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The eQuality Project Annual Report 2018 – 2019

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Contents

01
Our Mission

02
What's New in
eQuality?

04
Research
at a Glance

06
Policy
at a Glance

07
Outreach
at a Glance

09
In the
Spotlight

10
eQuality by the
Numbers

11
Who We Are
What We Do

Our Mission

To help young people
create a networked
environment where
they can play,
learn, communicate,
and participate
equally, free from
surveillance and
identity-based
harassment.

What's New in eQuality?

We are a seven-year partnership project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, developing new knowledge about young people's experiences of privacy and equality in networked spaces.

With the rapid increase in popularity of consumer devices connected to the "Internet of Things" (IoT), worries about user privacy – and especially that of young users – has risen sharply. Perhaps the most pernicious aspect of these IoT devices is that they consist of a vast range of consumer products that are designed to collect as much user data as possible. Driven by the surveillance economy, connected devices have led to the creation of the "smarthome" and "smartschool", which can contain everything from smart speakers, smart TVs, smart mattresses, and educational software suites: always watching and listening to their users and those around them. This type of tracking is now transforming corporate surveillance from being space-specific to monetizing users' bodies through the monitoring of their daily activities via wearable devices such as smartwatches and fitness trackers. Perhaps the most worrying trend, however, is the increase the number of tracking products designed for young users. While they can provide a sense of interconnectedness and offer certain increased conveniences of modern living, they are also designed to harvest as much data about their users as possible, often without any technical safeguards or informed consent. As a result, many of these devices are measuring youths' lives, often from conception onwards, and amassing huge amounts of data about them along the way.

From a parent's point of view, the main selling point of smart speakers or home assistants is convenience. The ability of a smart speaker or home assistant such as Amazon's Echo, Google Home, and Apple's HomePod to set thermostats, check the weather, entertain the kids, or play music, is what initially draws many people in. What the majority of consumers don't realize is that

these smart speakers also have unprecedented access into users' lives, and take full advantage of that. Seeing a possible market niche, Amazon has gone so far as to release the Echo Dot for kids, which is programmed both to deliver more child-friendly content (such as jokes, trivia, etc.) and to pick up children's speech patterns so they can be recorded more effectively. While it may seem like a cool piece of tech that will entertain the kids while parents are making dinner, it is really designed to collect as much data about them and those around them as possible in the privacy of their own home.

In the United States, The Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, the Center for Digital Democracy, and the Consumer Federation of America have launched a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission arguing that, with the Echo Dot, Amazon is violating the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA).¹ They point out that not only is there no ability for parents to search the data collected on their children, but that the Echo also retains sensitive information (such as social security numbers and allergies) after users delete it. There are also, notably, numerous issues surrounding parental consent: for example, if one's children played with an Echo at a friend's house.² Numerous news stories have also highlighted how "humorous" recordings are reviewed by employees,³ and sometimes shared on private chats between employees in internal chatrooms.⁴

Some home assistants such as Google's Nest and Facebook's Portal, which are equipped with a camera, not only incorporate facial recognition, but also follow users around a room.⁵ Amazon's Echo Look will even

judge your outfit. While smart speakers may not be actively recording at all times, they are always listening for their “wake word,” and when the camera is enabled, it’s always watching, and thus generating legitimate concern about the limits of corporate surveillance.

In addition to creating the smarthome, tech companies are aiming to make the smartschool the new normal. Educational technology (or “ed-tech”) is one of the new frontiers for tech companies in the education sector, with a broad range of educational software being used in schools. Microsoft and Google are perhaps the two biggest fish in the ed-tech pond, supplying schools with everything from tablets and laptops to entire educational software suites. The trade-off for the use of the software and tech is the collection and use of the students’ personal information which will be used for Google Apps connected to the Education account. However, as some privacy-minded Canadian parents have recently discovered, if they choose to decline the terms of service for Google G Suite for Education (typically supplied with Google Chromebooks) there is no alternative.⁶ It is essentially an “opt-in” or have your child be left out, scenario.

The surveillance of and data collection about students does not end in the physical space of the classroom, however. Some school boards – particularly in the United States – have started to contract surveillance of students’ social media to private corporations in the name of safety. Students’ social media posts are collected and run through a series of algorithms that are designed to pick out specific key words to determine whether intervention by the school or law enforcement is required. While the goal of preventing violence and identifying students in crisis is a worthy one, the wholesale surveillance of students inside and outside of the school verges on the dystopian – especially when combined with the huge amount of social media data that private corporations are harvesting from youth in the increasingly lucrative surveillance economy.

Corporations not only track young people through their schools, but also through their parents. Smartwatches and fitness trackers are marketed as a one stop shop for users to access their biometric data and exercise stats, or access the internet and connect with friends via social media, and many smartwatches for kids are advertised as

a method for parents to locate their children via GPS. Many wearable tech gadgets also send unencrypted data to company servers, meaning not only that a corporation is collecting all of this biometric and location data, but also that the data transfer is insecure and vulnerable to hacking. Germany has gone so far as to ban the sale of certain smartwatches advertised to children, and labelled them as “spying tools.”⁷ The Norwegian Consumer Council commissioned a study into smartwatches aimed at kids, and found them to be both “incredibly negligent when it came to security and incredibly greedy when it came to surveillance”.⁸

The sheer scale of data collection is extremely disturbing in itself, and raises countless other questions. If the company is sold, who retains ownership of the collected user data? Where is the data stored, and how will international boundaries affect the storage, use, and protection of consumer data? To what extent does parental consent affect the collection of data? How well are young tech users protected from the data-fication of their lives? These are just a handful of questions that need to carefully addressed before we move much further down the IoT road, making it even more urgent that we work together to develop some answers before the surveillance economy becomes totally all-encompassing.

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Research at a Glance

Creating new knowledge about networked technologies, online discrimination and identity-based conflict between young people online.

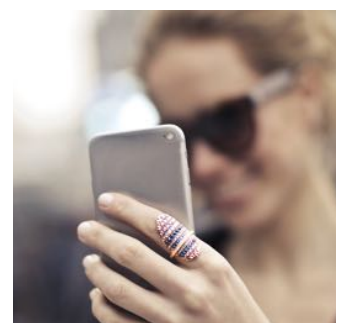
This is What Diversity Looks Like Focus Groups

Research into youths' attitudes towards online privacy has consistently provided evidence that overturns the stereotypes that young people are largely disinterested in privacy and that they don't attempt to control the flow of their personal information and data. Over the past year, eQuality Project researchers have undertaken focus groups across Canada to better understand what young internet users think of online privacy, and what steps they take to protect it. The data also revealed much about the social norms that young people rely on to regulate their self-representation and to control their audiences in order to protect their privacy on social media platforms. The findings from "This is What Diversity Looks Like" will be published in 2019 and 2020.



Global Kids Online Report

In 2018, The eQuality Project partnered with UNICEF Canada to launch Canadian Kids Online – a branch of UNICEF's Global Kids Online Project. Over the course of the last year, eQuality Project researchers conducted a survey on the online experiences of Canadian youth, specifically investigating the ways in which the online environment can amplify constraints and opportunities for young Canadians, and how their knowledge, attitudes, and sensitivities to privacy issues affect their rights online. This project will help further our understanding of youths' attitudes towards online privacy, and the ways in which their privacy decisions shape their experiences. It will also contribute to international research on youths' experiences with the online environment. The published findings from "Canadian Kids Online" will be released in Fall 2019.

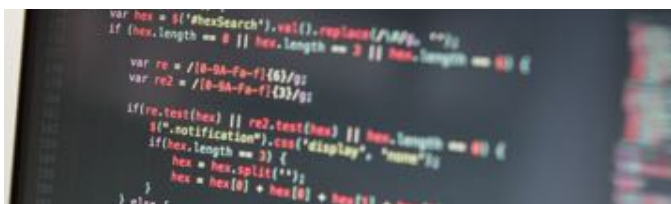


The Canadian Yearbook of Human Rights

Published by the University of Ottawa's Human Right Research and Education Centre (HRREC), The Canadian Yearbook of Human Rights is a yearly collection of research concerning human rights issues in Canada. The yearbook provides comprehensive coverage of this research, and for the 2017 – 2018 issue, the eQuality research team has compiled a special section focused on big data and algorithmic discrimination. This special section includes papers on topics ranging from the decision-making processes implemented by big data-driven algorithms and their impact on human rights; algorithmic discrimination; the importance of privacy related to big data collection; how the policies of social media platforms can fail users when it comes to hate speech and harassment; and, the right to be forgotten. The 2017 – 2018 issue of the Canadian Yearbook of Human Rights will be published in 2019.

Canadian Teachers' Federation Survey

Over the course of the past year, eQuality Project researchers have worked closely with partners at The Canadian Teachers' Federation to develop a survey for Canadian teachers concerning the use of personalized learning and education apps and suites in Canadian schools, and their effect on student privacy. Focusing partly on the use of specific apps and the ways in which they collect information from students, the project will also investigate teachers' experiences with this technology in the classroom, namely, how these education apps and suites affect the classroom environment, and the ways in which teachers adjust to their use in the classroom – i.e. teacher training in the use of apps and personalized learning; effects on teacher workload; how teachers instruct students in their use; whether teachers themselves bring this technology into the classroom, and, whether the decision rests with the school administration. The survey will be launched across Canada in the fall of 2019.



Policy at a Glance

Creating digital media policies that respond to young people's needs, and to disseminate new knowledge to policy makers and members of the public.

R. v. Jarvis Intervention & Public Forum

In February 2019, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled on a much-anticipated case that addressed privacy, equality, and sexual violence. *R. v. Jarvis* was a voyeurism case in which a high school teacher used a hidden pen camera to surreptitiously record images focused mainly on the chest and cleavage area of several female students and one colleague. The main question that the Supreme Court had to consider was whether the women targeted had any expectation of privacy while on school grounds, or whether the right to privacy was lost "in public." The Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic (CIPPIC) intervened in the case and was represented in court by eQuality's Jane Bailey and CIPPIC's Director, David Fewer. The Supreme Court found the teacher guilty of voyeurism. Following release of the decision, The eQuality Project, CIPPIC, and the Centre for Law, Technology and Society (CLTS), with support from the Shirley Greenberg Chair on Women and the Legal Profession, hosted a public panel discussion featuring a number of the advocates involved in the intervention, including Jane Bailey (The eQuality Project), David Fewer (CIPPIC), Suzie Dunn (The eQuality Project), Adam Goldenberg (Ontario College of Teachers), and Karen Segal (Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF)).

Presentation to NZ Privacy Commissioner

In December 2018, eQuality's Jane Bailey gave an invited presentation on The eQuality Project's research findings at the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of New Zealand. Bailey's presentation included eQuality's research on youths' attitudes towards online defamation and harassment, as well as recent Canadian legal

examples of cyberviolence (including the recent Supreme Court Decision in *R. v. Jarvis*), as well as some of the materials that the eQuality research team has developed for individuals who have experienced online violence and harassment (eQ's *Legal Briefs* and *Tech-Facilitated Violence* modules, available on the resources page of the eQ website). The New Zealand Privacy Commissioner, John Edwards, as well as representatives from his Office, the Office of the Ombudsman in New Zealand, and Netsafe (New Zealand's not-for-profit online safety organization) attended the presentation.

Open Caucus Intervention

In May 2018, eQuality's Valerie Steeves participated in the Open Caucus' session on the protection of private data. The Open Caucus is designed to be a non-partisan forum for discussion on issues of national importance, open to all who are concerned about the protection of private data, including members of parliament, parliamentary staff, senators, the media, and members of the general public. The panel was focused on the ways in which Canada's federal privacy laws could be expanded to include political parties, as Canada's privacy laws do not currently apply to how political parties collect, store or (mis)use the private data collected from Canadian voters. The discussion was focused on the possible changes that could be made to Canadian privacy law that would ensure that Canadians' private information is managed ethically and transparently by the Canadian federal political parties. The Open Caucus panel also included Daniel Therrien (Privacy Commissioner of Canada), Avner Levin (Professor and Dean of Ryerson's Ted Rogers School of Management), and Adam Kardash (Partner, Privacy and Data Management, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP).

Outreach at a Glance

Creating and disseminating educational and outreach materials to help Canadian youth make the most of their digital media experience.

Art Exchange Puerto Rico

In April 2018, eQuality Project researchers travelled to San Juan, Puerto Rico to facilitate the second of two transnational art exchange workshops with young artists to develop art-based responses to (in)equality issues in the networked environment. Workshop participants were presented with a series of Imagination Primers that highlighted examples of activists' use of numerous forms of art as a tool to resist online harassment, surveillance, and racism. The participants then planned and executed their own art projects to promote a more just online environment – using art as a form of resistance. Over the course of two workshops, 28 young artists produced a broad range of visual, performance, and experiential artistic responses that reflected and pushed back against (in)equality issues that they had experienced, or were important to them.

eQuality's Valerie Steeves and Jane Bailey worked with Chloe Georas (from the University of Puerto Rico's Law School) and Andy Villanueva (an award-winning filmmaker and member of eQuality's Youth Advisory Committee) to initiate two art-based interactions in Puerto Rico: one in Georas' University of Puerto Rico class and another through a general call to the community. Participants were mentored by two art professors throughout both of these events, and these interactions ultimately culminated in an art exhibition in San Juan's Diagonal art gallery in May 2018.


Andy Villanueva filmed two documentary videos for the workshop and exhibition, featuring interviews with the artists about their experiences and the philosophy behind their work, as well clips from the exhibition. Both are on the resources page of the eQ website.

Lesson Plans w/MediaSmarts

Over the course of 2018 and 2019, The eQuality Project has worked closely with partner MediaSmarts to produce a series of lesson plans in order to further opportunities for the dissemination of, and engagement with eQuality Project research and outreach materials. We have co-published a series of bilingual lesson plans for our Art Exchange Workshop, Disconnection Challenge, Cyberviolence Module, Invisible Machine (highlighted below), and Pushback Module. The lesson plans range in age from Grades 7 – 12, and a complete list of completed lesson plans and the lesson plans themselves (available as downloadable PDF documents) are available on the resources page of the eQ website, which will be expanded in the coming years with the development of further lesson plans.

Ghomeshi Effect

This past year, The eQuality Project and the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity partnered to help launch The Ghomeshi Effect on a tour through Ontario and Alberta. The Ghomeshi Effect is a documentary dance-theatre performance that tackles sexual violence in Canada, particularly how it is handled in the legal system. Through an edited series of documented interviews, The Ghomeshi Effect uses a series of choreographed dance sequences paired with monologues to inform and interrogate the language used in the discussion of sexual violence – both within and without the Canadian legal system. The 2018 tour was launched in Ottawa, with the opening performance held at the University of Ottawa followed by a talkback with The Ghomeshi Effect artists and members of the art and sexual violence support community.



Cashing-In Module

Everything that is posted online on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook can be, and frequently is collected, sorted, and inserted into algorithms designed to sort users into specific categories. These algorithms allow corporations and governments to make judgements based on extrapolated data and to place users into specific categories based on lifestyle, interests, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and other pre-selected categories. Not only can these algorithms make false assumptions about people based on extrapolated data, but they can also recreate and reinforce discrimination, biases and stereotypes based on the information supplied to them. The fact is that machine learning and algorithms are not objective calculation tools: they are only as good as the human programmers and the data supplied. On top of that, the algorithms themselves introduce biases by selecting proxies for things like socio-economic status.

For example, a selfie at a favourite coffee shop (#espressoislife #deathbeforedecaf) will create a spiderweb of categorical associations based on numerous data points from that single post. Location data will be used to triangulate your location when you posted the selfie, which will be used to make several assumptions about you. Based purely on location data (from either WIFI or geolocation technology), numerous calculations can be made about the poster's socio-economic status, shopping preferences, mode of transportation, and more.

The eQuality Project has created a mock social media page in order to illustrate the ways in which data is collected, and how this data is used by algorithms to make judgements about internet users in ways that they do not suspect or realize. Although the page eQ has created is fictitious, it highlights examples of algorithmic assumptions reported in the real world.

Outreach and Education Plan

The eQuality Project has been developing an education and outreach plan with which to disseminate high quality education and outreach programming for youth, parents, educators, and community organizers. These education and outreach materials will be designed for use by eQuality Project partners and the diverse groups of youth and supporting adults that our partner serve, as well as members of the general public. The materials will provide the opportunity to learn how to engage in healthy relationships, while also developing knowledge regarding data transparency, big data, algorithms, and healthy public sphere communications.

The development and delivery of eQuality education and outreach materials are and will continue to be informed by intersectionality in order to better ensure that these resources reflect the variety of factors including social location and membership in equality seeking groups that affect young people's experiences of privacy and equality. Using an intersectional child rights perspective has, and will continue to help to ensure that these materials incorporate youth voices, and support and respect young people's capacity to make decisions, while also incorporating new knowledge into their world views. In addition, these youth led activities will encourage youth to speak with peers about these issues, and to take leadership roles in challenging and championing issues that are important to them.

Our ongoing commitment to create innovative outreach materials will allow The eQuality Project and its partners to provide appropriate, intersectional, and youth-led digital literacy and equality training to both improve knowledge about online privacy and equality issues among young people and those who support them, as well as to improve young peoples' experiences in networked environments. The eQuality Project's Outreach and Education Plan will be completed in the autumn of 2019.

In the Spotlight

Suzie Dunn

How/When did you become interested in gender and equality issues?

I became interested in gender and equality issues when I was quite young. Many women in my social circle and larger community experienced violence and struggled to find the support they needed. As a young woman, the lack of institutional supports for survivors left a deep impression on me. Fortunately, I was surrounded by strong women who recognized this lack of equality and wanted to see change. While at university, I started volunteering and working with youth and women's organizations that advocated for equality and provided front line service work, and I have never turned back!

How did you get involved with eQuality?

Before The eQuality Project, I got involved with The eGirls Project, researching how Australia was addressing youth and technology issues, which is where my interest in equality, technology, and the law started. Several years later, Jane Bailey suggested I pursue a graduate degree and invited me to do research with The eQuality Project, and here we are! Since being with the project I've been able to interview youth about their thoughts on defamation, and summarize close to 700 criminal law cases on technology-facilitated violence.

Are there opportunities to work with young people in your field? Why is that important?

We have a lot to learn from young people. Our research has shown that youth are incredibly thoughtful when it comes to technology, privacy, and equality. As an academic, I see opportunities to do research in collaboration with youth about the issues that are important to them as they are often miles ahead of us on what the upcoming issues are, what platforms are relevant, and how technology should be regulated. We also have a duty to provide support systems for young people when they do experience harassment, privacy violations, or other trouble online, and I'd like to see more supportive non-profits and social services available

What's working well in your area of work, and what needs to improve?

Most of my research is on technology-facilitated

violence, and In the last few years, I've seen more people starting to do research, providing educational materials, helping with the technical aspects of things, and giving legal support. It's inspiring to see this growing network of individuals and organizations dedicated to combatting technology-facilitated violence. When it comes to what needs to be improved, first, there are still major gaps in knowledge, expertise, and resources. Shelters, support workers, police, and legislators are among the people who need more resources to tackle these issues. Secondly, technology companies need to address the ethics and equality issues imbedded in their products, and be accountable if reproducing inequality and make people unsafe online.

What's one piece of advice that you'd offer someone starting in your field?

Reach out to people who are doing the work you are interested in and surround yourself with people who support you and the work you do. It can be tough working on the problematic aspects of technology. You'll need your cheerleaders to back you up – I couldn't do my work without mine.

What would you like to see as a long-term outcome of The eQuality Partnership?

I want to see the development of a collaborative network of youth, educators, lawyers, law makers, police, academics, lawyers, advocates, activists, tech-companies, hackers, and whoever else is interested working together, sharing resources, and teaming up to end technology-facilitated violence.

Which groups/projects would you recommend for those interested in similar work?

The Association for Progressive Communication, The Badass Army, Citizen Lab, Cyber Civil Rights Initiative, Gender IT, Heartmob, Hollaback, Take Back the Tech, Trollbusters, and the YWCA.

Is there a particular quote that inspires you?

"When we speak we are afraid our words will not be heard or welcomed. But when we are silent, we are still afraid. So it is better to speak." – Audre Lorde

eQuality by the Numbers

11 RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

WORKSHOP **28 PARTICIPANTS**

25 PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS



3,500

TWEETS



CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

30



6 POLICY INTERVENTIONS



RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

17



5 LESSON PLANS

WHO WE

We are a partnership of academic researchers, community organizations, educators, policy-makers, and civil society groups working with youth to identify evidence-based practices and policies that promote healthy relationships and respect for privacy and equality online.

We are working together to create new knowledge about young people's experiences and needs with respect to networked technologies. Our research is informed by participatory action methods that see young people as equal participants in the knowledge-creation process. We are also committed to using intersectional methods that explore how social location affects young peoples' sense of self and opportunities. We will use the new knowledge we develop to create innovative education, policy and public engagement initiatives (such as classroom modules, media production-based learning activities for youth, workshops, train the trainer programs, policy intervention toolkits, and an online repository of multi-media materials) to help parents, teachers, school administrators, communities and policymakers work with youth.

WHAT

WE ARE

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The Alberta Teachers' Association
The Canadian Centre for Gender &
Sexual Diversity
Canadian Internet Policy and Public
Interest Clinic

Canadian Race Relations Foundation
Canadian Teachers' Federation
Canadian Women's Foundation
Centre for Law, Technology & Society
Egale Canada Human Rights Trust
George Mason University
Government of Alberta
Human Rights Research and Education
Centre
MediaSmarts
Ottawa Coalition to End Violence
Against Women
Outside of the Shadows
UNICEF Canada
University of Ottawa
University of Toronto
University of Western Ontario
The Vanier Institute of the Family
Women and Gender Equality Canada
YWCA

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The Information and Privacy
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WE DO

2018

2019

Annual
Report