

Young Canadians, Participatory Digital Culture and Policy Literacy

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Participatory digital tools have been enthusiastically adopted by young people: they blog, vlog, upload, download, click, surf, post, podcast, mash, chat, poke, text, tweet, talk, game, sample, scan, and remix...but, what sorts of content are they interacting with and creating? Do they have an understanding of the policy processes that insure (or inhibit) the open and diverse communication system that they use everyday? How can these complex and arcane policy issues be framed as broader values vital for social well-being, democratic communication, and the public interest?

In the closing session of the Forum on Canada's Digital Economy hosted by Industry Canada in June 2009, Canadian Heritage Minister James Moore highlighted that media consumption practices and delivery mechanisms amongst young people under the age of 25 are numerous and plentiful, surpassing the knowledge base of the average member of Parliament: "...don't assume that those who are making the decisions and driving this debate understand all the dynamics that are at play here...and how great they can be for Canada."

As policymakers in Canada muse about the constituent elements of a digital economy strategy they are recognizing that many youth are perspicacious in their digital meanderings. But too often the voices of youth are not considered in policy development. This program of research thus fills a research gap in communication studies in policy, political economy, and critical media literacy by examining how young people use digital technologies, their knowledge of digital policy issues, and how best to design in a participatory fashion with youth policy toolkits. In both the academic and practitioner realm, it expands the realm of media literacy to encompass digital policy as a key literacy component for the "networked age".

This paper introduces a research program funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for three years (2010-13). The research program has a dual focus: through interviews and focus groups with young Canadians it will examine their use of digital technologies for play, education, work, and civic participation, as well as assess their knowledge of digital policy issues, while student-led workshops on digital policy and media-making will enable young Canadians to develop the capacity and fluency to create innovative policy toolkits. Research questions include:

- What are the everyday uses of digital technologies by youth?
- How do these practices shape their knowledge of digital policy issues?

- What tools and techniques can be mobilized to create participatory and innovative digital policy literacy toolkits?
- What are examples and best practices of digital policy literacy projects targeted for youth that are developed by governments, educators, and activist groups?

This paper details the project goals, reviews literature on media and digital literacy, positions digital policy literacy as a fundamental attribute that should be included in digital literacy, and briefly describes several pilot projects under development as part of this research program.

Project Goals

In earlier SSHRC funded research (*Children, Young People & New Media in the Home*, 2002-06) I concluded that while young people were intrepid internet surfers, they were often uncritical towards the commercial content they favoured, naive about the internet's technical aspects, and possessed scant knowledge of internet policy issues. While parents and policymakers raised concerns about violence, predators, and pornography, my research pointed to more insidious issues: a casual disregard about personal privacy amid a proliferation of data mining; an ethical ambiguity surrounding copyright and plagiarism; and a penchant for policymakers to address young people as consumers of entertainment rather than as citizens or media producers (Shade et. al, 2005)

Given young people's active use and shaping of digital content, I argued that the development of a critical and creative literacy campaign on internet policy that involved young people's design and input was vital. Many young Canadians are indeed savvy about their rights as digital users and receptive and eager to understand and contest digital policy. Citizen activism surrounding copyright reform and network neutrality is illustrative (Shade 2008), as is recent youth mobilization against a CRTC decision on usage based billing (UBB) which would have allowed telecom providers to charge consumers according to how much internet use they consumed (Shaw 2011). Another successful intervention was a complaint brought forward by University of Ottawa law students to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner alleging Facebook violations under Canadian privacy legislation; ordering Facebook to make remedies, Canada became the first country in the world to issue legally binding recommendations to the popular site whose global membership at that time topped 300M (Bardeesy 2009; Denham 2009).

Precision around the terms will explicate the program's goals. *Young Canadians* are designated as Canadian youth aged 15-22, a cohort comprised of high school (grades 7-11 in Quebec and 9-12 in the rest of Canada), college/CEGEP, and university students. This age range was chosen because this group popularly comprises the 'net generation' – e.g., young people that have grown up amid the domestication of the internet and its availability in homes and schools (Palfrey & Gasser 2008). Many of these youth are also mobile-savvy, eschewing landlines for mobiles and the object of avid marketing by wireless providers. *Digital technologies* comprise social media ('Web 2.0' applications) and mobile phones; the OECD (2007) calls this the "participatory web" because of the centrality of user-generated content integral for the construction of social networks, creativity, and knowledge of its users. This blurring of consumers and producers is key to participatory digital cultures (Benkler 2006; Bruns 2008). Veenhof et.al (2008) remark that in Canada, "the internet is breeding a more social era, with active communication and information seeking activities compared to the more passive traditional forms of entertainment such as television" (23). Choice, conversation, curation, creation, and collaboration now exemplify the technical and social attributes of the digital ecology landscape that many young people inhabit (Clark & Aufderheide 2009).

Young People and Social Media – A Brief Literature Review

Recent literature on young people and digital technologies is interdisciplinary, spanning communication/cultural studies, women's studies, education, sociology, psychology, and political

science. While popular accounts tend to focus predominantly on risks, e.g., exacerbation of familiar risks in existence prior to their digital manifestation (bullying, Shariff & Churchill 2009) or new risks specific to digitization ('sexting', Hasinoff 2011), empirical scholarship is analytically critical. This scholarship goes beyond blithe celebrations of young people's ostensible agency to interrogate genres of engagement, identity formation, cultural production, civic participation, and new media literacies.

The MacArthur Foundation Digital Media and Learning Program produced a significant body of work on youth engagement; Jenkins' (2009) white paper enumerated key attributes of participatory digital culture: collaborative problem-solving; the creation and production of new media forms; involvement in civic culture; and online affiliations. Participatory culture has low barriers to access; rewards innovation and supports creative expression; combines forms of informal mentorship; and in general contributes to social connectedness. *Kids' Informal Learning with Digital Media: An Ethnographic Investigation of Innovative Knowledge Cultures*, funded by MacArthur, was a three-year study of young people aged 10-30 that explored how digital media was embedded in their everyday social and cultural ecology. Ito et.al. (2008, 2009) referred to a set of genres of participation to describe levels of media engagement, taking into account social, technical and cultural patterns of youth: "hanging out" (friendship-driven practices), "geeking out" (interest driven practices), and "messing around" (transition zone between geeking and hanging out). Other qualitative enquiries provide a similar perspective: Greenhow & Robelia (2009) on lower-income youth; Gray (2009) on queer rural youth in the U.S.; Quan-Haase (2007) on email and IM use by Canadian university students; Bennett (2008), Harris (2008), Rheingold (2008) Juris and Pleyers (2009) on modes of civic participation.

Girls' Studies (Duits 2008; Jiwani et. al. 2005; Harris 2007; Kearney 2006, 2011; Mazzarella & Pecora 2007; Mendes et.al. 2009; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh 2005; Sweeney 2008) focuses on the history and contemporary expression of girls' cultural activities and use of digital technologies for identity formation (Mazzarella 2005; Thiel Stern 2007; Van Doorn et. al. 2007; Weber & Dixon 2007; Willett 2008). Stern (2008) notes a lively girls' studies scholarship highlighting girls internet use from impression management to civic participation, countering prevalent public discourses that position girls as needing protection from online risks (Cassell & Cramer 2008; Shade 2007). One strand of research prioritizes access, equity and social inclusion and the amelioration of digital and participation divides based on class, race and gender (Livingstone & Helsper 2007; Hargittai & Walejko 2008; North et. al. 2008; Notley 2008, 2009; Clark 2009; Robinson 2009; Tripp & Herr-Stephenson 2009).

Social network sites (SNS) like Facebook are a heady locus; their "articulated social network" (Ellison et. al. 2009: 6) facilely renders networking a pervasive facet for young people. The Pew Internet & American Life Project estimates that 75% of young adults aged 18-24 and 70% of teens use SNS (Lenhart 2009a), and SNS is used to post personal information, upload and distribute creative content, and connect political interests. SNS is valuable for identity formation; boyd's ethnographic research highlights how SNS creates "networked publics" (spaces of youth autonomy with peer-based reciprocity outside of the formal purview of authority figures, 2006, 2008a-b).

The use of mobiles by youth for establishing and maintaining connections to peers and families has been studied internationally: Scandinavia (Ling 2007; Stald 2007), Quebec (Caron & Caronia 2007), and Japan (Ito et.al. 2005). The enabling properties of constant connectedness via texting and chatting points to the mobile as an intrinsic facet in youth's everyday lives: its functionality fuses with identity formation and friendship safeguarding. The Pew Internet & American Life Project further reports that mobile phone use by teens has grown from 63% in 2006 to 71% by early 2008 (Lenhart 2009b). IDC projects that 31M new young users will join the mobile market from 2005 to 2010 (Carvajal 2008) and revenue and services sold to young consumers or their parents will grow to \$29B by 2010 (Holson 2007). In Canada mobile phone adoption has become nearly ubiquitous with 99% of the population subscribing to mobile services, and the younger demographic is seen as a key target for emerging trends in wireless communication (CWTA 2010; Shepherd & Shade 2011). The convergence of SNS and

mobile phones is the latest trend (Prodhan 2009); Cellular News (2009) reports that 26% of wirelessly connected Canadians aged 18-34 access the internet from their smart mobile devices everyday, with 65% browsing from their mobiles a few times daily. Kennedy et. al. (2008) describe mobiles and the internet as “family technologies,” citing an increased use by married families with children compared to childless couples or single-person households.

Livingstone’s research findings from the EU Kids Online II project have yielded insights into the policy implications around equity, social inclusion, risks, regulating problematic content, generational divides, and civic participation (2006; 2007a,b; 2009; Livingstone & Helsper 2007; Livingstone et. al. 2007; Livingstone & Haddon 2009). Montgomery’s (2007, 2009) research on the political economy of the internet and youth is noteworthy for its strong policy focus. Advocating for policy to restrict the intensification of online commercialization in youth spaces and to curb unethical marketing practices, she has recommended developing strong privacy protection, arguing for public interest values in media policy for intellectual property, net neutrality, and universal access and spectrum allocation. In Canada, Burkell et. al. (2007) and Steeves (2006, 2007) have argued for an informed public debate about the nuanced values within children’s online privacy.

From Media Literacy to Digital Literacy

In this section of the paper I briefly trace the development of media literacy for young people in Canada and outline some of the key definitions of media literacy that have been developed in the last two decades. With the diffusion and popularization of the internet, the turn towards digital literacy is then briefly discussed, including key responses from international media regulators and scholars. The federal government’s development of a national digital economy strategy is touched upon, with interest expressed by some stakeholders to develop guidelines and programs around digital literacy, especially for young people. These frameworks, developed by the Media Awareness Network (MNet) and the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA), are definite steps in the right direction, but missing however are explicit references to knowledge of a panoply of digital policy issues as a component of digital literacy, aside from some mention of the need for knowledge of copyright law and safeguarding privacy in online environments.

Canada – and in particular the province of Ontario – has been an innovator in promoting media literacy in schools. The Association for Media Literacy (AML) was initiated in 1978 for media literacy teachers in Canada and has since spawned other provincial media literacy organizations that comprise the CAMEO national network (Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations) (AML, About Us). Alongside consulting with the Ontario Ministry of Education, AML has created the annual National Media Literacy Week and hosted several national and international conferences on media literacy. Because of AML’s advocacy, the Province of Ontario was the first educational jurisdiction in the world to mandate media literacy, which is included in the English curriculum (Boles 2001). AML also was the genesis for the Media Awareness Network (MNet) who has taken up a key role in Canada in developing and promoting effective internet knowledge and education for schools, teachers, parents and children, especially around privacy issues.

Much has been written about the constituent elements of media literacy. One oft-cited resource is eight key concepts of media literacy developed by John Pungente of the Jesuit Communication Project for the Ontario Ministry of Education. These include the following:

- 1—All media are constructions. Media literacy works to deconstruct these constructions.
- 2—The media construct reality. Many of our personal understandings of the world emanate from pre-constructed media messages.
- 3—Audiences negotiate meaning in the media. Our individual context determines our responses to media messages.

- 4—Media have commercial implications. Understanding the political economics of ownership and control is essential to understanding how media is constructed.
- 5—Media contain ideological and value messages. Social, cultural, and political values are embedded in the media we consume.
- 6—Media have social and political implications. The media can influence social and political change.
- 7—Form and content are closely related to the media. Different platforms for media delivery can deliver diverse interpretations of media events.
- 8—Each medium has a unique aesthetic form. These forms can inform, educate or misinform or annoy us. (Pungente 1989)

Similar to Pungente's concepts, another popular definition of media literacy was formulated by the U.S. National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy in 1993: "media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and produce communication in a variety of forms" (Aufderheide 1993).

A decade later, a related definition of informational literacy was developed by UNESCO. In their Alexandria Proclamation of 2005, adopted by the Information for All Programme (IFAP), information literacy is defined as "the capacity of people to recognise their information needs; locate and evaluate the quality of information; store and retrieve information; make effective and ethical use of information, and apply information to create and communicate knowledge" (Catts and Lau 2008). This definition is similar to that emanating from the World Summit on the Information Society in their Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning, which further recognizes that information literacy "is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion of all nations" (2005).

With the increased diffusion and use of the internet in the 2000s, media literacy has again been taken up by media regulators especially in the UK and EU. In particular calls for media literacy have been precipitated by governments eager to address internet risks and media harms, and to encourage individual responsibility and industry cooperation and often self or co-regulation. Brabazon (2011) argues that as media literacy tenets have been subsumed by media regulators and policymakers (e.g. the Communications Act of 2003 from Ofcom in the UK, various European Commissions and Council of Europe initiatives),¹ top-down regulation is problematic, and "slower than social and media movements. This problem is worsened in an environment of a read-write web, of mobile and accelerated content generation and dissemination". The US Federal Communications Commission proposed a digital literacy corps as part of its 2010 National Broadband Plan; the corps would train youth and adults to teach digital literacy skills and enable private sector programs that address digital adoption (FCC 2010).

The digital turn in media literacy highlights the importance of unpacking the term 'access' to encompass the technical and the social infrastructure. For instance, the "Access Rainbow" is a socio-technical model for internet access that highlights the interrelated technical, economic and social infrastructures necessary for effective access: governance, literacy/social facilitation and community intermediaries as service providers mingle with the technical layers of content, carriage, hardware and software (Clement and Shade 2000). The social infrastructure of internet access further includes a need to pay attention to critical literacy elements: effective searching and navigability of information and authentication and assessment of information (Hargittai et. al. 2010, Hargittai 2010). Alongside access and use, digital literacy is also premised on an ability to critically understand and create digital media content and tools.

Reconceptualizing the tenets of media literacy education to account for digitization, Hobbs and Jensen (2009) point to "a new emphasis on 'digital citizenship'...with an emphasis on the rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups as communicators on the internet and in real life" (p. 5). New media literacy skills thus need to include an attention to legal and ethical issues, social and personal identity formation, and the porous boundaries between private and public spaces.

Three central objectives should guide media literacy, Livingstone (2009, p. 202) argues. The first is

ensuring equality of opportunity in the knowledge/information society, particularly recognizing the achievements and contributions of citizens working in a market-based economy. The second is ensuring active participation in a democracy, where civic participation is encouraged and diversity of voices strengthened. The third goal is to include a human rights agenda to contribute to individual and collective fulfillment. O'Neill and Hagen (2009) echo this rights perspective, arguing that the democratizing possibilities of digital literacy are often ignored by regulators with a focus instead on technological 'literacy' and digital skills assessment (O'Neill and Hagen 2009). Media and digital literacy platforms too often refer to consumers and individual needs rather than on citizen's needs for the collective good. O'Neill argues that this focus on ethical individualism is flawed, and that communication rights should be the framework for digital literacy: "What is absent from this way of describing media literacy is any consideration of the notion of communication rights, such as the right to accessible information, the right to communicate and the right to privacy. This is the alternative discourse of media literacy that regards it as fundamental a human right as other forms of literacy" (O'Neill 2010, p. 323). One notable exception is the Council of Europe's recommendation that information and communication technologies should empower young people (Council of Europe 2006) and a later recommendation promoting freedom of expression and information as a fundamental human right (2007). Both recommendations refer to the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which calls on freedom of expression, freedom of association, and the right to privacy (UN 1989).

In a White Paper prepared for the Aspen Institute and the Knight Foundation Hobbs presented a plan of action for media and digital literacy education in both formal and informal educational environments. The report defined digital and media literacy as "a constellation of life skills that are necessary for full participation in our media-saturated, information-rich society" (2010, p. vii). Elements that comprise digital citizenship include: making responsible choices and accessing and comprehending relevant information and ideas; analyzing and authenticating diverse messages in different forms; creating content in various forms using a variety of digital tools; reflecting on ethical conduct and behavior by knowing one's rights and responsibilities; and taking social action individually or collectively to share knowledge or solve problems for one's family, community, or workplace.

In their submission to the Digital Economy Strategy Consultation, the Media Awareness Network (2010) argued for the development of a comprehensive national plan to achieve digital literacy in order to both boost Canada's declining economic productivity and to improve the quality of Canadian lives. Access and use, critical understanding of digital media content and tools, and creation of digital media content and tools are key principles of digital literacy, and a requisite for active citizen engagement. MNet suggested ways to develop a National Digital Literacy Strategy that would bring together government, civil society and other community organizations, and educators. In term of youth, MNet pointed out that responsible engagement by youth is necessary to mitigate digital risks, with online privacy management a key concern. In terms of knowledge of digital policy issues, MNet highlighted the importance of understanding rights and responsibilities related to intellectual property and copyright: "Many Canadians who want to be responsible digital citizens nonetheless lack an understanding of their legal rights and responsibilities in regards to their own creations and those of others" (p. 24).

The Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA) surveyed stakeholders about various internet issues, and digital literacy emerged as a major topic issue particularly related to access, privacy, security, trust, social cohesion and governance. Digital literacy was positioned as essential for achieving the 'digital economy value chain', of creativity, innovation, productivity, and competitiveness and was described referencing the standard definition of digital literacy as encompassing use, understanding, and creation of digital media content and technologies. The sphere of understanding encompasses "how to protect privacy online" (p. 4) alongside a knowledge of rights and responsibilities.

CIRA followed up this report with a national consultation on the future of the internet, with

assistance from MNet and the International Institute for Sustainable Development. Based on a multi-sectoral stakeholder consultation and a public forum, CIRA’s report is designed as their submission to the 6th UN Internet Governance Forum in Kenya in 2011. The consultations focused on two related elements: the internet and economic development, and the internet and digital literacy, concluding that both elements need to be linked for a comprehensive and credible internet governance strategy. Concerns surrounding safety, security, ethics, identity management and privacy were cited as motivations for promoting digital literacy, with individuals assuming responsibility for protecting their rights.

Considering Digital Policy Literacy

Communication policy is broadly construed as the principles, processes, and procedures of various legal actions (legislation, court orders, or policy directives) that govern the diverse uses of communication resources at the global, national, or community level. Understanding institutions of policy governance and the various structures of participation for the policy process is key. Bachen et. al (2008) argue that “ICT policy issues offer promising routes to engage youth in ethical deliberation, community volunteering, and organized political action because communication policy touches their lives directly through their own characteristic media usage” (p. 296).

By foregrounding digital policy, this project will expand upon the aforementioned tenets of media and digital literacy which traditionally focus on critical reflections on media content to understand its aesthetics, production, and ideology, while newer theorizations (“new media literacy”) consider how people “engage proactively in a media world where production, participation, social group formation, and high levels of nonprofessional expertise are prevalent” (Gee 2009, p. 20).

Extending this approach, Livingston (2009) argues that we must understand young people’s digital literacy in the context of “the legibility of the interface”, referring to how technological affordances can activate or inhibit interactions. In other words, online environments are designed and marketed to encourage and exhibit particular benefits for the producer (e.g. surveillance and third party marketing in digital playgrounds; see Grimes & Shade 2005, Steeves 2006). It is thus important that young people become knowledgeable about the nuances of these infrastructures, various digital policy issues, the policymaking process, and how they might effectively intervene and potentially shape policy. Specific interrelated digital policy issues to examine in this project are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Digital Policy Issues

Access	Content	Privacy	Intellectual Property/Copyright
Ownership (internet service providers, mobile phone carriers)	Commercialization and advertising in online spaces	Collection and retention of personal information by online sites and search engines	Terms and Conditions on commercial online sites
Net neutrality and “traffic shaping” debates	Acceptable Use Policies (AUP) in online spaces, schools, universities	Third party marketing and data mining/surveillance in digital playgrounds (e.g. NeoPets, Second Life)	Peer-to-peer file-sharing, downloading politics, piracy discourse
Community and public access (libraries, schools)	Data retention	Obligations of social media companies	Fair use/fair dealing
Cyber-cafes, other WiFi enabled spaces	Representation and diversity	Behavioral marketing	Digital right management
Spectrum management	Freedom of speech vs. censorship	Privacy policies	Open source culture, Creative Commons
Gaps/divides	Authentication	Mobile marketing	Plagiarism

This research program takes a critical communication studies perspective: the four theoretical quadrants encompass cultural studies, political economy, social shaping of technology and critical media policy. In the qualitative component of this research project, interviews and focus groups with youth align with cultural studies' concern with analyzing the myriad ways that meaning is constructed by various media, in how audiences engage with media, and the social role of the media.

A political economic framework will be used to analyze recent developments in digital and mobile technologies. Manovitch (2009) argues that questions surrounding the political economy of the consumer electronics industry and the "social media" firms (who are often entrenched in larger structures of media power and concentration) with their inherent goal of revenue accrual through various marketing schemes and third-party advertising need to be critically addressed before we can blithely celebrate young people's ostensible agency and autonomy in using such technologies.

Political economy also demands a critical understanding of policy processes that link to structural and historical understandings to values "that assess the process for its contribution to democracy, equality, participation, fairness and justice" (Mosco 2009, p. 226). A social shaping of technology (SST) perspective will enable a nuanced examination of the interrelated spheres of development and design, marketing, and appropriation by users to interrogate how youth use digital technologies in their everyday lives. This approach derives from Mackay and Gillespie's (1992) critical approach to SST that draws on concepts from cultural and media studies: "A cultural studies approach leads us to analyze technology *not solely* as a process of design, but as a product of three conceptually distinct spheres" (p. 691): conception, invention, development, and design; marketing; and appropriation by users. Critical media policy, by engaging with 'ordinary citizens and consumers' who have little to no formal policy expertise, rethinks the relationship between reflective qualitative audience studies and policy making, and "represents the potential to revitalize and refocus 'policy' research, promoting further investigation of alternative questions and perspectives" (Classen 2004, p. 26).

Young Canadians, Participatory Digital Culture and Policy Literacy - Projects in Beta

Several projects are currently under development as part of this research program. A brief description of these projects is thus provided:

Surveilling the Girl Video

I wrote a chapter for Mary Celeste Kearney's book on girls media cultures which looked at the new regime of domestic surveillance with a particular focus on how promotional and media discourse was positioning young people – and particularly the young girl – in need of safe technological spaces, using the example of the mobile phone and social network sites that utilize GPS or biometric technologies to monitor, control, track, and otherwise contain young people's communicative practices. In the chapter (Shade 2011) I examined the continuing discourse of prevention and safety online, and the writing of it coincided with an increased public discourse on sexting. I was struck by how very gendered media coverage was – while also ironically (or not) lending a literally titillating view on the issue. Yet another moral panic, I thought, for the latter part of the first decade of the 2000s... The chapter also looked at how the mobile, through its augmentation of technological modes of surveillance, has now become a device to allow for remote parental control and monitoring, and highlights how the marketing of GPS mobile devices and subscription-based social network sites to nervous or concerned parents domesticates and normalizes surveillance technologies. Baby monitoring devices, home security systems, nanny cams embedded into teddy bears, houseplants, mantle and wall clocks, networked IP cameras, eldercare medical devices, and smart appliances that integrate internet and security video monitoring are a routine feature of many North American households.

When I presented this paper at conferences, or talked about these trends in my undergraduate classes, and illustrated my talk with screenshots from company websites, screenshots from media coverage, YouTube clips, etc. – there were usually audible gasps and laughs – particularly from my students. The best guffaws were when I showed the introduction of Taser International’s surveillance systems for parents to ward against texting while driving or ‘loss of daughter’ over sexting. The video is thus intended to illustrate these issues and serve as a pedagogical tool for undergraduate classroom discussion. Questions it raises include:

--why does media and public discourse continue to construct young women as susceptible to cyber-bullying, online sexual predation and therefore in need of technological solutions to assuage their parents’ fears surrounding their mobility?

--how can scholars remedy this narrow perspective through qualitative research that facilitates the voices of young women to be heard in media discourse and in policy formation?

--what are communication rights for youth as they negotiate the digital infrastructure?

(See: *Surveilling the Girl*, Leslie Regan Shade with video editing by Concordia Communication Studies student Phil Creamer, <http://www.vimeo.com/23753352>)

The Mobile and Me: Canadian Youth Negotiate the Impact of Mobile Phone Regulation

This project, done collaboratively with doctoral candidate Tamara Shepherd at Concordia University, looks at how mobiles are marketed towards and perceived by young Canadians, and highlights how the economics of youths’ mobile phone use might impact current telecom regulatory decisions. Our project adapts a framework developed by Mackay and Gillespie (1992), who argue that inserting a cultural studies approach into a social shaping of technology (SST) perspective allows for a nuanced examination of three interrelated spheres of technology: regulation, marketing and appropriation by users. The first sphere, regulation, is examined through an overview of the current contested state of the wireless industry in Canada, wherein debates over levels of foreign ownership in the telecom sector revolve around competition, affordability, and cultural sovereignty. Several mobile marketing campaigns by incumbent firms and new upstart companies specifically targeting youth are analyzed to comprise the second sphere. The attitudes and practices surrounding the everyday uses of the mobile phone by a selected group of Canadian youth aged between 20 and 24 comprise the third sphere. Through focus groups, youth shared how their uses of the mobile relate to the particular context of Canada’s wireless service industry, with discussions revolving around their understanding of the economics of the mobile phone, including payment, service contracts and pricing plans. While our participants admit to the necessity of the mobile for their everyday lives, they expressed a deep-seated mistrust of mobile service providers, with their frustration focused on a lack of transparency regarding wireless plans, the high cost of mobile service amid a lack of wireless competition in the country, and poor customer service by providers.

(See Tamara Shepherd and Leslie Regan Shade, *The Mobile and Me: Canadian Youth Negotiate the Impact of Mobile Phone Regulation*, paper prepared for IAMCR, Communication Policy & Technology Section, Istanbul, July 2011)

Remix Culture and the Politics of Copyright

MA in Media Studies students Juliet Lammers and Claire Kenway have interviewed sixteen people between the ages of 18-30 about their uses of digital technologies for creating and remixing music, their knowledge of copyright legislation and fair dealing, and their thought on alternatives to the current copyright regime, including Creative Commons. Many of these young people are artists and DJs. Lammers and Kenway are creating a database narrative film from these recorded interviews, using the

Korsakow system (<http://korsakow.org/>). Korsakow is open source interactive software designed by Berlin-based media artist Florian Thallofer. Korsakow films (“K Films”) are interactive. While the author can determine the ‘rules’ by which scenes are related, the viewer’s narrative path is generative. K-films are comprised of multiple SNUs – smallest narrative units – which are usually short (20sec- to a few minutes) video clips. “Think of it as a *Choose Your Own Adventure* book in video format but without fixed paths: a cloud rather than series of branches. The director inputs clips, tags them with keywords and makes a rough skeleton. The viewer can chart out their own trajectory, following whichever meanings and associations interest them most” (Sarkissian 2010). Lammers and Kenway’s project will be accessible for viewing and remixing, and will be accompanied by a resource guide on copyright basics and ongoing issues in copyright reform in Canada.

Negotiating, Managing and Designing Privacy Online

This research project will interview individually and in focus groups high school, cegep, and university students to determine their definitions, perception, negotiation, and management of privacy in off-line and online (including mobile phones) contexts. Questions will also focus on the ethics of privacy (what might be considered a privacy breach, violation, invasion? What is over-sharing? What are the boundaries of social surveillance -- e.g., amongst friends, peers, family, work?). In addition this project will also ask youth to conceptualize designing privacy within online (and mobile) contexts, such as through the design of technological affordances or features, and through rewriting privacy policies.

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Notes

1. Communications Act 2003, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/21/contents>; European Union, Media Literacy: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/literacy/index_en.htm; Council of Europe, European Audiovisual Observatory, http://www.obs.coe.int/oea_publ/iris/iris_plus/2011-3.html; Commission of the European Communities (2009b) Commission Recommendation on Media Literacy in the Digital Environment for a More Competitive Audiovisual and Content Industry and an Inclusive Knowledge Society. Brussels: European Commission.

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