

Project Report

*** indicates a required field**

Research Title

Children's rights to privacy in the era of Big Data.

This question is read only.

Please provide a short summary of the work that was completed as part of this project / research *

Protecting children's privacy in relation to commercial online data practices has become a global issue but we have yet to assess how we might address this in New Zealand. The objective of this project was to explore whether parents and teenagers are equipped to manage children's personal data privacy in relation to current commercial data practices online.

I searched academic literature that had some bearing on children's data privacy. There is a lot of scholarly research that looks into children's privacy in relation to their interpersonal communications. However, the subject of children's personal data privacy in relation to commercial and institutional data practices is a new area of research. There are few qualitative explorations of how parents and children understand 'commercial' or 'institutional' privacy. I reviewed the EU Global Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which leads the way in acknowledging children's rights in relation to commercial data practices, and regulatory approaches adopted by the US and the UK.

I then conducted research with parents and children to explore how they think about privacy online, and how they conceptualise personal information online. I explored their attitudes and practices in relation to commercial data policies, gauging what (if any), privacy-protection strategies they currently employ.

I recruited 13 parents and 15 teenagers (aged 12-16) across Auckland. Ethics approval for the project was obtained through Massey University. I conducted interviews with individual (parents and teenagers) and also teen friend-pairings, as well as one teen focus group. The interviews and focus group were between 60-90 minutes in length. I recorded the sessions, and the data when collated and transcribed for each participant generated over 228 pages of text.

A thematic analysis of these texts utilized NVivo 12 qualitative research software. This yielded rich data on how participants conceptualised privacy, their current practices around engaging with commercial consent mechanisms, parental oversight, and personal data awareness.

I drew on Simone van der Hof's (2016: 412)* typology of data to gauge participant knowledge of data flows and current commercial data practices. Analysis resulted in a number of key findings around how parents and children understand privacy online, their conceptions of personal information online, and their awareness and responses to commercial data practices. I identified several obstacles to enlisting parents as caretakers of children's privacy. Some of these could be addressed through encouraging internet companies to provide better data privacy options, and increased transparency in terms of the accessibility of data policies and consent mechanisms to both parents and children, a measure endorsed by the EU GDPR.

* van der Hof, S. (2016) I agree, or do I? A rights-based analysis of the law on children's consent in the digital world. *Wisconsin International Law Journal* 34(2), 409-45.

Describe the 'who, what, where, when and why' of your initiative

Timing

Is your project / research complete? *

Yes No

If your initiative is still in progress, pick 'no'

Start Date

04/02/2019

Must be a date.

Finish Date

16/12/2019

Must be a date.

Milestones

What have been the major steps / stages (i.e. milestones) involved in delivering your initiative to date?

Milestone	Description
Ethics	The first milestone was to gain ethics approval which I was able to obtain through Massey University. This required research into Massey ethics rules and requirements around conducting research with children, in particular, the requirements around consent.
Recruitment	<p>Recruitment goals were achieved but did require a different approach. I underestimated how much time and promotional effort, and the additional cost required to address the issues associated with these recruitment challenges. The recruitment of participants, therefore, required more time and travel. I also offered participants a token voucher for participation.</p> <p>I conducted interviews in office, and in-home locations, as well as a NZ Scout facility. The project was promoted to several community organizations. This had a number of benefits, such as improving the socio-economic spread of the sample and the richness of data collected. This is discussed further in the section on changes to the approach.</p>

Design and Data collection	<p>Given the changes to recruitment, collecting data required more travel to a number of locations from north of Auckland to West Auckland. It also required more time to conduct additional interviews.</p> <p>A chief milestone was the high likelihood that participants might lack knowledge of commercial data practices and so lack the motivation to take part, or that they might simply not see the issues of commercial surveillance and data mining having any personal consequences.</p> <p>To address this, I developed a schedule of key topic areas to provide a loose structure for interviews and focus groups. This drew from existing academic research and policy developments in the area of children’s data privacy. Within each topic area I developed a number of questions that, if needed, could be used to prompt and explore issues with participants. A workbook following the schedule was given to each participant. I tested some interactive exercises to elicit reflections on privacy and data sharing, and also included a few closed-ended questions. While following a qualitative conversational style, these additional tools proved to be a useful tool if children were shy in expressing their ideas, or if time was limited such as during the focus group. One-on-one interviews worked well for parents who were happy with an open qualitative format, with the workbook exercises and questions adding to the data set.</p>
Analysis	<p>There were three sets of data: audio recordings, multiple-choice questions, as well as some written texts. I transcribed and collated data for each participant before organizing this material into a preliminary coding structure within Excel, and importing this into NVivo. A thematic analysis of this material was then undertaken using coding and memoing techniques. This generated some key findings and identified areas for future research.</p>
e.g. planning; major activities; evaluation	

Outcomes

What outcomes were generated as a result of this project / research?

Internet research 2018/19
Internet Research final report
Application IR000302018/19 From Dr Caroline Keen
 Form Submitted 12 Dec 2019, 12:15pm NZDT

Outcomes are the changes that have occurred for the beneficiaries of your initiative. Generally outcomes can be framed as an increase or decrease in one or more of the following:

- Skills, knowledge, confidence, aspiration, motivation, (these are generally **immediate** or short-term outcomes)
- Actions, behaviour, change in policy (these are generally **intermediate** or medium-term outcomes)
- Social, financial, environmental, physical conditions (these are generally **long-term** outcomes)

Immediate outcomes occur directly following an activity (e.g. within 1 month); intermediate outcomes are those that fall between the immediate and long-term (e.g. between 1 month and 2 years); and long-term outcomes are those we expect to see years later (e.g. 2, 5, 10 or 50 years after the activity).

We also want to learn more about how you tracked the outcomes of your initiative - what you measured and how.

If you need more help understanding what outcomes are, read the help sheets at www.ourcommunity.com.au/evaluation

List your initiative's outcomes and attached information in the following table. Leave blank any fields that do not apply to your project.

Outcome	Were these outcomes anticipated?	Timeframe	Indicator	Verification Method
Identified key understandings of privacy by parents and children	Anticipated	Intermediate	Key findings	Thematic analysis
Identification of key obstacles to parental mediation of children's data privacy	Unanticipated	Intermediate	Key findings	Thematic analysis
Contribution to educators	Unanticipated	Immediate	Key findings to be supplied to NZ Scouts	Dissemination through their organisations newsletter
Contribution to public knowledge	Anticipated	Intermediate	Key findings will be published on website in the short term, and further media articles published in the medium term	Publication in local or national news
Contribution to research community	Anticipated	Long-term	Publication	Acceptance to academic journal

Internet research 2018/19

Internet Research final report

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Service	Unanticipated	Long-term	The NZ Privacy Foundation established a new working group looking at issues around children's privacy. We are developing documents for the Foundations website offering advice about commercial privacy.	I am a member of this working group. Awareness raising information on the Foundation Website.
Outcomes are the changes that you believe were generated or influenced by your initiative. See information above.	Choose from the list	Choose from the list (see description above)	What you used to measure this outcome - e.g. 'change in teenage pregnancy rates from x to y'	e.g. survey; interviews; focus groups

What (if anything) did you change in your approach and practices as your project research proceeded, and why? *

Initially, I intended to do one focus group with teenagers through a local school, and a number of parent interviews. I approached local schools but did not successfully arrange to conduct a focus group at a school. This required a different recruitment approach.

Having to recruit participants individually took much more time but proved beneficial. I focused on recruiting and interviewing parents first, so that they were informed about the research. This enabled me to gain their consent and recruit their teenagers and friends to take part. I was also able to access teenagers for qualitative interviews and also for 'friend interviews', which generated richer data than expected from a single focus group. I also conducted a focus group with younger teens through the NZ Scouts organisation.

This new recruitment method required more promotion, i.e. schools were happy to place a flyer on their website, I also created a website for the project, contacted local community organisations, clubs and libraries. Hibiscus Coast News and the Rodney Times also published articles about the project. This took place over a longer period, and required much more time, promotional materials, and communication than anticipated. However, it enabled me to connect with appropriate organisations and schools and resulted in a series of interviews with teenagers which enriched research outcomes.

Following this recruitment process I was able to get a better spread across different school deciles, socio-economic levels, gender, and some ethnic spread. Teenagers attended schools in from north of Auckland, Hibiscus Coast and North Shore, central and east Auckland districts. I also conducted one focus group recruited through the NZ Scouts Association. This provided access to a group of younger teenage peers for whom the focus group method worked well.

We may use this information to help inform others undertaking similar work

What did you learn as a result of undertaking this project/program? *

There was much to learn around recruiting parents and children outside of the school environment where one might expect to have a captive audience. Engaging people from the community requires building some trust and credibility as well. Following a clear ethics

process and promoting the work in community papers proved useful strategies. It also allowed me to interact with communities, clubs and groups who also provide education to children, through which future awareness and education initiatives might also be effective.

It was also challenging to recruit and engage participants in discussion about issues that have yet to really register as a key social concern in New Zealand. In addition, despite the wealth of research conducted on children's competencies and resilience to content, conduct and communication risks online, research on privacy risks in relation to commercial data practices is only in its infancy. By following a grounded methodology in the gathering and analysis of data I was able to address these challenges.

One of the unforeseen benefits of the recruitment process was that in interviewing parents and then their children, I was able to observe how parenting styles influence children's understandings and privacy practices online. At the same time I also interviewed 'teen-friends' which was useful in exploring how they might influence each other's attitudes and practices toward online privacy risks. I found that parent attitudes and parenting styles often shaped teenagers' privacy and security practices, and this is an important and understudied area of research which I intend to develop further.

The current neoliberal governance model assumes that children's resilience and safety can be achieved through parental mediation of children's online activities, and education through schools. However, this research identified several obstacles to raising awareness and privacy competencies among parents and children in relation to commercial data practices.

While many parents and teenagers were aware that targeted advertising takes place, most had a severely limited view of what constituted 'personal data' in the digital context, or the scope and nature of personal data now collected in the commercial environment. This is in large part due to the speed of technological innovation facilitating more granular and continuous personal data capture. The opacity of commercial data practices, along with the complex and less than transparent consent mechanisms / options used by many businesses, are key obstacles to raising public knowledge of commercial data practices and what they are agreeing to, and is an important focus for policy makers.

As this project progressed it became apparent that participants consistently excluded commercial data practices as posing any real threat. Privacy, as defined and conceptualised by parents or children who took part in this project, rested on concerns about interpersonal privacy and reputational harms that could occur if personal information was shared publically (i.e. a private/public dimension). The longer-term harms of personal information being monetised by commercial entities, (i.e. a private/commercial dimension) were largely unrecognised by parents and children. This presents a challenge for those wishing to raise awareness and enlist parents in safe-guarding their children's privacy rights and is an area that I intend to develop further.

We are particularly interested in lessons that may help others undertaking similar work. Think about what you learned about your inputs (money, skills, personnel, time - too much; too little; about right?); your assumptions (were they 100% right, only partly right, or were the results a complete surprise?); and the context of the project/program (timing; targeted beneficiaries; geographic settings - were they right; wrong; about right?)

How will you share your learnings from this project/research? *

This work has provided a vehicle to conduct research in a reasonably new field of children's privacy, and is an area of research I intend to further develop. The findings provide opportunities to inform educators, policymakers, and key stakeholders who currently provide advice and education to children and parents. I will disseminate material through my website, media, children's advocacy groups, and supporters of the project such as local schools and NZ Scouts. Two articles are in progress and it is intended that these will be published in academic journals contributing to the larger debate on children's privacy rights.

The New Zealand Privacy Foundation has set up a working group, of which I am a member, looking at children's privacy in the evolving regulatory environment. I intend to develop aspects of this research for the NZ Privacy Foundation website.

What mediums were used to share the learnings? Have you reached the audience you expected?

We'd love to see some visual and audio representations of your work. Please share below.

Upload files: *No files have been uploaded*

and/or

Provide web link: <http://www.socialresearchnz.com>
 Must be a URL

and/or

Provide additional details: I am continuing to do interviews with parents and teenagers to test the findings that this pilot study has generated. I would also like to do similar research with school educators in the new year. I will be meeting with an InternetNZ representative to discuss this research and future opportunities for collaboration.
 Please include captions, if relevant

Can we use your media content in our own communications? Yes No Please contact us first
 e.g. in our annual report

Financial Report

*** indicates a required field**

Project Income & Expenditure

Please provide details of any project income (funds received) and project expenditure (funds spent) to date.

Use the 'Notes' column to provide any additional information you think we should be aware of.

Income Description	Income Type	Confirmed Funding?	Income Amount (\$)	Notes
InternetNZ	Philanthropic Grants *	Confirmed *	\$22,920.00	A community research grant received from InternetNZ

Internet research 2018/19

Internet Research final report

Application IR000302018/19 From Dr Caroline Keen

Form Submitted 12 Dec 2019, 12:15pm NZDT

Expenditure Description	Expenditure Type	Expenditure Amount (\$)	Notes
Literature review	Salaries and Wages*	\$4,382.60	
Interviews/workshops	Salaries and Wages	\$5,843.47	
Transcription	Salaries and Wages	\$3,478.26	
Analysis	Salaries and Wages	\$6,952.52	
Recruitment	Salaries and Wages	\$3,290.00	Time spent far exceeded original budget 150 hours
Food/hospitality	Overheads	\$231.88	
Technology costs	Overheads	\$821.85	Recording, computing, office and admin
Travel	Overheads	\$819.73	The project involved more travel to different locations in Auckland. We also provided a voucher for participants.

Income and Expenditure Totals

Total Income Amount	Total Expenditure Amount	Income - Expenditure
\$22,920.00	\$25,820.31	-\$2,900.31
This number/amount is calculated.	This number/amount is calculated.	This number/amount is calculated.

Have you experienced any issues with your intended project budget to date? If so, please explain reasons for any major variances or for providing incomplete information:

I had to spend more time and resources on developing promotional materials, and recruitment. The reasons and benefits of these changes are explained in the sections on 'changes during the project' and 'key things learned during the project'.

Certification and Feedback

Feedback

You are now nearing the end of this form. Before you review your application and click the **SUBMIT** button please take a few moments to provide some feedback. (If you would rather provide anonymous feedback, please go to **{{ Grantmakers: provide a link to an anonymous survey or delete this sentence }}**)

Please indicate how you found the acquittal process:

Very easy Easy Neutral Difficult Very Difficult

How many minutes in total did it take you to complete this form?

120

Estimate in minutes (i.e. 1 hour = 60 minutes)

Please provide us with your suggestions about any improvements and/or additions to this form that you think we need to consider: