (2002) have used Foucault's heterotopias to theorize children's imaginary play in cyberspace. Sara McNamee (2000) uses Foucault's work on heterotopias to discuss the video game as a space of heterotopia, "an unreal, inverted mythical space is there for the player to control and contest." McNamee portrays the space of the video game as providing an 'other' space of imagination and autonomy, providing a space of alternative possibility to the controlled and regulated space of everyday childhood. Intrinsic to Foucault's theorizing of other space is the disjunction that occurs between the abstract space of imagination and the physical space of the everyday. Foucault conceives of a space of imagination, a heterotopia separate from the space of the everyday. Contemporary life is governed by a set of oppositions between spaces, oppositions that we take for granted: between private space and public space, between family and social space, between the space of leisure and the space of work. Foucault suggests that these oppositions are "nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred" (p. 23). A theoretical desanctification of space occurred after Galileo, however, "we may still not have reached the point of a practical desanctification of space" (p. 23). The underlying social structures that we take for granted are embedded in these spatial oppositions, perhaps, enabling them to serve as spatial controls.

These oppositions define lived space, creating boundaries around spaces, influencing understandings and uses of space. Foucault describes the two spaces. The first space is an internal space of dreams and passions "light, ethereal, transparent space, or again a dark, rough encumbered space; a space from above, of summits or on the contrary a space from below, of mud" (p. 23) This internal space of dreams and passions evokes the luminous qualities of Lefebvre's (1974) illusion of transparency, which was tied to conceived space. Foucault (1986) then travels to another site describing lived space:

> The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also in itself a heterogeneous space… We live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another (p. 23)

The two sites echo Lefebvre's (1974) double illusion describing two spaces that are bounded and separate. Heterotopias are spaces that are unreal and yet exist simultaneously in reality. Soja (1996) suggests that Foucault's discussion of heterotopia resonates with the conceptualizations of Thirdspace because both Lefebvre and Foucault were making the point in their conceptualizations of spatiality, "that the assertion of an alternative environment of spatiality directly challenges (and is intended to challengingly deconstruct) all other conventional modes of spatial thinking (p.163). They are not just 'other spaces' to be added on to the geographical imagination, they are also 'other than' the established ways of thinking spatially. Like Lefebvre, Foucault enables theoretical challenging of traditional spatial binaries.

Much of contemporary play theory emerges from the work of Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1967). Huizinga describes a magic circle of play, spatially and temporally separated from the requirements of everyday life, bounded by a set of rules. French sociologist Roger Caillois (1958/2001) built upon Huizinga's work similarly defining play as occurring in a separate bounded space outside the everyday. Huizinga's work is a standard reference in game theory:

> More striking even than the limitation as to time is the limitation as to space. All play moves and has its being within a playground marked off beforehand materially or ideally, deliberately or as a matter of course. Just as there is no formal difference between play and ritual, so the "consecrated spot" cannot be formally distinguished from the playground. The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., are all in form and function playgrounds, i.e. forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart. (1967, p. 10)

Huizinga's description of play firmly separates the space of play from the space of the everyday. The magic circle describes a bounded play world that children are either a part of or outside of. While the magic circle is useful in describing particular play experiences it doesn't allow for the contiguous spatial experience of play that children increasingly describe as being a part of some of their digital play experiences.

Lefebvre's (1974) theory of Thirdspace provides a framework that separates space into 3 distinct parts. The product of this Thirding-as-Othering is described as a "trialectics" which refers to Lefebvre's explanation of three spaces: the space of material spatial practice, the conceived space and the lived spaces. Soja (1996) suggests that spatial understandings have for the past century been focused on a dual understanding of space; first space as a concrete material space that can be empirically mapped and second space as conceived ideas or imaginary thoughts about space. These two themes correspond with Lefebvre's perceived space and conceived space with the combination of the real and imagined space serving as lived space. In describing Thirdspace, Lefebvre insists that two terms are never enough: *Il y a toujours l' Autre* There is always the 'other', a third term that disrupts disorders and begins to reconstitute the conventional binary opposition into a third term, which is always more than just the sum of the two original parts. It might seem that Thirdspace functions as a tool for spatial theorizing. The accepted binary is shattered by the insertion of another possibility, which serves to transform accepted understandings of how space is constructed. Thirdspace acts as a space of theoretical play, theorizing beyond the accepted, outside of the established spatial constructions. However, this play has rules that emerge in the form of the defining qualities of Thirdspace:

> A knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences, emotions, events and political choices that is existentially shaped by the generative and problematic interplay between centers and peripheries, the abstract and concrete, the impassioned spaces of the conceptual and the

lived, marked out materially and metaphorically in *spatial praxis*, the transformation of (spatial) knowledge into (spatial) action in a field of unevenly developed (spatial) power (Soja, 1996, p. 31)

Thirdspace was envisioned as a space where physical space and abstract space come together in a lived space providing a resistance to the hegemony of space as it is historically and currently constructed.

In using Lefebvre's Thirdspace to understand the space of children's play it might be suggested that the illicit and secret play of children serves as a space of possibility and resistance to the hegemony of spatial regulation and control. Thirdspace is described as a space of possibility, a space of nonconformity, a space of difference where social constructions around space can be redefined and as a place where power relationships can be renegotiated. This could exist in the spaces where children define their own play, entering into play freely. Lefebvre argues for the right of difference and the right to struggle "against the increasing forces of homogenization, fragmentation, and hierarchically organized power that defined the specific geography of capitalism" (Soja, 1996, p.35). Thirdspace can provide a space where struggles against the oppression of hegemony might occur, where citizenship can be renegotiated Thirdspace was envisioned as a space where physical space and abstract space come together in a lived space providing a resistance to the hegemony of space as it is historically and currently constructed. Thirdspace embodies the compulsion, the yearning to move beyond what is acknowledged and understood. Thirdspace might be useful in describing the space in which children's resistance to hegemonic forces of institutions and social structure occurs

but his spatial distinctions are not particularly useful in understanding children's actual play experience.

In researching young peoples' play experience, it is becoming apparent that they have different understandings of space than previous generations. This is particularly evident in the case of online and offline spaces, children sometimes view these spaces as fluid, contiguous spaces as opposed to discrete bounded spaces (Dixon, 2005; Dixon, S. & Simon, B. 2005; Dixon, S. & Weber 2007; Giddings 2007; Ito, et al., 2008). Many academics assume that children experience space differently solely because they are young and have yet to learn to impose the adult constructed boundaries around space. While other theorists are exploring the possibility that spatial boundaries are shifting and becoming more fluid in response to lived experience. Many Western children today have been socialized into a world of Internet and video games. For them, it would appear that the space of imagination is contiguous with the space of the concrete, physical play.

Adults who research play have been socialized into a world that had a different media landscape than the children they research. Their analysis is informed by their own media socialization in which the virtual space provided by the Internet or video game emerged as new and uncharted. Adult researchers are more likely to understand these play spaces as an 'other' space, separate from physical space. The space of the hockey game on the street would be understood as occurring in the concrete, material space of Lefebvre's (1974) first space, the virtual play would occur in the second space of imagination. Using spatial theories that structure spaces as discrete, creating opposing categories such as those between virtual and real, work and play maintains existing spatial distinctions that may no longer always be experienced in actual lived space.

The idea of play as occurring solely within a separate bounded space is being contested as boundaries seemingly become fluid. Boundaries are breached between adult and child play spaces as a fourteen-year-old plays video games online with a forty-year-old; between spaces of work and play as the student works online with peers on a school project from home in her pajamas at 4am and Facebooks from her phone during class. Children playing video games with friends don't always seem to experience immersion in the sense of being transported to an 'other' space. Traditional play boundaries are contested as they describe the virtual video game play as contiguous with the accompanying play that is occurring simultaneously in physical space. The participants describe their digital life as completely fluid with their everyday experiences, there are no disjunctions.

The theoretical construction of space seems to be caught up with the nostalgia that Lefebvre described in his discussion over collective yearnings for natural, unspoiled physical space. As the public space children occupy diminishes and more and more social interactions occur in virtual space the nostalgia for 'free' space seems to be intensifying. Contemporary scholars of childhood and new media fuel the fire as they describe an absence of space free from the hegemony of corporate interests. There is a pervasive longing for free space as described by Naomi Klein (2000) in her book *No Logo*. She says "What haunts me is not exactly the absence of literal space so much as the deep craving for metaphorical space: release, escape, some kind of open ended freedom"(p. 84). Klein describes a kind of pure space, devoid of the presence of hegemonic institutions, free from the messages of marketers. But Klein suggests that this type of space no longer exists. The idea of escape and resistance has been marketed and branded

as children dwell in a continuous loop of spaces created through consumption. It seems counterintuitive to seek a pure, untouched space in digital space. However, the potential to create an original space appears to be compelling, communities proliferate online as young people seek to create their own play spaces.

The work of de Certeau (1984) seems most applicable in this age of new media, if indeed the ultimate production lies in the act of consumption, as media becomes increasingly interactive the trajectories of consumers evolve from passive media consumption, to active consumption to creative consumption to cultural production. Consumers become producers as teenage girls dominate the blogging community, teenage gamers mod the video game; young people create massive social networking communities, u-tubing their way to celebrity.

Spatial theorists such as Lefebvre (1974), Soja (1996), and de Certeau (1984) explicate the ways in which forces of production structure and control space while individuals struggle to resist these hegemonic forces. The works of play theorists such as Huizinga (1967), Caillois (1958/2001), Sutton-Smith (1997) along with Winnicott & Winnicott (1982), and Turner (1982) can be used to understand how culture emerges and evolves through play as individuals creatively push the boundaries of play spaces. In combining the works of all of these theorists it becomes evident that play can act as a form of resistance or subversion as spatial definitions are contested in response to lived experience.

Chapter 6: Conclusions; Discussion of Dominant Ideas in the Research

Methodology

Ethnographic Scenes: Writing the Everyday

In the expression of this research, I meant to reflect the mundane nature, the banality of young people's everyday engagement with popular culture, however I quickly became caught up in the challenge of how to succinctly express the ordinariness of the everyday. This is especially challenging given that the entire discourse surrounding digital culture and young people tends to be dominated by panic, spectacle, and moments of crisis. The predominant question in approach became: How does one extend critical thinking beyond sociological understandings driven by crisis?

New scholarship in the field must reach past the hysteria generated by mass media news headlines and moral panics for a deeper understanding of the realities of young people's experiences with digital culture. One way researchers can explore the nuances of the everyday is to engage in longitudinal, ethnographic research that encompasses as many aspects of daily life as possible. There needs to be a progressive and proactive research agenda that provides a balanced perspective in advance of crisis moments rather than solely reacting to mass media news headlines and moral panics. Through engaging in a range of research that includes a variety of experiences we can build a broader picture of the reality young peoples everyday experience of digital culture.

Including Portraits of Privilege

The young people who participated in this study reflect one end of a digital spectrum of access and engagement: Their socio-economic status affords them a high

level of access to new technologies; they live in a city where the culture and the economy valorize and embrace digital culture and innovation; and the adults in their lives tend to view their use of digital culture favorably. Social anxieties around digital technologies are tempered by the parental desire for children to use these tools to support and enhance their future learning and earning potential. Because of their position of privilege , the study participants reveal important information about the role of technology in the lives of early adopters who have a high degree of access and literacy. The early adopters that characterize this ethnography represent a distinctive demographic, and many of the characteristics that define this group of young people accentuate their uptake of digital culture; it is perhaps, a hyper-intensified representation of more general youth cyber-subcultures. It might be argued that this group of young people, by virtue of their use and immersion in digital culture belong to a larger global community, sharing common characteristics with those young people who are digitally connected in similar ways.

Themes

Identifying Adult Anxieties and Investment in Digital Culture

There is constant tension in the dichotomy between freedom and restriction in the research on children and technology. While these young people are generally encouraged to experience and explore the world around them (accessing information, ideas and experiences through travel, educational opportunities and the mastery of new technologies) they are often simultaneously highly restricted, monitored and controlled by the adults in their lives. Due to adult expectations and concerns for young people's well being, they may have limited time and space for free, voluntary, unstructured,

unsupervised play, in response they create space for autonomous play through their use of digital technology.

Adults have implemented greater controls over young people today to address safety concerns surrounding their online activities, and to increase their educational productivity. Henderson, Harmon and Houser (2010) examine, for example, the 'hyper-parenting' trend in the culture of contemporary parenting. They discuss modern mothers, in particular, who rush their children from one highly organized activity to the next in an attempt to transmit essential skills and best prepare the child for future adult success. While parents have always reflected some degree of personal investment in their offspring, the stakes appear to be higher for highly competitive, well-educated parents. They feel that their children's success reflects on their ability to provide the best resources, and comments on their competence as parents. According to Henderson, Harmon and Houser, this culture of hyper-vigilance exists more in middle and upper-middle classes, as mothers in these groups engage in continuous comparisons and judgments of each other's parenting skills. In my research, this kind of behavior and attitude was revealed in the fact that participant's often had little private time and space because of parental concern surrounding their safety on and offline. Parent's compete to be the most vigilant as was illustrated in the ethnographic vignette in Chapter 4 where a group of parents were discussing the surveillance technologies they employed on their children. All of which was evident in the field research in the form of continuous anxieties about safety online and off resulting in young people ending up with very little private time and space. The ways in which young people coped with these pressures varied - some explicitly resisted, while others resisted subversively.

Rethinking Risk

One of the most telling themes that repeatedly surfaces in this dissertation is the notion of risk, and the general discourse of risk that pervades popular media's discussion of young people and digital culture.

It is not surprising that young people seem to be adopting the discourse of risk inherent in representations of digital culture in the popular media. While the study participants initially declared that most young people's use of technology and new media was superficial and shallow, their own engagement reflected an entirely different understanding of their use. For example, *they* used the Internet (unlike their peers) to express their musical identity in a meaningful way, or used text messaging to maintain a strong relationship with a friend or relative who had moved away. They adopted the discourse of youth in general as being at risk, but believed that they themselves used the Internet safely, meaningfully and productively.

Participants explained that technology has evolved so rapidly that it has created even significant divides among users who are only a few years apart. For example, the grade 10 students discussed how different they found the grade 7 and 8 students, in regard to their level of immersion in digital culture, because the younger students had been exposed to greater amounts and more advanced technology at much younger ages. Young people are aware that social norms are changing significantly in a shorter period of time, and as a result the generations that follow them are much more immersed in digital culture and from older students perspective demonstrate fewer social skills than they do. Older students, therefore, are beginning to apply the same risk discourse

embodying the anxieties and moral panics of their parents to young people only a few years younger than themselves.

Risk discourse is highly problematic because it frames digital culture in terms of danger rather that in terms of opportunity, and potentially shuts down conversations between generations as young people feel they must hide online experiences from adults to protect their autonomy. The discourse of risk needs to be put into perspective and balanced with the discourse of potential. Young people are continuously in the process of constructing a digital identity that is, perhaps, more powerful than their physical identity: For instance, college admissions officers, potential employers, potential friends and partners are making decisions that have profound, real world consequences based on digital identities. Because of this new reality, it is important to help young people to think about the ways they choose to construct their digital identities; to envision potential audiences and consequences. The construction of online identity can be framed as a positive life project, rather than as a risk to be avoided. The Internet is not about to disappear; therefore, helping young people learn to manage their digital identities is a critical endeavor.

When adults respond to fears of online risk by implementing surveillance technologies and restricting young peoples access to digital technologies the result is often the opposite of the one intended - young people react with increased resistance, rebellion and secrecy. These adult strategies potentially result in shutting down intergenerational conversations. Instead adults should consider addressing the underlying behaviors reflecting upon what young people’s online activity actually signifies.

Managing New Social Norms

Young people need more effective digital literacy education in order to manage risk in their online activities. While they appear digitally savvy—learning to use new technology through trial and error, experimenting and asking peers how to create websites, upload videos to YouTube, edit images and so on—they have more trouble making important decisions about information-sharing and managing issues around sociality in their online relationships. When they move outside their familiar, geographical and social context, for example, they find that new social norms specific to digital culture must be negotiated. These change and develop quickly (moving at the rapid fire pace of new technologies) and become deeply entrenched. This process is demonstrated in Chapter 5, when participants travelled to a rural area without access to the Internet and cell phone signal. They struggled to find appropriate ways to interact and communicate with the local young people according to a new set of rules. Norms surrounding the appropriate means of communication were so firmly entrenched that the participants felt uncomfortable to communicate via a landline phone—they felt this would violate the basic social norm of a digital context. This perfectly exemplifies how quickly norms surrounding digital technologies develop and become established. Determining the nuances of digital technology use in varying contexts, therefore, can help young people better understand changing social norms in digital communications. When young people engage in risky behaviors either online or offline it behooves adults to address the actual behavior rather than to respond solely to the digital context. For instance, asking why the risky a particular picture was posted, what type of power or attention was being sought might result in a more effect response than simply eliminating

access to a social networking site.

Understanding Privacy

Young people generally choose to exclude adults from their digital lives to avoid creating tension between the generations (resulting from adult anxieties around digital culture), and so that they may continue to play and socialize independently. Because youth are often more knowledgeable than their parents about digital culture they easily evade supervision (Livingstone & Bober, 2003, 2004). As a result young people are often forced into situations where they must make important decisions concerning privacy issues alone on a moment-to-moment basis.

In their article *Broken Doors: Strategies for Drafting Privacy Policies Kids Can Understand* Burkell, Steeves, and Micheti (2007) reveal that young people are suspicious of privacy policies, but feel that they must accept them in order to participate in online culture. When youth had a chance to scrutinize and discuss privacy policies with knowledgeable adults and peers, however, they became engaged and critical of them. While it is essential to mandate that privacy policies be clearly written in accessible language for all ages, this is only a part of the solution. Becoming literate in issues surrounding digital culture is a critical factor:

> Knowing what information is collected, how it is used, and with whom it is shared, young people might still decide to offer their personal information for access to the games and social networking sites they want, but their decision will be informed. Comprehensible privacy policies are obviously key to this process, for these are the documents that can and should tell users what they need to know about information collection and use (Burkell, Steeves, and Micheti, 2007 p. 6).

According to Papacharissi (2010), the real problems arise when individual autonomy is challenged, and users do not have control over their private information. Papacharissi describes how the right to privacy is exchanged for the right to participate in the digital public realm:

> Slowly, privacy defined as the right to be left alone attains the characteristics of a luxury commodity, in that a) it becomes a good inaccessible to most b) it is disproportionately costly to the average individual's ability to acquire and retain it, and c) it becomes associated with social benefits inversely, in that the social cost of not forsaking parts of one's privacy in exchange for information good and services (e–mail account free–of–charge, online social networking) places one at a social disadvantage. Luxury goods not only possess a price point beyond the average person's reach, they also connote social status and advantage (para. 6).

In this article, the notion of privacy as a luxury good that is inaccessible to most people emerges from young people's narratives. Safeguarding one's privacy requires a level of income, education, and technological skills that most young people do not have. It was the adults in their lives, therefore, who spent the most time and energy trying to protect the participant's privacy through a process of regulation and control.

Because the participants in this project were highly digitally literate, their schools were also beginning to recognize the need for integrating digital literacy education around privacy into their curriculum. That these young people were amongst the best educated and most literate and were still relatively uninformed about privacy issues speaks to how far we still need to go in this area.

Cultivating Secrecy and Trust

The act of keeping secrets is in itself sociologically significant: The meaning of secrets change across cultures and over time, as societies evolve. In some contexts, secrecy is highly regarded, for instance, Simmel (1906) suggests that the ability to keep information secret is a sign of intellectual and emotional maturity. He identifies a society that has evolved sufficiently as one that allows the individual to keep certain information secret, and requires greater transparency from government. If this premise is true, we could conclude that contemporary Western society is in a state of regression: Individuals are increasingly revealing secrets—their own, their family's and their friends' becoming immersed in a voyeuristic fascination with revelation through reality television, YouTube, Facebook, twitter and so on. Telling and hearing secrets personally and through mass media has become a form of entertainment. Personal transparency has become valorised, while governments and nameless entities monitor and record our actions both on and offline, in virtual anonymity. We never know exactly who is watching us and we continuously wonder: Are those police cameras at that traffic light? Are those surveillance cameras on the side of that building? Are our keystrokes being recorded? Is our hard drive being copied? Our data being mined? Still, we willingly relinquish our privacy to participate in online spaces, all the while allowing the entities that monitor us to guard *their* privacy.

Allowing others to maintain private spaces and information connotes trust. When adults employ surveillance technologies such as nanny cams, net nanny's, GPS tracking devices, and install surveillance cameras in schools to monitor young people, it is justified under the rhetoric of care. However, there are important side effects: these activities eliminate the element of trust from our intergenerational relationships. In her

article “Trusting Children” (2010), Tonya Rooney warns that the use of surveillance technologies on our children removes opportunities for adults and young people to weigh the balance between risk versus trust—a necessary skill in everyday life for negotiating and evaluating risk in everyday life. Additionally, Rooney notes, pervasive surveillance eliminates opportunities to develop trust. How can a young person learn to trust others and to develop self-confidence if they are socialized in a world of that is characterized by risk and mistrust? On a broader level, questions emerge regarding the extent to which it is possible to learn to make decisions autonomously, to learn to navigate the space of the city or negotiate personal independence with the constant safety net of surveillance. Secrets have come to be associated negatively, rather than valued as functional social mechanisms. Secrecy allows people to cultivate necessarily private places away from society—individual spaces of play, reflection, solitude and imagination. Ironically, secrecy can actually engender social cohesion in a few ways. Allowing people a private space for secrets requires a degree of trust; we trust that an individual’s privacy will not impinge on, or hurt others. Also, the sharing of secrets can strengthen social bonds because this constitutes an act of trust between two or more people. Respecting young people’s need for secrecy and privacy in the digital world is certainly one way to strengthen intergenerational relationships and cultivate trust.

Looking Ahead

Young people need privacy as much as, and perhaps more than, adults. They require personal and protected spaces that allow them to explore identity, build relationships, and work through conflicts on their own. At the same time they need to be

aware that the decisions they make about privacy issues potentially have long-term repercussions we can only imagine at this point. Because teachers and parents have not grown up having to negotiate the particular and ever changing challenges of the digital world, they can only offer young people speculation about the future consequences of their decisions, and provide moral support based on traditional social norms. This doesn't mean youth must face a world of new technology alone, it means that we all still have a lot of learning to do. This is why it is so important to find ways to communicate, intergenerationally, and not completely close ourselves off to young people in a desire to protect them.

Perhaps privacy is, or will soon be, obsolete, and when this generation become adults they will have no secrets. Every piece of private information that they have knowingly or unknowingly shared may be in the public realm. It may not matter, if everyone is in the same position: defined by embarrassing videos, personal emails, the texts you sent to your best friend, love interest, or school yard enemy. On the other hand, perhaps privacy will not become obsolete and all of those childhood and adolescent indiscretions *will* matter. Maybe those transgressions will cost people future opportunities, and this transitional generation will pay the price for their inability to protect their privacy online.

Or, as a result of the consequences that they suffer, privacy will be more clearly defined, and will become more highly valued and protected. In an annual report to parliament (2008), the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada suggested that, "In effect, young Canadians are learning through trial and error to manage how their personal identity is presented and perceived" (p. 18). The report further suggested that the Office's

future challenges lie in “developing tools and information resources that support this natural learning process and encourage privacy-positive behavior by both consumers and businesses” (p. 18). It is indeed critical that government intervenes to protect not just the privacy of young people but also the collective privacy of all Canadians. It is imperative to promote the value of privacy as a collective good—not just the individual’s right to privacy—but the very concept of privacy as an ideal because privacy serves a functional purpose within our culture.

Because adults cannot foresee the future or predict the consequences that may follow young people’s online activities, they instinctively try to protect young people by: limiting or restricting their use of technologies, keeping constant watch over them, or infiltrating their online spaces to supervise them. Young people understandably resist these efforts because they infringe upon their private social interactions and play spaces. The question becomes: How do we respect young people’s privacy and help them learn to protect it?

Once again, education, support and sensitivity are key. Young people need information about the ways in which their privacy may be violated online, advice on how to protect personal information, and know that they can turn to adults for empathy and assistance in difficult situations. From this foundation, they can learn to make more informed choices. From a social and legislative perspective, it would be beneficial to all users in online environments if the entities that access information were made transparent and accountable.

Final Thoughts: Directions for future research

Responsibility for managing risk online should not be offloaded onto young people, parents and educators alone. Privacy protections need to be built into the architectures of online spaces. Transparency of those collecting data, in conjunction with responsibility for protecting the data collected should be the obligation of designers, producers and owners of the entities engaging in these practices.

Supporting research that examines a range of young people's experiences with digital culture, in a variety of geographic, socio-economic and cultural contexts contributes to a broader understanding of how young people experience digital culture in their everyday lives. By conducting this type of longitudinal ethnographic research, the diverse experiences of young people can be compared and considered in order to inform policy and provide the digital literacy skills necessary for young people to safely and productively navigate this complex digital environment.

Although young people are often deemed to be digitally savvy they are seemingly unconcerned or unaware that their data is being harvested and archived by both corporate and government entities from the time they begin playing online. Young people need to be informed regarding how their data is potentially being collected, analyzed, archived and shared and the potential consequences. To this end, curriculum is needed to provide some of the digital literacy skills necessary to safely and productively navigate an increasingly complex digital environment. It's crucial to educate young people to think critically about what types of information they want to share, who they want to share it with and when and how they choose to share it. Young people need to learn skills so that they can autonomously manage their online information and identities. They need to be allowed to make *informed* choices.

Intergenerational Collaborations; Negotiating New Norms Collectively

The most common comment I hear from young people is that "adults just don't get it." They don't understand how much the world opens up to young people online, the degree to which they can access information, establish friendships, negotiate relationships, participate in communities, explore a global marketplace, discover and share music, art and ideas in ways that would never be possible without digital technologies. Young people participate in a rich cultural environment as a result of their engagement with digital culture and as a result of this they are often forced to make important decisions and negotiate changing social norms on the fly.

Oddly, the most common comment I hear from adults about young people's immersion in digital culture is very similar to young people's refrain. Adults worry that, "They just don't understand." From an adult perspective young people are unaware of how high the stakes are and how great the risks regarding safety, privacy and future consequences of their engagement. Both adults and young people have valid and important concerns. It is through discussion and negotiation that adults will learn what it means to grow up in a digital world and that young people can share questions and concerns as they arise. Both adults and young people need to become informed in order to negotiate these evolving spaces. While it appears easier to keep young people safe through surveillance, regulation and control than to create safe spaces for them by demanding transparency and legislation surrounding privacy issues the trade off of sacrificing the existence of private spaces in which to keep secrets and make mistakes needs to be considered.

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Appendix A

Parental Consent to Participate in Research on Young People, Sociality, Communication and Play Spaces

This is to state that I agree to allow my child participate in a program of research being conducted by Shanly Dixon of the Humanities Doctoral Program in Society and Culture of Concordia University.

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to explore young people's use of digital technology to create spaces of sociality, to communicate, and to form community.

Participants will be invited to participate in an interview in which they will be asked to discuss their use of digital technologies (computer use such as, social networking spaces, games, instant messaging, cell phone use, console game use etc). They will be asked questions about which types of technologies they use and asked to describe how, when or why they choose particular technologies. This interview will take between one and two hours. At a later date participants may be asked for an online interview or to engage in participant observation, sharing websites, games and online applications that they use with the researcher. Participants will be free to choose the level of participation that they want to offer.

Participation is voluntary and participants may withdraw from the research at any time up until the publication of the thesis. Participants may request that all or some of their data be discarded at any time up until the publication of the thesis.

All information that participants provide is confidential. Names will not be used in the research, and potentially identifying details will be changed, such as school names. All of the data will be compiled so that the final report will not include descriptions of actual individuals but rather 'types' of technology users. This research may be published. The original data will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the research project.

You may ask questions at any time and can ask to have any or all of your child's data removed from the project before its completion. We will do everything possible to ensure that this is an enjoyable worthwhile experience for your child and welcome any suggestions that you might have.

Feel free to contact the researcher if you have any questions or suggestions or need more information.

Shanly Dixon
Concordia University
Humanities Doctoral Program in Society and Culture
Office: 514-848-2424, ext. 5568
Cell: 514-710-3073
dixons@alcor.concordia.ca

If you have further inquiries please feel free to contact the researcher's supervisor:

Dr Bart Simon
Concordia University
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Office: 514-276-7941
Simonb@alcor.concordia.ca

If at any time you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant please feel free to contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University 514-848-2424(7481) or by email areid@alcor.concordia.ca

I have carefully read and understood the preceding project description and I consent to let my child participate in the research as indicated above.

Childs Name ___________________________________

Parent /Guardians Name _______________________ Date_____________

Parent or Guardians Signature ___________________________

Telephone ________________ email__________________

Appendix B

Assent to Participate in Research on Young People, Sociality, Communication and Play Spaces

You are invited to participate in a research project about young people and their digital play. Please read this paper carefully. It will help you decide whether or not you would like to participate in this project. Please feel free to ask as many questions as you want (in person, by telephone or by email).

What this project is about:

Do you use computers, game consoles, cell phones? How do you use them? Do you chat with friends; do you Instant Message, Text Message, play video games with friends? We want to know anything that you can tell us about your play with computers and other digital devises.

What we invite you to do:

We invite you to meet and discuss your play and activities especially with computers, internet, game consoles and cell phones. We would like to record the conversation. We will talk about things like how, when, why and where you play, what sites, games, and activities you like or don't like and why, what types of information you share, with whom and why. The discussion will take between 1 and 2 hours. At a later date you may be asked to take part in an online interview, group interview or to allow the researchers to watch you play. You will be free to choose how much or how little you would like to participate.

Participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate. You can stop participating at any time and ask that any or all of your information be discarded up until the time that the project is completed.

All information that participants provide is confidential. Your name will not be used in the research, and potentially identifying details will be changed, such as the names of anyone you mention or school names. All of the data will be compiled so that the final report will not include descriptions of actual individuals but rather 'types' of technology users. This research may be published.

We will do everything possible to ensure that this is an enjoyable worthwhile experience for you and we welcome any suggestions that you may have.

Feel free to contact the researcher if you have any questions or suggestions or need more information.

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If at any time you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant please feel free to contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University 514-848-2424(7481) or by email areid@alcor.concordia.ca

I have carefully read and understood the preceding project description and I consent to volunteer to participate in the research described above. I understand that I may withdraw from the project at any time during the study up until its completion and that I must first obtain my parent's or guardian's written consent on the accompanying form.

Name ________________________ Date ____________________

Signature _____________________________

Telephone _________________ email___________________