Access Points and Implications for Citizenship:

The Materialization of Internet Access and the Shaping of Citizenship at Two Wi-Fi Hotspots in Post-Pandemic Urban Canada

by

Melanie Vidakis

B.A., Concordia University, 2021

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the

School of Communication

Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Fall 2024

Declaration of Committee

Name:	**Melanie Vidakis**
Degree:	**Master of Arts**
Title:	**Access Points and Implications for Citizenship:** The Materialization of Internet Access and the Shaping of Citizenship at Two Wi-Fi Hotspots in Post-Pandemic Urban Canada
Committee:	**Chair:** **Richard Smith** Professor, Communication
	Katherine Reilly Supervisor Associate Professor, Communication
	Frédérik Lesage Committee Member Associate Professor, Communication
	Stuart Poyntz Examiner Professor, Communication

Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

a. human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics

or

b. advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University

or has conducted the research

c. as a co-investigator, collaborator, or research assistant in a research project approved in advance.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed with the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

Update Spring 2016

Abstract

The Covid-19 Pandemic highlighted the critical role of the internet in shaping citizenship in Canada, as individuals and businesses deepened their reliance on digital connectivity. The literature on digital citizenship often focuses on helping people engage in responsible online engagement. However, the nature of digital access structures human experience in many ways. This study asks, "What does the materialization of internet connectivity reveal about our experiences of citizenship?" It considers digital influence in urban contexts by comparing experiences at two internet access points: a public library and a fast-food restaurant in Metro Vancouver. Using a critical spatial perspective, the research explores individual experiences at the micro-level, community and institutional dynamics at the meso-level, and the wider implications of digital policies at the macro-level. This analysis reveals how our relationships with internet technologies inform and materialize our experience of citizenship.

Keywords: Citizenship; Internet; Access; Free Wi-Fi; Terms of Service (TOS); Technology

To my mother, who may not know how to use a computer but gets s**t done.

Acknowledgements

I dedicate a special acknowledgement to my supervisor, Dr. Katherine Reilly, who greeted me when I first arrived at SFU and quickly became an invaluable academic mentor. Her holistic approach to academia fostered an environment where I could flourish professionally and personally. Whether through critical discussions on datafication or the intricacies of writing academic proposals, she contributed towards making this journey enjoyable. Your patience and guidance were crucial to the success of it all: thank you!

I wish to acknowledge and thank my first-year professors in the School: Ahmed, Frederik, Katherine, and Stuart whose breadth of knowledge in the field inspired much of this work.

I would like to express gratitude for the support that facilitated this research: the BC Graduate Scholarship; Dean Fellowship Funding; Graduate Fellowship; and the FCAT Graduate Award. This funding enabled the interviews in public spaces and travel to the Canadian Communication Association and the International Communication Association Conferences where I presented early research findings and received valuable feedback from peers and academic mentors.

I am grateful to the patrons at the sites of study whose willingness to share their experiences provided critical insights into the daily use of technology.

Thank you to my family for their support.

Lastly, thank you to those, whether on or off the Burnaby Mountain, who asked: “how’s your thesis going?” Your interest and encouragement were a great source of motivation.

Table of Contents

Declaration of Committee ii
Ethics Statement iii
Abstract iv
Dedication v
Acknowledgements vi
Table of Contents vii
List of Tables x
List of Figures xi
List of Acronyms xii
Glossary xiii

Chapter 1. Introduction 1
1.1. Context: Ubiquitous Internet Connection 3
1.2. Literature Review 5
1.2.1. What is Citizenship? What is Digital Citizenship? 5
1.2.2. Media Literacy 7
1.2.3. Citizenship, Data and Privacy 9
1.2.4. Rethinking Digital Citizenship 10
1.3. Theoretical Framework: Citizenship and Space 12
1.3.1. The Role of Digital Media in Shaping Spatial Experiences 14
Structural Forces 14
Agentic Influences 17
1.4. Outline of the Subsequent Chapters 18

Chapter 2. Methodology 20
2.1. Research Questions 20
Selection of Sites of Study 20
2.2. Participant Observation 22
2.3. Interviews 25
2.4. Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis 29
2.5. Overview of Combined Methods 33
2.6. Methodological Constraints 34
Design 34
Limitations 35
2.7. Ethical Considerations 36
2.8. Exploring Researcher Positionality 36
2.9. Reflections from Field Work 38
2.10. Conclusion 38

Chapter 3. **Variations in Internet Provision:** ***A Rich Exploration of Two Access Points*** **..... 40**
3.1. The Internet as a Resource 41
3.2. The Internet as a Valuable Resource at the Vancouver Public Library 42
Wi-Fi TOS at the Vancouver Public Library 42
3.3. The Internet as a "Service" 45
3.3.1. The Internet as a "Service" at McDonald's Canada 46
McDonald's Canada Free Wi-Fi 47
3.4. Encountering the "Giant Wall of Text" 52
The "No Option" Sentiment 53
3.5. Overview: Assessing TOS and Free Internet Access 56
3.6. Conclusion 58

Chapter 4. **How Spaces of Access Occupy People:** ***Spaces of Access and Datafication*** **..... 59**
4.1. Exploring Interviewee Responses to Data Collection 60
Indifference to Data Collection 61
Ambivalence 62
Concern for Data Collection 64
A Critical Analysis on Perspectives of Data Collection: 66
4.2. Complexities of Datafication and Privacy 69
4.3. Conclusion 72

Chapter 5. **How People Occupy Spaces of Access:** ***The Materialization of Access*** **.. ..... 74**
5.1. The Influence of Connectivity on the Observed Spaces 75
Analysis 80
5.2. Covid-19 and Internet Usage 80
5.2.2. Towards a Reevaluation of Digital Citizenship 82
5.3. Exploring Diverse Perspectives on Connectivity: Not everyone wants to, or can integrate digitally 84
5.4. Conclusion 86

Chapter 6. Conclusion 88
6.1. Summary of Main Themes 88
6.2. Research Contribution 89
Re-evaluating Digital Citizenship 89
A Note on Free Wi-Fi 90
6.3. Considerations for Future Research 91
Considerations for Future Research based on Methodological Reflections 93
6.4. Trending Topics in Internet Studies 94
Conclusion 95

Epilogue **97**

References **99**

Appendix A. Suggestions for Conducting "On-the-Fly" Research Interviews **109**

Appendix B. Interview Questions **111**

Appendix C. Interview Participants **113**

List of Tables

Table 1. Materialization of Connection at the Sites of Study 75
Table 2. Summary of Themes from Interviews on Covid-19 Impact on Internet & Technology Use 82

List of Figures

Figure 1. Capital Portal, VPL 43
Figure 2. Captive Portal, VPL 43
Figure 3. Captive Portal, VPL 44
Figure 4. Captive Portal, McDonald's Canada Free Wi-Fi 47
Figure 5. Subversion of Spaces 79
Figure 6. Extensions of Spaces and Wi-Fi Provision 79

List of Acronyms

CRTC	Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IOT	Internet of Things
ISP	Internet Service Provider
PCD	Personal Communication Devices
TOS	Terms of Service (Also at times labelled as Terms & Services or Terms and Conditions by different entities: but reduced to TOS where possible for clarity throughout this thesis)
VPL	Vancouver Public Library

Glossary

Captive Portal	Login page that greets a user before connecting to free Wi-Fi at an access point. Login page typically includes the Terms of Service.
Datafication	Refers to the process of data collection; turning things like actions and subjects into data.
IoT (Internet of Things)	A network of physical devices connected to each other and the Internet, exchanging information.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

"I am not an Athenian or a Greek, but a citizen of the world." — Socrates

"Ours is a brand-new world of allatonceness. 'Time' has ceased, 'space' has vanished. We now live in a global village...a simultaneous happening." — Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Massage*, 1967

People's lives have increasingly become interwoven with internet technologies, transforming how we act, live, and communicate. This interconnectedness has reshaped private and public spaces and impacts the very nature of citizenship. Internet technologies have expanded our ability to connect with the world, echoing Socrates' notion of belonging to something greater than one's immediate surroundings.

But what exactly is citizenship? Humans have grappled with belonging, freedoms, rights and responsibilities, exclusionary societies, wars, and immigration. 'Citizenship' cannot be easily defined universally or historically. Scholars have explored citizenship from various perspectives, including educational (Dewey, 1916), political (Arendt, 1958; Tilly, 1996), social (Marshall, 1950), and communication (McLuhan, 1964; Habermas, 1962; Castells, 1996, Carey, 1989) Additionally, digital and internet technologies have introduced new concepts such as digital citizenship.

The literature on digital citizenship tends to focus on responsible internet use, often framed as a behavior that internet users should adopt. However, within this context, the internet is less often explored as a phenomenon that shapes people's experience of citizenship. This thesis takes up the latter by examining digitally mediated spaces in urban settings and the experiences of the people who navigate them.

This work is guided by the central question: "What does the materialization of internet connectivity reveal about our experiences of citizenship?" It specifically investigates how internet experiences manifest tangibly, focusing on what can be observed, experienced, and felt by technology users. This work employs a critical spatial perspective through

participant observation and interviews conducted at Wi-Fi-accessible locations such as fast-food restaurants and libraries to explore technologically mediated spaces. It also examines the governing Terms of Service (TOS) at two Wi-Fi hotspots; how internet users are utilized as data sources; and their engagement with physical and digital spaces.

Conducted during Canada's transition out of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions and during the reopening of public spaces, this research provides a perspective on technological experiences during and after this period. This is because reliance on digital technologies shifted during the pandemic as we transformed how people work, relate to each other, and spend leisure time. The aim of this work is to fill gaps in our understanding of digital citizenship, particularly the intersection of digital citizenship and space, to better grasp the implications of a technologically mediated society.

The main finding from this work is that the materialization of internet access has significant implications for the experience of citizenship. This was identified in three ways. Firstly, free internet services at access points are not neutral; the nature of Wi-Fi provision shapes the nature of connectivity and this in turn has implications for our experience of rights, responsibilities and social norms. Secondly, data collection that can occur at Wi-Fi hotspots or via social media services has become normalized, regardless of how people feel about it. Thirdly, experiences of connection vary across different spaces of access, indicating that spaces offering internet access become spatially organized in ways that structure the experience of citizenship. Overall, this thesis considers the situated nature of rights and obligations in digital spaces, emphasizing the importance of understanding the organization and regulation of each digital space and physical access point in shaping internet users and their interactions with internet technologies. This work challenges notions of public space utility and demonstrates the dynamic nature of public environments as influenced by connectivity.

In the remainder of this introduction, I offer a literature review about citizenship and space, digital citizenship, and the evolving landscape of internet technologies. This review finds that the literature on digital citizenship, and especially on digital literacy, tends to put the onus on individuals to use technology responsibly. It also explores critical structural and

agentic concepts that provide a framework for thinking about the materialization of citizenship in different digitally mediated contexts. This framework forms the basis for the research findings to follow.

1.1. Context: Ubiquitous Internet Connection

One rainy day in March 2022, while in downtown Vancouver, I noticed a taxi offering "free" Wi-Fi which sparked my interest in digital hotspots. The option of connecting to Wi-Fi in a taxi is presumably a marketable amenity, allowing passengers to stay connected while traveling from one destination to another. This availability of "free" Wi-Fi is significant in many scenarios: in cafés, stores, city centers, and more. The prevalence of these access points, even the ones in motion, demonstrates that people are continually invited to be connected to the internet.

Driven by both policy and corporate interests, free internet access has fostered a culture where the perpetual availability of the internet and constant connection are normalized. Present-day environments not only invite individuals to stay connected but have also led to a reliance on internet connectivity.

According to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC, 2019, p. 20), from 2013 to 2017, there was a notable decline in the use of landline phones and television in Canadian households, while internet and mobile phone usage significantly increased. By 2017, 90% of households had mobile communication, and 89% had internet connectivity (p. 20). This trend captures a shift toward technologies that facilitate online connectivity, surpassing traditional communication methods like landline phones and conventional mass media such as television and satellite services.

The influence of mobile communication technologies has been advancing, with wireless technology evolving over recent years. This has taken us from 2G services, which supported voice calls and simple messaging, to 5G networks that provide fast internet speeds and enable an array of IoT (Internet of Things) devices.

People increasingly have access to various connectivity options, such as 5G, personal Wi-Fi, and free Wi-Fi. The key difference is that 5G and personal Wi-Fi networks are privately purchased, while free Wi-Fi is typically provided by businesses or city services. In diverse settings, from public parks to grocery stores, free Wi-Fi can be provided to enhance the customer experience, echoing offerings like Wi-Fi in taxi cabs that keep passengers connected. Accessing free Wi-Fi often requires agreeing to specific terms, leading to differences in how internet experiences materialize across locations. Consequently, the nature of connectivity has the potential to shape our experience of citizenship in different spaces and contexts.

Changes to the nature of our connectivity have been magnified by the Covid-19 pandemic. As the pandemic unfolded, the internet demonstrated its multifunctional capabilities (Bilodeau et al., 2021): it supported virtual classrooms (Buchholz et al., 2020); fostered social interactions (Liddicoat, 2021); disseminated public health information (Badr et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022); facilitated telehealth services; transformed homes into virtual office spaces (CIRA, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2021); and accelerated the growth of e-commerce (Government of Canada, 2022).

Video conferencing platforms like Zoom and Google Meet saw a surge in use, becoming essential tools for education and work (Wiyono et al., 2021). However, this also introduced new challenges, such as "Zoom Gloom," a term coined to describe the fatigue and psychological strain many experienced as they adjusted to an online lifestyle (Williams, 2021).

Liddicoat (2021) describes this transformation, noting that the internet became "a space in its own right, a place where we truly live" (p. 128), highlighting how the internet has evolved into an integral space where people exist. Overall, the internet proved critical during the pandemic, embedding itself more deeply into the fabric of both individual and communal activities. This period was marked by new experiences, varying skill levels with ICTs, and significant adaptation to technology. Section 5.2. of this thesis explores personal accounts of these experiences through interviews.

With shifts in societal norms, especially under the rapidly changing conditions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, the materiality of connection evolved. By 2020, 94% of Canadian households were connected to the Internet, and 81% of individuals in metropolitan areas had a mobile data plan (Statistics Canada, 2021), indicating a substantial increase in digital connectivity. The invitation to connect to the internet—through both personal and public means—combined with shifting societal practices emerging during the pandemic, forms the basis for my investigation into citizenship in the digital age.

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. What is Citizenship? What is Digital Citizenship?

This section considers citizenship from its classical definition and the associated norms, which pertain to levels of belonging.

Citizenship encompasses both a legal status, and a set of rights and responsibilities that shapes the participation of individuals in society. Traditionally, frameworks such as those proposed by T.H. Marshall, define citizenship in terms of civil, political, and social rights within a nation-state (Marshall, 1950). It determines an individual's access to various societal benefits, legal protections, and forms of political participation.

Citizenship also serves as a framework through which individuals understand their place within society, influencing their identity and their relationships with others. This contributes to a broader culture of citizenship. A culture of citizenship may not be limited to a formal status, and instead, can relate to people's participation within society. However, within this culture of citizenship, we can also observe that it can be exclusionary, reflecting socio-political dynamics and power structures. While citizenship grants rights to some, it can marginalize certain groups (Isin & Turner, 2002, p. 5; Lister, 2007, p. 50; Mossberger et al.,, 2008, p. 145-146). Traditional frameworks of citizenship often exhibit a Western-centric bias. For example, Abu-Laban (2014) uses Canada as a case study to illustrate these biases, showing how the country's foundation on settler ideals has historically marginalized Indigenous and French-Canadian communities. This legacy of exclusion continues to affect many groups.

In the digital age, the nature of our participation in society complicates the idea of citizenship. The internet expands the boundaries of citizenship to include digital rights and responsibilities (Hintz et al., 2019; Mossberger et al., 2008). Discussing citizenship requires considering both the beneficiaries and the excluded. The concept of inclusion and exclusion extends to the digital realm through the digital divide, which refers to disparities in internet access (Castells, 2001, p. 275).

Importantly, this divide involves not just who can access the internet but also the impact of such access or lack thereof (p. 275). A study by Wavrock et al. (2021) categorize the digital divide into levels: the first concerns basic internet access and frequency of use, and the second focuses on the variety of activities users engage in, from basic to advanced. Notably, proficient users are more likely to engage in capital-enhancing activities such as learning and networking (p. 9). For instance, using the internet for services like registering for classes and checking schedules was reported by only 5.1% of basic users compared to 67.1% of advanced users (Table 1). Proficient internet users are therefore more likely to engage in activities that enhance their social and economic capital.

Hintz et al. (2019) argue that in our digital age, "digital acts become important means through which citizens create, enact, and perform their roles in society" (p. 26). This aligns with the works of Castells (2001) and Wavrock et al. (2021), which examine the varying impacts of internet access among different users. Digital acts can contribute to societal enrichment, making digital citizenship integral to how individuals contribute to and benefit from society in the digital age.

However, digital citizenship does not guarantee equal access or capital-enhancing experiences for all internet users. The digital divide reflects challenges intrinsic to citizenship, emphasizing that societal participation now hinges not just on the fact of digital accessibility but also how that access is provided and what that means for the experience of social spaces.

In summary, traditional views of citizenship emphasize possessing rights within a context, and cultural perspectives of citizenship consider belonging and identity. However, a critical examination reveals that rights are often not uniformly granted and the degree to which

people belong is different for all. This notion is central to this thesis, which argues that digital citizenship, like its traditional counterpart, encompasses more complex realities than the term might initially suggest. Accordingly, this work re-evaluates digital citizenship to reflect the materialization of connectivity and the lived experiences of individuals in increasingly digital spaces.

1.2.2. Media Literacy

Digital citizenship is commonly framed and promoted within the context of media literacy, a perspective prevalent in educational settings. This widely adopted approach emphasizes that being a digital citizen involves demonstrating responsibility and accountability for one's actions on the internet, often supported by strategies like digital literacy resources. However, this thesis diverges from this approach to digital citizenship. Rather than focusing on how users can adapt responsibly to a digital society, it explores how digital technologies affect individuals in ways that often contradict the expectations of digital citizenship. This approach shifts the emphasis from user adaptation to an examination of the broader, and sometimes unexpected, impacts that digital experiences have on people's lives.

Livingstone's 2003 framework for media literacy introduced essential skills necessary to navigate the digital world: accessing, analyzing, evaluating, and creating content. These skills are fundamental for the proficient use of ICTs (p. 6). This foundation has evolved into what is now known as digital citizenship, which emphasizes responsible online behavior. Contemporary educational resources and programs, shaped by the works of Ohler (2010), Ribble (2015), and Lauricella et al. (2020), aim to foster digital responsibility among young users. These interpretations of digital citizenship reflect neoliberal ideals, promoting individual agency within a society that minimizes questioning of or intervention in hegemonic structures (Harvey, 2005). This shift encourages digital citizens to effectively use digital tools, actively engaging and contributing to society through their online presence.

Resources for enhancing digital literacy include websites and books, providing guidance to educators, school boards, and the youth. An exemplar of these resources is MediaSmarts, a Canadian non-profit that has pioneered "Media Literacy Week" in Canada with a focus on Digital Citizenship. MediaSmarts advocates the principle that "We all have a role to play in our online world, and we are all digital citizens" (2023), underlining the idea that digital citizenship applies universally, regardless of age.

MediaSmarts defines digital citizenship as:

> the ability to navigate our digital environments in a way that's safe and responsible and to actively and respectfully engage in these spaces. Although we live and interact in the digital world in a similar way to the offline world, we're not always as mindful of our actions online. We can sometimes act without realizing how it could affect our reputation, safety and growth as digital citizens. In the meantime, everything we do online continues to affect and define our digital world and selves (2023)

This definition aligns with the neoliberal focus on individual responsibility and efficient online behavior, framing digital citizenship as a status that internet users hold and should actively manage to sustain a positive online presence.

Other resources for educators advocate for digital citizens to be "ideal" citizens:

> We don't want students to know just how to use technology but also when and why. We want them to be not only good workers but also good neighbors, informed voters, and involved citizens. After all, once they graduate, they may be living next door to us, if not physically then certainly digitally. We would do well to ask ourselves just what kind of neighbors we would like them to be (Ohler, 2010, p. 19).

This viewpoint promotes the impact the internet can have on civic engagement, portraying students as digital neighbors interconnected in the online community. Ohler challenges educators to extend their role beyond traditional teaching, emphasizing the necessity to mentor students in navigating the digital world responsibly:

> In fact, if we as educators and adults are interested in continuing the mentor-mentee relationship that has existed for millennia between the old and the young, then this is a key component of our new job description: to help students see and evaluate the technology in their lives. Any consideration of digital citizenship is useless without this ability (p. 19).

This definition of digital citizenship bears resemblance to the digital resources from MediaSmarts, advocating for a comprehensive educational strategy that cultivates informed, responsible digital citizens prepared to engage ethically in the digital landscape. These perspectives are integrated into the media literacy framework, which emphasizes the development of responsible internet users who ethically consume and contribute to online content. This approach is typically top-down, where adults are tasked with guiding students on proper internet usage to become positive contributors within the digital sphere.

Media literacy approaches to digital citizenship are popular because they offer a framework for action in educational, policy or community contexts. However, these approaches often generalize the experience of citizenship that materializes in different media and connectivity environments. This thesis demonstrates the importance of considering context. If digital citizenship is reduced to notions of responsible behavior, it places a significant burden on users to navigate the variations in experiences they encounter effectively. Therefore, this thesis rejects agency-centric definitions of digital citizenship, and instead focuses on how experiences or cultures of citizenship materialize in specific contexts.

1.2.3. Citizenship, Data and Privacy

Recent scholarship on digital citizenship has focused on datafication (van Dijk, 2014) which refers to the process where users' digital activities generate valuable data for those who collect it. Datafication raises concerns about personal privacy. The debate around data collection gained significant attention following the Edward Snowden leaks in 2013, highlighting how businesses like Facebook (now Meta) and Google profit from user data (Hintz et al., 2019; Hong, 2020; Zuboff, 2019).

Datafication implies that online activity is converted into insights that impact various aspects of users' lives. This data can include metadata, or "data about data" (Cheney-Lippold, 2017; IEEE Xplore, 2023; Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, 2014), which encompasses details like timestamps and locations, forming a "data double" that

profiles citizens and influences everything from consumer behavior to civic engagement (Hintz et al., 2019).

Personalized advertising illustrates how algorithms leverage data, targeting users with highly specific ads. However, these algorithms, often function as opaque 'black boxes,' which lack sensitivity. Users frequently navigate the digital realm without fully understanding the algorithmic foundations that shape their experiences which have inadvertent consequences (Bucher, 2017; Diakopoulos, 2014; van Dijk, 2013).

As described by Hintz et al. (2019), digital citizens are characterized as both "active" and "supervised," meaning their online engagement is often subject to monitoring and surveillance, which impacts user experiences even if they are unaware. Within a critical framework, digital citizenship addresses the complexities of navigating digital spaces, including issues like data collection and algorithmic functioning. This framework recognizes the dual role of digital technologies in enabling participation while also exposing users to various forms of oversight and control.

The literature on personal data and citizenship once again tends to emphasize the responsibility of individuals to protect themselves (Mansell & Steinmueller 2020). In fact, digital literature is often mobilized to educate people about the risks of sharing personal information online (Pangrazio & Selwyn 2019). As in the case of media literacies, less attention is paid to how the nature of digital divides and internet access shape datafication and materialize experiences of citizenship[1].

1.2.4. Rethinking Digital Citizenship

As I reviewed the literature on 'digital citizen' I found the concept to be increasingly ambiguous. I also noticed a gap in the literature concerning a major component of citizenship: public space and its relationship to digital citizenship. Therefore, I focused on

[1] More recently, media literacy perspectives have intersected with issues of personal data and citizenship, as organizations like MediaSmarts address algorithms and surveillance concerns. However, the argument here is that while they provide resources for youth to navigate these complexities, they may still fall short in addressing the full range of challenges posed by evolving digital landscapes or in focusing attention on the role of policymakers in addressing these issues.

studying people's experiences with internet technologies in public spaces to understand what these experiences reveal about citizenship and a culture of citizenship more broadly, such as how free Wi-Fi might influence certain norms.

With this in mind, I deliberately chose not to confine my investigation to the concept of digital citizenship. This is because it remains unclear whether all individuals who engage with digital media consider themselves digital citizens. For instance, someone who works and studies online might identify as a digital citizen due to their reliance on digital technologies for societal participation. In contrast, another individual who participates in online civic discourses might never have encountered the term digital citizenship. Furthermore, the term digital citizen is relatively recent, gaining prominence in the 2000s, and its familiarity might be more pronounced among younger demographics who have encountered the term in educational settings where digital citizenship can be part of a curriculum[2].

In my interviews, discussions naturally touched on whether participants were citizens, international students, or permanent residents of Canada. The individuals I interviewed frequent the public spaces examined in this study. Although some may not be formal citizens, they are part of a culture of citizenship within the studied area, engaging with spaces where they work, socialize, and carry out various activities. Ultimately, this study is centered on people and their experiences of internet technologies. While also considering how corporations create the conditions for digital users, this work seeks to strike a balance between understanding agentic and structural perspectives and how they together shape the digital environment. In what follows I present the theoretical framework that allows me to explore the materialization of people's experiences of citizenship within digitally mediated spaces. I will start by examining space and citizenship, then move on to addressing the role of the digital within these contexts.

[2] The term gained prominence with the work of Ribble et al. in 2004, which outlined strategies for schools to integrate their educational practices with technologies.

1.3. Theoretical Framework: Citizenship and Space

Public spaces are tied to citizenship. Whether a predetermined space, like a mall designed with a specific socio-economic demographic in mind, or a park used for social interaction, or a mix of settings—people continuously find, use, and reshape spaces. These spaces are crucial because they provide opportunities for people to express their rights and responsibilities and participate in society. Citizens need spaces where they can belong and engage. People frequently visit parks, restaurants, community centers, schools, businesses, hospitals, libraries, theaters, and more. These spaces, whether for consumerism, labor, or fulfilment of civic duties, serve as venues where people learn about themselves and the world around them. Of course, however, the extent to which individuals can engage depends on the environment[3].

Public spaces are crucial for social interaction, allowing people to come together, meet new individuals, and connect with those they already know. Habermas historized the development of the "public sphere" in the context of 18th-20th centuries. The public sphere is a place where people gather to discuss and form opinions (1974, p. 49). The significance of public space in relation to citizenship lies in its foundational role in fostering participation and democratic governance (Harvey, 2005). Such spaces are essential for forming opinions, discussion, and civic engagement. In the context of the "public sphere" public spaces allow citizens to engage in reflective dialogue and democratic discourse. In more recent literature, Sennett (2018) theorizes that cities should be designed in "open" ways, which are accessible to all, adaptable to change, and capable of hosting many activities.

However, many modern public spaces are increasingly commodified, transforming citizens into consumers rather than active participants. Harvey refers to this as commodification and spectacle (1989, 2005). Commodification refers to the commercialization of spaces that were once freely accessible, while spectacle involves designing spaces to attract

[3] See works like *Building and Dwelling*, where Sennett (2018) examines how urban environments can either foster or impede civic engagement based on factors like design.

consumers through marketing and aesthetic appeal, which can shift focus away from communal use and reinforce social divisions.

Examples can include restaurants, cafés, and parks with entry fees, which tend to attract individuals from affluent socioeconomic backgrounds. For example, a quick glance inside a mall might suggest it is open to the "public," but a closer look reveals exclusivity. Are there unhoused people present? Are there unauthorized vendors? Establishments that charge entry fees or reinforce ideals about who can spend time in a space often exclude individuals from lower socioeconomic classes. This creates environments that cater predominantly to wealthier patrons, resulting in a social setting where the demographic profile of visitors reflects their ability to pay for the experience. This practice reinforces social and economic stratification.

Lefebvre famously stated that space is socially constructed, meaning it is shaped by the social interactions and activities that occur within it (1991). For instance, while a mall caters to specific shoppers, a public park can also be repurposed by its users. I think about a park near my apartment where a group of women bring their personal chairs and blankets to get comfortable, sew, and socialize. This park serves as a social hub for them. This group exemplifies Lefebvre's notion of the "Right to the City" from his 1968 work *Le Droit à la Ville*, where urban space is shaped by social relations and practices. Another example is how parks can become sites of protest, displaying posters for strikes or political causes. While the municipality may dictate aspects of the park, such as the physical amenities benches and tables, or the recommended hours of use, people still adapt these spaces to meet their needs.

As this thesis transitions from discussing citizenship and physical spaces to the impact of digitalization, it is crucial to understand how technology is involved in our interaction with urban environments. Digitalization has significantly transformed how we perceive and engage with space, blending both physical and digital realms. The integration of digital technologies into everyday life introduces more dimensions to the concept of space and experiences of citizenship, raising critical questions about accessibility, privacy, and digital norms.

1.3.1. The Role of Digital Media in Shaping Spatial Experiences

Imagine this scene: Person A walks into a McDonald's in Canada with a briefcase and a personal laptop in tow. They order a coffee, find an available table, and set up their laptop. After a few sips, they get ready to connect to the free Wi-Fi and engage hastily with the . After accepting the terms, they join a Zoom meeting with a work partner in a European city. They discuss, debate, and eventually close a business deal that involves shipping items to different parts of the world. As the meeting progresses, Person A notices their laptop battery is running low, prompting a quick move to a nearby table with an outlet to charge their device. After the meeting, as Person A packs up their bag, they notice a QR code on the wall advertising a survey. They scan it with their phone and, after completing the short survey about the restaurant's space and products, are rewarded with a free snack and a prompt to download the restaurant's app for future rewards. Before leaving, Person A sends a quick text to a family member, asking how their day is going. Then, they return to the counter, claim the free snack, and walk out of the restaurant.

This scene is rich with digital activity, and this section will break down these events to highlight the impact of digital media on spatial experiences. Specifically, I explore how digital media organize spatial experiences through two aspects: 1) the structural power of internet technologies and 2) the opportunities for digital media users to engage and participate electronically. I argue that digital citizenry materializes at the nexus of structural and agentic forces.

Structural Forces

Digitalization has fundamentally changed spaces, particularly through the materiality of devices and how they structure the materialization of spaces. Mackenzie's concept of "wirelessness" (2010) captures the complexity of internet communication, including personal communication devices (PCDs), Wi-Fi, and mobile data:

> Wirelessness designates an experience trending toward entanglements with things, objects, gadgets, infrastructures, and services, and imbued with indistinct sensations and practices of network-associated change. Wirelessness affects how people arrive, depart, and inhabit places, how they relate to others, and indeed, how they embody change (p. 5).

Wireless technology shapes the way individuals interact with spaces and each other, emphasizing not just the presence of technology but also its tangible materiality (2010, p. 5). The Internet of Things (IoT) further exemplifies this by connecting physical devices through sensors and network connectivity (IBM, n.d., para. 1). Engaging with the internet extends beyond PCD's: it involves a comprehensive system which includes the digital users and all that connects them to the broader internet infrastructure. This includes Internet Services Providers (ISPs), Wi-Fi access points, and platforms that channel digital experiences.

Wi-Fi form a particular focus of this work, and these access points are examined not only through their wording but also in terms of accessibility. Access to "free Wi-Fi" in places like taxis or restaurants often require someone to already be a paying customer. Free, public internet, therefore, has evolved into a service that is frequently paid for, either directly or indirectly through consumer transactions.

To explore how citizenship materializes in the IoT, I draw on Mosco's (1996) concepts of commodification, spatialization, and structuration, which detail how media operate in capitalist societies and relate these concepts to the analysis presented in this work.

Commodification delves into how tangible and intangible assets, including communication technologies and digital platforms, are converted into marketable products within capitalist economies. Mosco emphasizes that these technologies, which were initially mobilized for community connection, have increasingly become gateways for commercial activities. This commodification process has transformed various aspects of daily life, such as entertainment, fitness, and personal organization, into opportunities for profit generation, showcasing the influence of capitalist logic in the digital age.

Mosco also highlights how public spaces, traditionally accessible and communal, are increasingly commercialized, with sponsorships and corporate interests shaping their use (p. 153). He points out that the digital public sphere, once seen as a democratic forum for public discourse, is now dominated by corporate entities. This can now be seen with companies like Alphabet (Google) and Meta (Facebook) which commodify user engagement by transforming social interactions and personal data into valuable assets for

targeted advertising. This commodification process, according to Mosco, challenges the democratic ideals of public discourse by prioritizing profit over genuine civic engagement.

Corporations like Bell and McDonald's leverage free Wi-Fi to engage consumers, illustrating how businesses utilize digital spaces to expand their influence. This connectivity facilitates diverse interactions. For example, Person A from the above scene can effectively exist in two places at once—physically in a McDonald's in Canada while digitally interacting with someone in another time zone. This scenario exemplifies the merging of physical and digital spaces, enabling seamless global interactions.

Mosco illustrates this through his concept of spatialization, drawing on Lefebvre's theory of space to explore how media technologies dissolve traditional geographical barriers (p. 173), creating a globalized world where interactions and access to information are no longer constrained by location. He also examines the dynamics of business concentration, analyzing how corporations use technology to strengthen their market positions (p. 199). Regarding Wi-Fi hotspots, corporations provide internet access while simultaneously developing products and apps that keep consumers engaged with their brands. This strategy demonstrates how businesses leverage digital spaces and services to amplify their influence, reflecting broader trends of commodification and spatialization in social life with media technologies.

Finally, drawing from the sociological theories of Giddens (1986), Mosco's concept of structuration examines how social relations, including power and control, are structured and restructured through media and communication systems. Mosco argues that commodification and spatialization contribute to the reproduction of hegemony (1996, p. 242). For example, ISPs and their digital discourses shape the digital landscape, normalizing their dominance among users. Consider the scenario of Person A, where before connecting to the Wi-Fi, had to agree to the TOS. This brief interaction with digital discourse implicates the user, whether they engage with it meaningfully or not. Structuration theory is crucial for examining how corporations design spaces to structure power dynamics, providing both the space and the service of digital access.

This perspective on structuration enables an exploration of how technology is embedded in everyday experiences created by those who shape its contexts. However, the agentic influence of users in engaging with and adopting internet technologies complements this view. Below, I outline how these agentic forces contribute to the dynamic interaction between technology and its users.

Agentic Influences

Digital media have opened new avenues for democratic participation, with increased internet accessibility and expanded civic engagement leading to significant societal shifts. Coleman and Blumler (2009, p. 12) highlight that the internet's interactive capabilities distinguish it from traditional broadcast media, making it a transformative medium for contemporary citizenship. The internet facilitates a wide range of democratic activities, offering opportunities for online engagement in areas such as education, work, voting, protest, and content creation, allowing for both resistance to and cooperation with established power structures (Bakardjieva, 2005).

Habermas identified a profound transformation in the public sphere due to the rise of media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, which became primary vehicles for public discourse and democratic governance (1974, p. 50). This evolution continues with digital media, which further reshapes how public opinion is formed and how civic life is conducted.

Silverstone's concept of "mediapolis" (Silverstone, 2007; Bakardjieva, 2017) explores the intersection of digital media, politics, and civic life, where traditional and digital media converge to create environments that heavily influence public perception. This concept is particularly relevant in understanding how public spaces in a digital society are now characterized by the constant overlap of public, personal, and organizational life. For instance, individuals navigate these spaces with personal devices, which are often regulated by digital agreements and public norms. Agency is expressed in various ways, such as agreeing to digital terms or opting to use private networks over public Wi-Fi to maintain autonomy. This entanglement of different aspects of life within the mediapolis highlights

the complex interactions between individuals and the media-dominated environments they inhabit.

1.4. Outline of the Subsequent Chapters

This thesis explores how the materialization of internet technologies influences experiences and cultures of citizenship. The research was conducted using qualitative methods, including participant observation and interviews at a branch of the Vancouver Public Library and two McDonald's locations—one in Burnaby, British Columbia, and another in Montreal, Quebec. I analyzed the TOS from these venues to examine the digital agreements governing internet access in these spaces.

The fieldwork is specific to certain geographic areas in Canada, and as such, it may not fully represent what is happening on a larger scale in Canada or other parts of the world. Nonetheless, the objective of this research was to explore and present relevant themes of digital citizenship at a local level by studying internet access points. This approach aims to understand how these local insights can relate to the broader experiences of citizens living in increasingly digital landscapes.

The remainder of the thesis is organized into five chapters. On continuation, Research Methodologies, details the approaches and methods used for data collection and analysis. The findings are presented in Chapters Three through Five, each addressing different themes.

Chapter Three: "Variations in Internet Provision: A Rich Exploration of Two Access Points" compares how two access points shape experiences of digital connectivity. A key observation is that Wi-Fi provision is not neutral, however, the desire for securing immediate internet connectivity often outweighs the inclination to read and understand the legal specifics of each access point.

Chapter Four: "How Spaces of Access Occupy People" examines the implications of digital agreements for both Wi-Fi hotspots and digital media services and their impact on users. It emphasizes the influence that digital companies have over the digital landscape, which has

become normalized by users. This chapter argues for a re-evaluation of the balance between digital integration and the preservation of individual rights, suggesting that approaches to digital policy need careful reconsideration.

Chapter Five: "How People Occupy Spaces of Connectivity" investigates the effects of connectivity on both public and private life spaces. The findings suggest that connections manifest in various ways, revealing a fluid nature of space utility across different organizational and structural contexts.

Chapter Six, the Conclusion, summarizes the research findings and reflects on the work's relevance within communication and internet studies.

Chapter 2.

Methodology

This chapter justifies the rationale of selecting three qualitative research methods. I consider my position as a researcher and reflect on biases that may influence this work.

The research methods operationalized were participant observation, interviews, and critical discourse analysis. An ethics application for the research was approved by Simon Fraser University's Research Ethics Board. Given that the sites of study were classified as public spaces, no consent was required from the public library or restaurant to conduct interviews in these spaces. However, it is always advisable to confirm this with a research ethics body and the chosen venues of study.

2.1. Research Questions

Research Question 1:

What does the materialization of internet connectivity reveal about our experiences of citizenship?

Research Question 2:

How do corporate discourses create and reproduce the context in which digital citizenship takes place?

Research Question 3:

How are discourses from internet services, such as terms and services and user policies, being used to reinforce or establish the power held by various actors, such as corporations and municipal governments, over internet hotspot users?

Selection of Sites of Study

The selection of the VPL and McDonald's Canada as sites for this study was a deliberate choice to contrast a public space with a private, corporate establishment and examine how each contributes to digitalization, particularly in terms of access to and utilization of digital

resources. These sites intersect in their provision of internet access, though they operate within different frameworks and may cater to different class profiles.

The VPL, known for its extensive resources and services, epitomizes a community space that is accessible to everyone, embodying the ideals of public accessibility and communal benefit. It represents a quintessential public venue where individuals from diverse backgrounds can freely access a range of resources and digital services.

McDonald's, as a global corporate entity, often functions as a quasi-public space, due to its widespread accessibility and utility for social interactions. However, the structural and operational setup of McDonald's reflects its private nature: seating arrangements are primarily intended for paying customers, which can limit access to those who make a purchase. Despite this, it is not uncommon for McDonald’s locations to accommodate space for a range of situations, including those seeking warmth or using the facilities, illustrating nuanced use of the space beyond consumer transactions.

The assumption that these sites may have different class profiles is informed by their differing operational models and user experiences. In 2018, Statistics Canada reported that 11.25% of Canadians aged 15 and above accessed Wi-Fi at public libraries, while 41.1% of Canadians 15 years and above did so at business establishments (Statistics Canada, 2021, Table: 22-10-0081-01). These numbers declined during 2020 presumably due to the closure of public spaces amidst the pandemic. Statistics Canada reported a decrease to 2.8% of Canadians aged 15 and above accessing Wi-Fi at public libraries, down from previous figures. Similarly, Wi-Fi usage at business establishments dropped to 23.9%, nearly halving the previous year’s percentage (Statistics Canada, 2021, Table 22-10-0144-01). This downturn conveys the pandemic's impact on the utilization of public spaces and the shifting patterns of digital access in communal areas. This was significant in conducting research post-pandemic to understand the evolving dynamics of how individuals engage with technology in public spaces after they reopened to the public.

2.2. Participant Observation

Through participant observation, a researcher immerses themselves in a setting, closely observing and interpreting interactions, and behaviors within that social context (Spradley, 1980). My observations centred on the activities of patrons in both library and restaurant settings, with a focus on digital engagement. The main observation sites included a branch of the VPL and a McDonald's establishment in Burnaby, BC. Additional observations were conducted at other McDonald's establishments in downtown Vancouver and Montreal. To maintain the privacy of patrons and participants, and since interviews were conducted at these locations, the exact locations will remain undisclosed.

To observe interactions at the venues of study, I was inspired by scholars like Halegoua (2019), who employed participant observation at McDonald's establishments in Missouri and Kansas investigating the interplay between digital infrastructure and Google's Fiber Optic project. Similarly, inspired by Powell's concept of "data-walking", which investigates the embodied experiences of individuals navigating data-saturated spaces (Hertz, 2017). Van Es & de Lange (2020) describe data walks as providing "a much-needed anchoring for understanding data as material and situated, and constitutive of everyday life" (p. 279). With this perspective, I adapted the essence of data-walking to observe tangible interactions with data in daily settings.

Building on the idea by Boczkowski & Lievrouw in Lievrouw (2014), who argue that "media and communication technologies could be seen as both 'cultural material and material culture'" (p. 22). I explored how communication technologies as cultural and material artifacts influence narratives about space, particularly how they intersect with notions of citizenship.

The methodology for this research centered on participant observation with a phenomenological approach, focusing on the experiences of individuals as they interact with technology. This would later be complemented by interviews with some patrons at the sites of study. The approach was informed by constructivist principles, recognizing that the observed social habits in various settings play a role in shaping perceived reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). By participating in the environment

as both a user and an observer, I aimed to ensure that observations remained as natural as possible, capturing an authentic picture of how people engage with these spaces.

The primary purpose of these observations was to generate insightful interview questions that delve into the day-to-day digital experiences of the patrons, informed by the initial observations. This method of observation is described as *open observation,* where "the researcher wants to identify what matters on the ground, in the observation situation or milieu" (Gaudet & Robert, 2018, p. 83). In section 2.3 of this chapter, the process of how these on-site insights informed the creation of interview questions is detailed. Additionally, the insights gained from these observations are integrated into the fieldwork analysis, offering perspectives on the role of technology in creating dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.

Implementation

I carried out participant observation in eight sessions, distributed between three McDonald's locations (five sessions) and a branch of the VPL (three sessions). The observations took place on the following dates: September 20th, 2022; October 8th, 2023; November 2nd, 2023, November 8th, 2023; January 18th, 2023; January 20th, 2023; January 24, 2023; and February 3rd, 2023.

To capture a spectrum of interactions, I scheduled visits to these locations at various times of day, aiming to observe activities and behaviors across different periods. The initial sessions of participant observation served as practice rounds to refine my observational techniques. After these initial rounds, I met with my academic supervisor to discuss the observations and receive feedback on how to better map the space and improve note-taking strategies for subsequent sessions.

I conducted participant observations for approximately thirty minutes at each site, followed by an additional twenty minutes dedicated to notetaking while still on location. These notes were transferred to a password-protected online document to ensure security and confidentiality.

During the observations, I positioned myself as a patron within the space, utilizing a table or desk and employing my own devices such as a laptop, alongside pen and paper for note-taking. Observations focused on how patrons used technology to carry out everyday actions such as communicating, working, browsing, and watching media content. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the spatial dynamics, I sketched the layout of the area, counting the number of tables and noting which were occupied by patrons using technological devices. These devices were categorized into two groups: personal devices (phones, laptops, tablets, flip phones, Bluetooth devices, etc.) that individuals had with them, and establishment-provided devices (self-checkout kiosks, public computers) that are fixed within the venue.

These sketches helped me orient myself within the environment and focus on the interaction between technology and the patrons using it. This process was informed by Kuznar & Werner's (2001) insights on mapping, which emphasize the role of spatial configuration in understanding social and economic behaviors:

> People's economic lives are affected by the location of resources, the areas where tasks are performed, or where exchanges take place. The social lives of people include where they sleep, where they congregate for conversation and decision making, who sits where at social functions, and the geographic location of social groups in the wider environment or residential unit (p. 205).

The theoretical framework provided by these insights on mapping offered a lens for understanding how the arrangement of physical spaces and the integration of technology within them can shape and mirror the dynamics of human activities and interactions. It fostered an examination of both the economic aspects, such as the availability of resources like those found in a library, and the social dimensions, like areas where people convene for communal activities, in these public venues.

The data gathered from the participant observations were analyzed by reviewing field notes and reflecting upon the spatial mappings produced. This analytical process documented observable behaviors and yielded insights into physical spaces and technology, and how the interactions found within these spaces influence the social contours of daily life. These insights are elaborated upon in section 5.1.

2.3. Interviews

The initial sessions of participant observation were instrumental in shaping the development of interview questions. By reflecting on the observed behaviors and interactions within public spaces, I pinpointed areas that required further exploration. This approach ensured that the study not only documented observable behaviors but probed into personal accounts from within technologically mediated environments.

For instance, while observing individuals' interacting with ICT's, I became interested in their understanding of the TOS governing the use of free Wi-Fi—particularly, whether patrons use the provided Wi-Fi or their own data plans. Since the process of agreeing to TOS cannot be directly observed, I realized this area required further attention. This was relevant for investigating the research question of how the digital experiences are shaped by corporate contexts and discourses. Consequently, I included interview questions to explore how people engage with and perceive the digital policies at Wi-Fi hotspots.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of how patrons utilized the internet, I included questions about home internet usage as well as use of technology and the internet outside private residences. Anticipating that some questions might not be relevant to all participants, I prepared a broad set of questions, allowing me to skip or modify them based on the interviewee's responses. This flexibility ensured the interviews were adaptable and could accurately capture the experiences of the participants.

I initiated the interview sessions with the question, "Tell me a bit about yourself," which was designed to allow interviewees to share as much or as little about themselves as they felt comfortable. This opener set the stage for more specific inquiries into their reliance on and usage of the internet. I explored their typical use of technology, such as whether they owned a cellphone, which devices they possessed, and which device they used most frequently. These questions were tailored to understand the materiality of their technology habits.

Further inquiries delved into people's habits and their relationship with the internet, such as whether they routinely read the TOS at access points, and if they followed a similar

practice for online platforms. These questions were followed up with the reasoning behind their choices. Another line of questioning addressed how the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted their relationship with the internet. All the questions were intended to explore different facets of digital experiences, from the materiality of the connection and proficiency in using technology to the extent of one's online civic engagement.

In designing these interviews, I drew inspiration from scholars like Marler (2021), who conducted participant observation and in-depth interviews with adults experiencing homelessness in Chicago to understand their access to and use of public internet. Similarly, Sandvig (2003) carried out ethnographic research on children's internet usage in Mexico, and Humphry (2021) examined the relationship between homeless Australian youth, mobile phones, and Wi-Fi hotspots. These studies contributed to the development of a methodological framework that emphasizes understanding personal experiences and interactions with digital technologies across contexts.

Implementation

I conducted a total of 14 interviews, which I refer to as "on-the-fly" interviews because participants were recruited directly at the site of study, rather than being pre-selected. The criteria for selecting interviewees included using a form of digital technology at the site (whether personal devices, self-ordering kiosks, or library devices), being of legal age, and providing informed consent. Before each interview, participants were presented with a consent form that detailed the study's purpose and their rights as participants.

The interviews encompassed a diverse age range, from 19-year-olds to seniors, with each session lasting approximately thirty minutes. As a gesture of appreciation for their participation, each interviewee received a $20.00 gift card.

The interview process was designed to be semi-structured, using a set of prepared questions to steer the conversations. This method is considered directive because it focuses on a predetermined topic and relies on established questions, but the semi-structured nature of the interviews also provides flexibility, allowing for spontaneous insights and thorough exploration of emerging topics (Gaudet & Robert, 2018, p. 97). This balance ensured that while specific areas of interest were systematically covered, participants also had the

opportunity to freely share their experiences and perspectives in a conversational style. During the interviews, I observed that the flow of conversation differed; some interviewees preferred a straightforward question-and-answer format, while others engaged more deeply, sharing extensive experiences in response to questions. The variation validated the effectiveness of the semi-structured format in accommodating different communication styles and depths of response.

Of the 14 interviews conducted, a majority took place at the VPL, where it was easier to recruit participants, perhaps due to the longer periods of time people visited the library. In comparison, although patrons at McDonald's also tended to sit for extended periods, the demographic mix included more groups like youth who were naturally excluded from the study, along some folks who were not using technology and thus also excluded from the study.

After each interview, I recorded notes on where the interview took place, the type of technological device that the interviewee was using at the time they were approached, and any relevant reflections that emerged post-interview. This documentation formed part of the post-interview reflection process, which included transcribing the interviews to ensure details were recorded (p. 105). This approach allowed for a rich analysis of the data, ensuring contextual nuances were preserved and considered during the evaluation phase.

For practice and actual data collection, I conducted two preliminary interviews with students from Simon Fraser University, followed by 10 interviews at the VPL and 2 at a McDonald's location. At the VPL, multiple interviewees (003, 007, 010, 011, 012) were observed using personal communication devices such as laptops, while others (004, 006, 008, 009) used library-provided computers. Interviewee 006 was also using physical DVD's from the library. At McDonald's, one interviewee (013) interacted with a self-checkout kiosk to order food, and interviewee 014 was using a mobile device. Although the formal interview count was limited to 14, my interactions at both VPL and McDonald's extended beyond these sessions. Many casual conversations with patrons—about their uses and perceptions of digital media—provided additional context. These interactions included comments like "*I don't touch Facebook, I'm too old for that*" or "*My daughter just received*

her degree online." These brief exchanges, while not included in the formal analysis, enriched my understanding of the varied ways in which people engage with the internet, revealing personal stories and perceptions of their digital experiences.

Analysis

The analysis of the interview data was organized using NVIVO12, which allowed for the systemic categorization of the data into various nodes. These nodes captured topics such as everyday ICT usage and concerns about data collection to the impact of Covid-19 on digital behaviours. These nodes were developed by identifying recurring themes from the interviews, seeking patterns in both similar and contrasting information. This process of identifying the nodes involved some trial and error. Initial themes were tested and refined based on feedback received at conferences and through further analysis of the interview data. This iterative process sharpened the focus on key areas of interest and concern among the participants. The nodes for organizing the interview data included:

- Notifications and Technology: People sharing experiences of how they experience phone notifications.
- Concern for Data Collection: Focusing on users' awareness and worries about how their data is gathered and used.
- Concern for TOS: Participants' attention to apprehension about the TOS they engage with.
- Covid-19 Impact: How the pandemic altered digital behaviors and technology use
- Democratic Involvement Online: Investigating the extent of users' engagement in online democratic processes.
- Effectiveness at Using Digital Technologies: Exploring how adept participants feel they are at utilizing digital tools.
- Everyday Use of ICT's: How participants use Information and Communication Technologies in their daily lives.
- Indifference to Data Collection: Noting any disregard towards data collection practices encountered among users.
- Indifference to TOS: Noting any disregard for TOS among participants.

- Interesting Remarks: A miscellaneous category for unique or unexpected comments that do not fit neatly into these nodes.
- Local Involvement Through ICT's: Looking at how participants use Information and Communication Technologies to engage with local community activities.
- Public Internet Usage: Documenting patterns of Internet usage of Wi-Fi in public or semi-public spaces outside of the home.
- Using Wi-Fi Outside Private Dwelling: Exploring the usage of Wi-Fi in public or semi-public spaces outside of the home.

For clarity and focus during analysis, these themes were consolidated into three main chapters. These chapters include interview data centered around: the experiences of users with internet access points and their TOS; sentiments towards data collection practices; the impact of Covid-19 on internet usage patterns; and perspectives from individuals on how they rely on internet technologies.

2.4. Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an analytical approach used to explore how power is manifested and maintained through discourses conveyed in texts (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 5). Wodak observes that those in positions of power often use language to fortify their status and further their interests. When applied to written texts, CDA can reveal themes, styles, syntax, and structure (Locke, 2004, p. 66 & 70).

Expanding upon CDA's principles, André Brock developed Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA), which specifically examines the language used in internet interfaces. Brock (2018, p. 1013) defines CTDA as a method that integrates the analysis of information technology design with the ways users create meaning (p. 1013), offering an in-depth look at the intersection of "technology, cultural ideology, and technology practice" (p. 1013).

Brock extends CDA by emphasizing the importance of not only the content but also the presentation, language, and practical application of these digital texts. In this research, CTDA serves as a tool to examine online narratives, usage contexts, and design elements,

specifically those manages by ISP's and the policies and access points. This approach was selected to unpack the ways in which digital texts are structured and interpreted, providing insights into the broader socio-technical systems that shape user interactions and experiences.

When accessing free Wi-Fi, users often come across digital policies such as TOS and User Agreements on PCDs. Connecting to the internet is a fundamental aspect of digital citizenship, yet the details of where, what, and the underlying processes of these connections are frequently overlooked in discussions about digital citizenship. This omission intensifies a gap in our understanding how digital environments function and how they are governed, which is critical for grasping the implications and responsibilities of being a digital citizen. Utilizing CTDA in this research provides a systematic approach to explore and analyze how online narratives, usage contexts, and design elements are orchestrated, particularly those facilitated by ISPs and the enforcement of Wi-Fi policies. This methodology was selected to uncover how these elements, designed by digital corporations, shape the interactions and experiences of digital users, examining the impact these structures have on digital engagement.

Implementation and Case Selection of Documents

The selection of documents for Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA) was based on the premise of comparing a corporate case (McDonald's Canada, serviced by the ISP Bell) with a municipal case (Vancouver Public Library, with an undisclosed provider). This comparative analysis seeks to illuminate how distinct entities influence experiences of connectivity. The documents chosen for this analysis include:

1. McDonald's Canada Captive Portal

2. McDonald's Canada Terms & Conditions, Bell Canada[4]

[4] I conducted a comparison of the McDonald's Wi-Fi policy across several locations in Vancouver, finding that all shared the same TOS. Additionally, I extended this comparison to a McDonald's location in Quebec, which also adhered to the same TOS. All locations visited had their Wi-Fi services provided by Bell.

3. McDonald's Canada's "Privacy Policies and Principles"
4. Vancouver Public Library Captive Portal
5. Vancouver Public Library User Agreement
6. Vancouver Public Library Use Policy

In gathering these materials, I sourced a mix of documents directly from the sites of study, capturing the immediate terms presented to users upon accessing the service. Additionally, I noted that these TOS often include links that direct users to further resources elaborating on the providers' digital policies. For McDonald's, although many digital policies are listed online, I specifically focused on websites detailing policies applicable to North America and Canada to ensure relevance to the context of the study.

Documents 2, 4, 5, 6, and 9 were obtained directly from the research locations by taking screenshots of the free Wi-Fi Terms & Services as displayed upon connecting to the network. The remaining documents were accessed through web browsers and are publicly available online, which provided a broader perspective on the digital policies in question.

Analysis

I employed two methods to analyze the documents. The first method was a thematic approach, focusing on the design and layout of the TOS. This included a visual analysis of how the TOS is presented to users upon initial connection, examining elements like layout and graphical interface. The second method involved a textual analysis of the TOS and other related online documents, aiming to understand the language and legal nuance embedded within. NVIVO12 enabled a structured approach to categorizing and analyzing the data through nodes. These nodes facilitated an organized examination of the documents in identifying and analyzing themes and patterns within the digital texts related to user rights, responsibilities, and the governance of digital interactions.

The qualitative data analysis adhered to a general framework for CDA which involves seven stages summarized by Mullet (2018): "select the discourse; locate and prepare data sources; explore the background of the texts; identify overarching themes; analyze external relations in the text; analyze the internal relations in the text; interpret the data" (p. 17)[5]. Applying CTDA improved this approach by incorporating an examination of design elements and the narrative structure of the TOS. The nodes for this analysis were developed based on recurring themes observed within policy documents. The nodes identified for thematic analysis include:

- Wi-Fi Available for Customers
- Wi-Fi Available for Public
- Connected City
- Content Limitations
- Data collection
- Developing Community
- Duties; Responsibilities of Internet user
- Internet as Resource
- Internet as 'Service'
- No information collected
- Internet as a Product
- Trust
- Unclear Conditions
- Wi-Fi Hotspot
- 3rd Parties

Some nodes integrate elements from a variety of documents, while others are specific to either the library or McDonald's policies. For instance, a prominent theme in the Vancouver Public Library's TOS and digital policies portrayed Wi-Fi as a "Resource," whereas McDonald's Canada framed it as a "Product" and additionally presented it as a

[5] Please see "A General Critical Discourse Analysis Framework for Educational Research" from Mullet (2018) and Table 2 for more detailed description of the seven stages.

"Service." This distinction formed the foundation for Chapter 3, where I look at this comparison of Wi-Fi as a Resource versus a Service in detail.

In conducting Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particular attention was given to power dynamics by dissecting the language used in these policy documents. This analysis aimed to uncover power relations by examining the legalized expressions within the documents: What language is employed, and what do these texts reveal about how corporations shape experiences of digital experiences? Utilizing Fairclough's framework, the research probes both the micro and macro levels of interpretation (1992, p. 72). At the macro level, the analysis provides insights into broader practices, such as data collection associated with free Wi-Fi usage. Meanwhile, the micro level concentrates on the content of the policies and the social significance that arises from the specific language used.

Careful consideration of both macro and micro levels helped capture tensions within these documents. On one side, they establish the terms of digital engagement, dictating how users should interact with the digital environment. On the other, they are often overlooked by the very users they are meant to govern, remaining largely unread and unrecognized in the practical usage of digital services. This dichotomy illuminates the complex relationship between digital policy frameworks and user engagement, enabling a detailed exploration of how these policies shape digital experiences.

2.5. Overview of Combined Methods

The combined use of participant observation, interviews, and CTDA in this study was carefully selected to be interdependent and mutually reinforcing. These methods reflect my intent to capture the subtleties of digital experiences. This methodological choice aligns with Etherington's (2004) perspectives on research methodology selection:

> Choosing how to do research is therefore a personal decision about what I need to do to discover what I want to know. One or more of the existing methodologies might suit my needs or I might create a new one for the specific purposes of the project I want to undertake (p. 72)

While each method provides a distinct perspective, their integration ensures a thorough exploration of digital access points by considering various angles of connectivity. While

traditional methods like CDA and participant observation established a solid analytical framework, adapting and expanding methods to include CTDA and "on-the-fly" interviews ensures the research remains attuned to developing research methods.

2.6. Methodological Constraints

Above, I justified my choice of qualitative methods to complete the study based on the research objectives. Below, I outline limitations stemming from this work's reliance on qualitative methods, the use of location-centric interviews, and the constraints imposed by this study's timeframe.

Design

The choice to employ qualitative methodologies in this study stemmed from the objective to explore technology usage, user experiences, and the governance of digital systems at access points. This approach addresses the central research question concerning the materializations of internet connectivity and experiences of citizenship. The methods effectively respond to questions of how internet experiences are organized; why they are organized in particular ways, and the implications of these arrangements. The methods were ideally suited to address issues related to the organization of digital systems, their underlying rationales, and the outcomes of these structures on users through situated research.

In effort to utilize qualitative and quantitative insights, I sought statistics from sources like the Canadian government regarding internet usage across the country. These statistics provided a macro-level view, such as the percentage of urban households with an internet connection. While such data offer a general snapshot of digital connectivity, they often overlook the nuanced, lived realities of individual experiences. Quantitative research played an important role in shaping the qualitative focus of this study. For instance, having an internet connection at home does not necessarily imply digital literacy. Relying solely on either qualitative or quantitative data could overlook overarching patterns or profound implications. This work could benefit from integrating a mixed method strategy such as

utilizing quantitative methods like surveys or content analysis (Jensen, 2011, p. 48) directly bridging the gap between macro-level statistics and lived realities of digital users.

Limitations

Conducting interviews at a public space like the library offered an overview of how different individuals, regardless of their background or demographic, interact with technology. This approach facilitated the identification of both commonalities and differences in digital experiences through targeting a specific locale. While studies like those by Marler (2021) and Sandvig (2003) offer valuable insights into the challenges and experiences of specific communities, a limitation of my research is that it was location-centric rather than demographic specific. However, this approach enabled the recruitment of a diverse range of participants, as interviewees were not pre-selected.

Another limitation is the completion of only one round of interviews without revisiting participants or adjusting the interview questions over time. Single interviews provide a glimpse of participant's perspectives, which may be valid only for a specific moment. Longer studies which include multiple rounds of interviews can capture the evolving nature of participants' experiences and perspectives. This project could benefit from refining the interview questions based on initial insights and revesting participants with revised questions.

As mentioned, the interviews were thematically organized. One reason for this is that more interviews were collected from the Vancouver Public Library. Though I included two research venues, the interview questions remained the same at both venues. With more interviews, questions could have been tailored to the specific location.

The constraints of the study's timeframe limited the depth of engagement with interviewees. Despite this constraint, the study captured an overview of people's internet experiences and addressed timely themes such as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on public spaces.

2.7. Ethical Considerations

Conducting research involving human participants necessities adherence to ethical standards to ensure to protection of participants' rights and well-being. In preparation for this study, I completed the TCPS2: CORE certification (2022), a comprehensive training on ethical conduct of research involving humans.

One ethical consideration was obtaining informed consent from all participants. As participants were recruited at the research sites, it was important to develop a robust consent form. This form outlined the study's purpose, the nature of their participation, and their rights as participants–ensuring they had the necessary information to make an informed decision about their involvement.

I opted not to audio or videorecording of the interviews. This decision aimed to cultivate a relaxed environment where participants could freely share their everyday experiences with technology without feeling surveilled. I manually transcribed the conversations, prioritizing accuracy while preserving participants' anonymity.

Maintaining participant confidentiality was another key priority. To address this, identifying information, such as names of participants are omitted.

Given the study's focus on everyday technology use, it was categorized as low risk by the Research Ethics Board, indicating that it was unlikely to distress or cause harm to participants. Additionally, to enhance transparency and allow participants to understand how their contributions shaped the research, I obtained consent to record their email address. This will enable me to share the final project with participants so they can see how their insights contributed to the research findings.

2.8. Exploring Researcher Positionality

Researchers come into a work with their own experiences and biases. Recognizing these biases are important for many reasons, one of them being to understand one's world and research better (Mortari, 2015). Etherington (2004) emphasizes the importance of

reflexivity in research, urging researchers to continually reflect on their positionality and its influence on their work (p. 11). Prior to, and during this research, I tried to confront my positionality through various literature and discussion with my academic supervisor.

A partial amount of this research stems from personal interests. My interest in this work arises from being part of a generation that remembers both before and after the ubiquity of smart phones, social media, and the influence of big data. My early encounters with the internet were communal – shared family computers, trips to the public library, and the familiar sound of a dial-up modem. Over time, I observed the transformation of communication habits, with smartphones becoming an extension to ourselves and everyday lives. These are shifts within technological landscapes and communication habits that piqued my interest to study the ever-evolving dynamics of the digital age.

My academic background in Communication programs, where studying digital media is a focal point, has undoubtedly shaped my presumptions. My experiences are also shaped by the privilege of consistent and reliable internet access, which I use for a myriad of purposes: work, education, and leisure. This privilege stuck with me throughout the research process and interviews, attempting to stay aware of disparities in digital access and experiences.

Reflecting more on the interviews: the space in which I conduct the field work, in Vancouver, is fraught with its own tensions. The city has contrast with its affluence juxtaposed by high levels of homelessness. This also influenced interactions and observations.

My personal journey as the first person in my family to attend university and graduate school also played a role, often making me feel out of place in academic settings. Etherington's assertion that research identities are fluid and not "fixed" (p. 15) resonated with me. While I have been observant of technological shifts, during this study I grew into the role of a researcher.

Throughout the research process, I grappled with questions like how do diverse individuals navigate the digital realm? How do entities like corporations shape our online experiences? What assumptions do people hold about technology, and do they challenge or reflect upon

these beliefs? By acknowledging and reflecting on my own positionality, I aimed to approach these questions with an open mind, ensuring that my research was rigorous and empathetic.

2.9. Reflections from Field Work

Engaging with participants during fieldwork was a rewarding process. I was surprised by the willingness of many patrons to take part in an interview and share their experiences. Even those who could not participate in the formal interview process exchanged a conversation about their digital experiences or wanted to learn more about the project.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews was beneficial. While I came prepared with a set of questions, the semi-structured approach allowed the participants the flexibility to engage in the conversation in an organic matter. This ensured that the conversations were informative but relevant to each participant's experiences. For example, in instances where there were questions on social media usage, if an interviewee did not participate in social media, we were able to focus on another way they used the internet. In some interviews, such as with Interviewee 005, the patron was retired and therefore shared information on how things have changed in the workplace since the influx of newer forms of digital media.

Despite the richness of the data collected, there were challenges. The breadth of topics covered in the interviews resulted in having to set aside some results to achieve a focused narrative in the thesis. A longer project could have allowed more time to explore each theme from the interviews. Please see section 6.3 for suggestions for future work based on methodological reflections.

2.10. Conclusion

This research employed an ethnographic approach, engaging with the study sites and the patrons who frequent these locations to capture the lived experiences and perspectives of digital users. This method illuminated distinct themes from the voices of individuals in urban settings where digital engagement is pervasive. The analysis of digital policies and TOS provided insights into aspects often overlooked in discussions about digital access.

The themes identified through this multi-method approach are the focal points of the subsequent chapters. These include the provisioning of the internet through comparing two access points, the overarching influence of datafication, and how patrons utilize the physical spaces that serve as internet access points.

The first two analysis chapters are structured to explore how organizations create and maintain digital experiences for patrons, specifically focusing on how these spaces provide Wi-Fi and collect data from users. This includes showcasing their digital agreements and examining interview data to understand how people respond to these practices. The final chapter delves into the agentic ways in which users utilize spaces to meet their needs, particularly during the pandemic, and explores their relationship with internet technologies. This organization begins with an examination of structural forces and people's experiences with them, and concludes with an agentic account, focusing on individuals within the research settings.

Chapter 3.

Variations in Internet Provision: *A Rich Exploration of Two Access Points*

> *READ CAREFULLY. THESE TERMS AND CONDITIONS IMPOSE OBLIGATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS UPON YOU (McDonald's Bell Mobility Wi-Fi hotspot, British Columbia, Canada)*
>
> *(...) it's a giant wall of text. Being who I am, I am too lazy to read it (...) (Interviewee 008)*

This chapter provides a detailed exploration of how two distinct access points differ in their provision of free Wi-Fi, showing the subtle yet impactful ways in which digital access points shape digital engagement for their users. By examining the captive portals and TOS at the selected study sites, it becomes clear that the internet is perceived and managed differently: as a "resource" at the Vancouver Public Library and as a "Service" at McDonald's Canada. These categorizations not only reflect the operational philosophies of each institution but also create specific conditions for digital users within these spaces. Furthermore, the governing digital agreements from Wi-Fi hotspots demonstrate that digital experiences are shaped and enabled by both physical and mediated spaces.

This chapter explores that the nature of internet provision is inherently non-neutral, examining the implications of such provisions in both community and corporate spaces from the perspectives of both providers and users. The terms 'resource' and 'Service' to describe free internet access, found in their respective TOSs, serve as a focal point to foreground the differences in how these entities conceptualize and deliver access.

The materialization of internet access varies according to the Internet Service Provider's (ISP's) approach, but despite these differences, people's use of the internet often proceeds with little regard for the nuances of these varying provisions. Through interviews, this chapter explores patrons' experiences and perceptions of digital agreements, revealing a common sentiment of having "no option" but to comply if they wish to connect to the internet. This reflects a broader issue: despite the non-neutrality of internet provision,

digital users' fundamental desire for connectivity often leads them to overlook the specifics of the conditions to which they are consenting. The tendency to prioritize access over understanding the governing terms demonstrates a need for greater transparency and user awareness regarding digital agreements at internet access points.

I begin this chapter by examining the internet as a resource, focusing on how the VPL provides it in this manner. Next, I explore the internet as a service, as exemplified by McDonald's approach. Finally, I consider the experiences of users at these hotspot locations, specifically regarding their engagement with free Wi-Fi and their interaction with the associated TOS.

3.1. The Internet as a Resource

The concept of the internet as a resource is a perspective upheld by diverse entities, ranging from international organizations to tech companies and national governments. The United Nations' Report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation stresses the fundamental human right to internet access, urging enhancements in digital cooperation that are grounded in human rights and inclusive of all (2019, p. 6). Similarly, the Mozilla Foundation, known for its open-source software initiatives like the Firefox web browser, champions universal internet access. Mozilla proposes a digital landscape where opportunities are uniformly available, promoting the internet as a shared global resource (Mozilla, n.d., para. 3). Meanwhile, the Canadian government prioritizes high-speed Internet access for its citizens, with targets set for 100% coverage by 2030, reflecting a commitment to mitigating the digital divide (Government of Canada, 2023).

These initiatives exemplify the role of the internet as a crucial resource in fostering active engagement and inclusion in society. Recognizing this is pivotal in addressing the disparities of the digital divide, such as variations in internet usage influenced by digital literacy and infrastructure availability (CIRA, 2018). This recognition advocates for a more inclusive digital environment where every individual can participate fully in societal and civic life, ultimately enhancing their overall well-being.

3.2. The Internet as a Valuable Resource at the Vancouver Public Library

Across Canada, public libraries have adapted to the digital age, expanding their services to meet the evolving needs of the public. A notable example is the Toronto Public Library, which has provided free take-home Wi-Fi kits to support low-income individuals (CBC, 2016). Similarly, the VPL emphasises the internet as an essential resource. Beyond its traditional role as a repository of books and periodicals, the VPL has broadened its offerings to include robust digital access, recognizing the internet's role in disseminating information and fostering community engagement. This strategy reflects a commitment to providing library users with access to a diverse and contemporary range of resources, positioning the internet as a critical tool for knowledge and connectivity.

Wi-Fi TOS at the Vancouver Public Library

The Vancouver Public Library offers Wi-Fi services to patrons in its commitment to providing accessible digital resources. According to their Public Internet and Computer Usage webpage, the VPL views online information resources as an integral resource for all library users:

> Vancouver Public Library considers Internet information resources an extension of our material collections for library users and one of the richest information resources available to the public. The Internet is also a participatory community space, and an important vehicle for developing community amongst library users (2015, para. 2)

By describing the internet as one the "richest information resources," VPL emphasizes its dedication to offering patrons comprehensive access to information. This perspective also reflects a broader acknowledgement of the internet's capacity to enhance individuals' quality of life by providing opportunities for education, communication, and personal and professional development.

VPL's internet connection interface for free Wi-Fi, as documented in 2022, serves as a tangible representation of their commitment to digital access, ensuring that patrons can seamlessly connect online while within the library's facilities. Their captive portal is a user-friendly and effortless connection experience for patrons. Their captive portal is below.

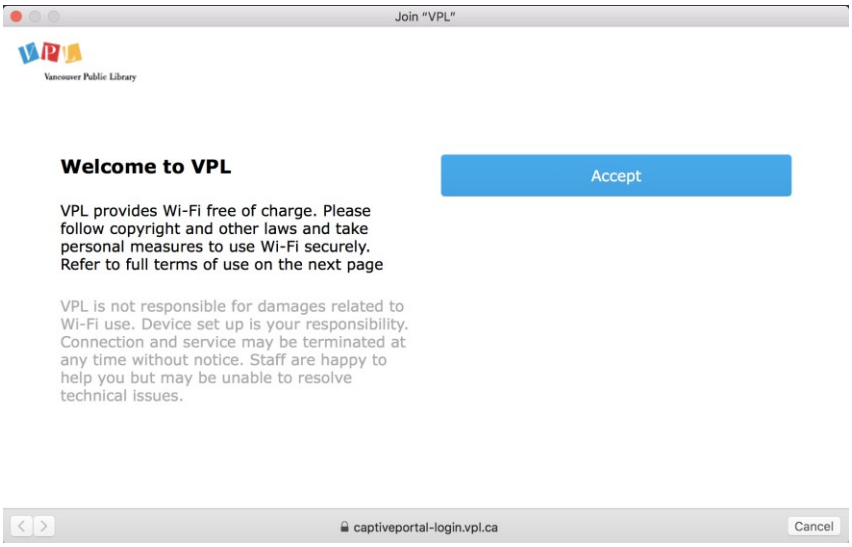


Figure 1. **Capital Portal, VPL**
Picture: Screenshot from author, on laptop, 2022

The captive portal features a blue button labeled "Accept," with minimal writing to the left-hand side. This text informs users that the Wi-Fi is free and advises them to take personal security measures. Additionally, it mentions that staff are available to assist with setting up devices, indicating that help is readily accessible within the vicinity. Upon clicking the "Accept" button, users are directed to a page displaying the Terms of Use.

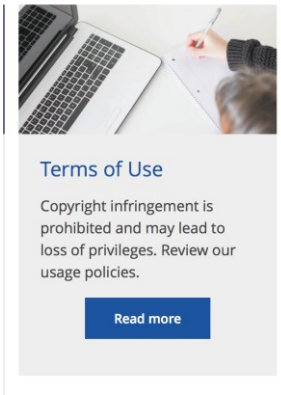


Figure 2. **Captive Portal, VPL**
Picture: Screenshot by author, web browser, 2022

After the initial landing page, the VPL presents a well-structured and user friendly Wi-Fi Terms of Use, divided into five sections: "Acceptable Use," "Equipment Configuration," "Connection Speed", "Protection and Privacy," and "Termination of Access." Each section is succinctly explained with a few lines of text, making the information digestible. This

format simplifies navigation and enforces the library's commitment to providing a comprehensive and accessible digital experience.

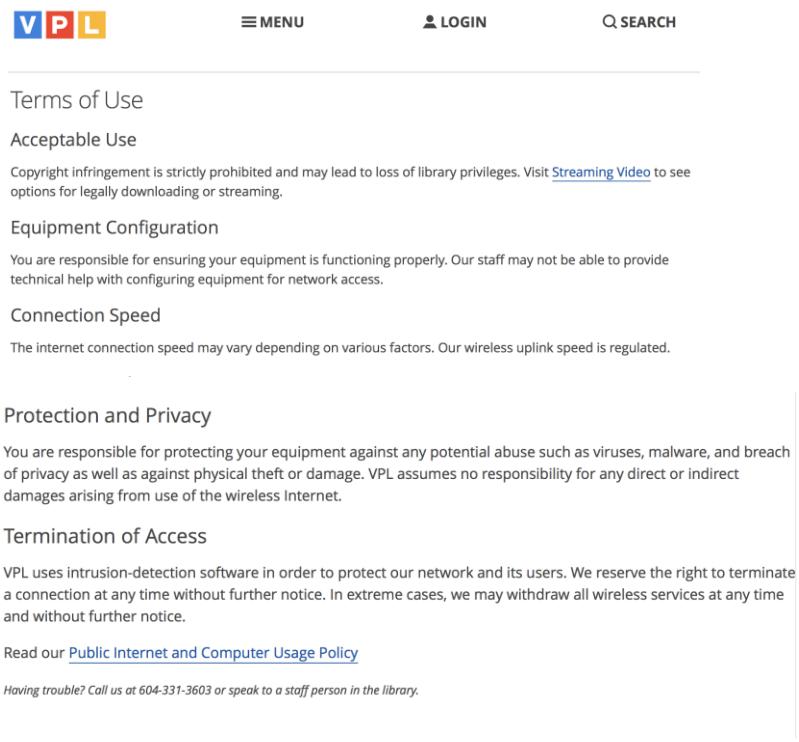


Figure 3. **Captive Portal, VPL**
Picture: Screenshot by author, web browser, 2022

In its "Public Internet and Computer Usage Policy," accessible via the Terms of Use, the VPL delineates four principal areas as part of its usage guidelines. Interestingly, although these sections provide essential information about VPL's Internet services, reading them or the Terms of Use are not a prerequisite for patrons to access the Wi-Fi service. The four areas include:

- Physical Access
- Content Access
- Acceptable Use of the Internet and Public Workstations
- Library Patrons' Rights (Vancouver Public Library, 2015).

These categories embody community-oriented principles. A significant element of VPL's community-focused approach is its emphasis on mutual respect. Analogous to the

expectation for patrons to maintain a quiet and respectful environment within the library premises, there is also a strong advocacy for responsible internet usage. This commitment to a respectful digital space is seen in policies such as, “Users must not violate the privacy of another library patron” (2015), which reinforce the library’s role as a secure and respectful environment for both physical and digital learning interactions. These terms align with VPL’s perception of the internet as a vital resource, offering straightforward connection guidelines and community-oriented terms that govern its use. Notably, the straightforward nature of these guidelines extends to how the VPL addresses concerns: they offer a direct contact point for patrons and encourage speaking with staff members, thereby fostering an open space where questions can be addressed.

The VPL does not disclose which ISP supports the free Wi-Fi service it offers. This lack of specification might give the impression that the library itself directly provides this service, contrasting with the practices of commercial entities that typically disclose their ISP partnerships. This aspect will be further explored in the following section, where I examine McDonald’s approach to internet access.

3.3. The Internet as a “Service”

The concept of the internet as a service reflects a transactional model where access is contingent upon certain conditions. This model is prevalent in settings like restaurant chains and retail stores offering Wi-Fi to customers, as well as in residential Internet services. For instance, Telus advertises on their website: “Our Vancouver internet plans have something for everyone. Whether you’re a streamer, gamer or just an everyday browser, we’ve got an internet service for you” (Telus, 2023). In these scenarios, the underlying assumption is that by subscribing and paying for the service for one’s home, users have some control over their internet usage and their personal data.

This section examines the model of "free" Wi-Fi at McDonald’s Canada, where internet access is offered at no cost but is governed by specific conditions. The analysis reveals that, although marketed as free, the Wi-Fi service embeds a series of obligations and implications for users. The Wi-Fi at McDonald’s that appears to offer convenience

functions as a regulated service with its own set of rules; there are inherent complexities in what is presented as a free service.

3.3.1. The Internet as a “Service” at McDonald’s Canada

In McDonald’s Canada, the TOS clearly classify the Internet as a “Service,” provided in partnership with Bell Mobility. This distinction is explicitly stated in the introductory paragraph of their policy:

> 1. General - The Bell Mobility Hotspot Internet service is an Internet access service provided by Bell Mobility, Inc ("Bell Mobility") which provides you with access to the Internet via a wireless access points (each a "Hotspot") utilizing one or more of the 802.11a/b/g/n proTOSols commonly referred to as "Wi-Fi" (the "Service"). (McDonald’s Canada, 2023)

This clarification sets user expectations from the outset, emphasizing that the Wi-Fi, though free, is a structured service with specific parameters. The contrast between how the Wi-Fi is presented in the initial captive portal and the document containing the TOS is striking[6]. The captive portal welcomes users with a friendly message, "McDonald’s Free Wi-Fi," alongside the Wi-Fi symbol and a welcoming note, “We hope you enjoy your visit.” This presentation may lead users to perceive the Wi-Fi differently compared to the formal and service-oriented language of the TOS. Below is an illustration of the captive portal as seen by users.

[6] The process of connecting to McDonald's Canada Wi-Fi involves navigating through a captive portal where users must accept the TOS, often without thoroughly reading them. To view the full TOS, users need to click a hyperlink provided within the captive portal, which redirects them to a more detailed document. This setup shows a tactic where the ease of clicking 'Accept' overrides the potential need to understand the detailed terms governing the service.

McDonald's Canada Free Wi-Fi

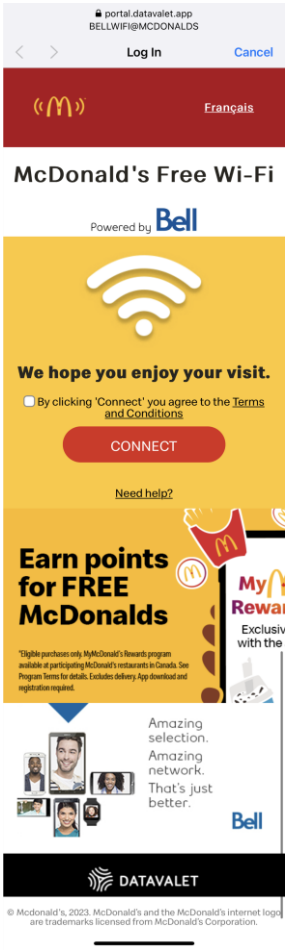


Figure 4. **Captive Portal, McDonald's Canada Free Wi-Fi**
Picture: Screenshot by author, mobile phone, 2022

Captive Portal

The captive portal at McDonald's Canada exemplifies how digital interfaces are integrated into the customer experience in contemporary fast-food chains. It features McDonald's iconic and trademarked golden arches, incorporating the Wi-Fi symbol with their company logo. Figure 4 shows a hand holding a smartphone, subtly promoting McDonald's mobile app and digital services alongside its traditional food offerings. This visual design enhances

the brand's digital presence and signals its provision of digital conveniences like free Wi-Fi and rewards systems[7].

The captive portal at McDonald's displays a reference to Datavalet at the bottom, indicating the third-party provider McDonald's and Bell collaborate with for their Wi-Fi service. A study by Ali et al. (2019) found and recorded that open access Wi-Fi hotspots, like those at McDonald's which utilize services from third parties such as Datavalet, often include trackers within their captive portals. This inclusion is a common feature designed to collect data on user interactions and behaviors. The study specifically noted a McDonald's location in Montreal, also serviced by Datavalet, demonstrating how these arrangements influence data privacy at free Wi-Fi hotspots.

TOS Agreement

The captive portal and TOS document for McDonald's Canada free Wi-Fi have been strategically designed to serve distinct purposes. The captive portal is enhances customer engagement and experience, using inviting language and visuals to promote the brand and its offerings. The TOS document focuses on legal protections and provides guidelines for using the service, adopting a more formal and comprehensive tone. This document outlines responsibilities and limitations associated with the Wi-Fi service through 14 clauses of varying lengths, addressing different aspects of the service, and forming a thorough legal framework.

The mention of Datavalet on McDonald's captive portal reveals that the TOS at McDonald's is influenced by this third-party provider. Unlike the more uniform approach of the Vancouver Public Library, McDonald's outsources the management of its legal documentation to Datavalet. Consequently, the TOS can vary across locations, reflecting Datavalet's template rather than a single, standardized set of terms from McDonald's itself.

[7] Furthermore, in store, McDonald's extends its digital engagement through physical installations like self-order kiosks. These kiosks represent a growing trend in self-service technology that allows customers to interact with the business in a more autonomous and digital manner (Castro et al., 2010). The integration of these kiosks, along with features such as loyalty points systems and digital promotional activities, showcases McDonald's as a brand that is adept at blending technology with its traditional fast-food service, positioning itself within the digital landscape.

While many clauses from the McDonald's hotspot visited for this study are found on Datavalet's website, users might not realize this, potentially leading them to assume the terms originate from McDonald's. The inclusion of specific details like location and Bell Mobility in the TOS gives the impression that these entities directly govern the terms, obscuring the involvement of a third-party provider like Datavalet. This arrangement shows the layered nature of internet governance at such public access points.

The introduction to the TOS at the McDonald's Canada Bell Mobility Wi-Fi hotspot sets a specific, binding tone right from the start with the words:

READ CAREFULLY. THESE TERMS AND CONDITIONS IMPOSE

OBLIGATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS UPON YOU (McDonald's Bell Mobility Wi-Fi hotspot, British Columbia, Canada)

One way this binding tone is achieved is through the use of capital letters to allude to the seriousness of the terms, creating an impression of formality and obligation. This stylistic choice emphasizes the seriousness of the agreement and the responsibilities and liabilities associated with using the "Service." The use of uppercase letters conveys a sense of authority and legal weight, effectively reminding users of the binding nature of the terms they are agreeing to.

The TOS document for McDonald's Canada Wi-Fi presents clauses that should be essential for users to understand the security and privacy implications of using the service. Below, clauses 6 and 9 are included for their emphasis on the user's responsibility regarding security and privacy:

- Hotspots represent additional security risks as compared with wired Internet connection because access to your compatible device is possible without being physically connected to your device, therefore, it is strongly recommended (and it is your responsibility to) ensure that the configuration of your device is secure (Clause 6)
- Your messages may be the subject of unauthorized third party interception and review (Clause 9)

- Bell Mobility has no obligation to monitor the Service. However, you agree that Bell Mobility reserves the right to monitor the Service electronically from time to time and to disclose any information necessary to satisfy any laws, regulations or other governmental request or as necessary to operate the Service or to protect itself or others", (Clause 9)

Clause 6 targets the heightened security risks of Wi-Fi hotspots. It advises users on the critical need to secure their devices, noting that the nature of wireless connections allows for potential unauthorized access without physical contact. This clause recommends that users proactively secure their device settings to protect their data from potential threats.

Clause 9 summarizes the possibility of unauthorized third-party interception and review of user messages. It warns users about the potential lack of privacy in their communications over the Wi-Fi network, emphasizing the importance of exercising caution with the information they transmit. This clause also notes that while Bell Mobility does not routinely monitor the Wi-Fi service, it reserves the right to do so and may disclose any information necessary to satisfy legal requirements, operate the service, or protect itself and others. However, the clause provides vague details regarding the circumstances under which Bell Mobility would exercise these rights, leaving users uncertain about the specifics of data disclosure.

These clauses place significant responsibility on users to protect their privacy and secure their data when connected to McDonald's Wi-Fi. While they outline the need for vigilance and proactive security measures, they also introduce a paradox: the requirement for security practices may conflict with the convenience of quickly connecting to Wi-Fi in a fast-paced environment. This tension reveals the complexity of maintaining privacy and security at public access points.

Force Majeure Clause

Toward the end of the TOS, a "force majeure" clause is included—common in service agreements to address liability under extraordinary circumstances (The Office of the Procurement Ombudsman, 2021). Clause 14 states:

> In no event shall Bell Mobility be liable for any failure to comply with these Terms and Conditions if such failure results from any condition or event

> beyond the reasonable control of Bell Mobility, including, but not limited to, fire, flood, earthquake, any elements of nature or acts of God, theft, riot, strike or other labour disturbance, power failure or war (Clause 14).

The inclusion of a force majeure clause in the Wi-Fi service terms provided by Bell Mobility at McDonald's Canada serves as a legal safeguard for the company, explicitly stating that it will not be held accountable for service disruptions or failures arising from events beyond its control. This provision is designed to protect Bell Mobility from liabilities in scenarios such as natural disasters, social unrest, or other unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances.

The clause outlines Bell Mobility's limited liability approach, clearly signaling an intention to minimize its responsibilities under various conditions. It remains ambiguous whether their inability to comply with the TOS pertains solely to the provision of internet service or also includes managing unforeseen factors, such as third-party interventions, as mentioned in Clause 9. This lack of clarity denotes the broad scope of the force majeure clause, potentially covering seemingly every circumstance that could impact service delivery and user privacy.

The implications of this clause are crucial. It informs how users should perceive the reliability of the service and their own data privacy during disruptions, and this clause includes virtually any unforeseen event— overall alluding to the unpredictable nature of digital services provided under such terms.

Although force majeure clauses are standard in some contracts to protect companies, their inclusion in Wi-Fi service agreements, such as those at McDonald's Canada, emphasizes the unpredictable nature of access points. This presents a dilemma for digital citizenry, where users must navigate how to responsibly use services that may change under unforeseen circumstances. Moreover, the obligation to thoroughly understand such extensive TOS—especially when they include complex clauses like above—can be a daunting and time-consuming task for users.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) implemented an internet Code in 2020 to assist customers in understanding Internet

services, especially those offered by major service providers like Bell Canada (CRTC, 2022). The code mandates that ambiguous terms in service agreements should be interpreted in favor of the customer (Section A). Despite this, the complex legal jargon and explicit obligations used in the McDonald's Canada documents pose challenges for users, complicating their ability to interpret the terms to their advantage. This discrepancy signals a gap between the regulatory intent to protect consumers and the actual comprehensibility of the terms for users.

3.4. Encountering the "Giant Wall of Text"

The TOS digital users "agree" to happen so closely to them: they are directly on devices, an immediate part of connecting to Wi-Fi, yet they also feel like they are happening a million miles away—distant and disconnected from daily interactions. The immediacy of connecting to the internet at access points contrasts with the distance and lack of engagement with the TOS. For instance, at the time of this study, at both the VPL and McDonald's, users could accept their Wi-Fi access without viewing the full TOS or User Agreements. This practice shows a common experience where these documents are presented in a way where their significance and implications can be overlooked.

I talked to patrons at these spaces about their experiences of connecting to free Wi-Fi, and a range of sentiments were expressed. The following section will look more closely at responses. The interview question regarding this theme was: "Do you read the terms and services before agreeing to connect to free Wi-Fi? Why or why not?" The responses included sentiments of: 1) general indifference towards reading the TOS, 2) cautious engagement with them, and 3) in rare cases, outright avoidance of public Wi-Fi.

Here are the sentiments summarized:

- **Indifference:** Many interviewees accept TOS without reading them, often because they find them too long and complex, or they simply lack interest in the details.
- **Cautious Engagement:** Some interviewees skim or partially read through the terms, typically looking for key points or basic implications of their agreement.

- **Avoidance:** A smaller number of interviewees avoid using public Wi-Fi altogether, citing concerns over privacy and security.

Although most participants admitted to not reading the TOS, the spectrum of responses shows the broader challenges of digital literacy and reveals some complexities users face when navigating digital services.

The "No Option" Sentiment

In this section, I explore a sentiment shared from interviewees who visit digital access and feel compelled to accept the TOS to gain internet access, which I term the "no option" sentiment. Many respondents admitted to a lack of understanding or concern regarding how their data might be used or monitored at access points. This brings forth significant dynamic at digital access points and their patrons, where the ISP sets terms that the latter feels compelled to accept. Users, especially those without legal or technical expertise, may feel they lack the influence or knowledge to understand, challenge, or negotiate these terms–also raising concern about digital literacy.

At McDonald's Canada, the comprehensive legal language and detailed conditions outlined in their Wi-Fi service terms are difficult to read and understand in one sitting. Similarly, at the VPL, while the Wi-Fi is presented as a public benefit, the requirement to accept terms to gain access reflects a similar sense of limited choice. Although the library offers patrons the chance to discuss the terms with a staff member, many may not be aware of this option. Interviews revealed that people experience a sense of inevitability when confronted with digital terms of service, viewing them as non-negotiable. This sentiment may stem from the necessity of internet access for essential tasks such as work, education, or personal communication. This common practice of accepting TOS at internet hotspots, without fully understanding them indicates a routine acceptance of this process, reinforcing a feeling of having no alternative.

This sense of inevitability suggests a dilemma for the experience of citizenship, particularly in balancing connectivity with digital governance. It also demonstrates the hegemonic influence from internet service providers, where power structures are embedded within media and communication systems (Mosco, 1996). Examining the role of the ISPs shows

the complexities of digital governance from a structuration perspective, where users are placed in a passive role, making the choice to use Wi-Fi services more about expedience than informed consent. The need for connectivity can overshadow critical engagement with the terms governing access. This dynamic raise questions about the power balance between digital service providers and users, and the extent to which individuals can assert digital rights. The following interview data outlines these concerns.

When asked, "Do you read the terms and services before agreeing to connect to free Wi-Fi? Why or why not?", Interviewee 003 shared:

> Sub: No. I should. The lack of care comes from not knowing the risks as much as I should. It's a lot of reading and time. If I am doing something, I'll just utilize the free tool of Wi-Fi. I have a blind trust in the tool. But I won't check my banking. (Interviewee 003)

This response reflects disinterest in engaging with TOS while also coupled with a recognition that there may be risks involved they are not fully aware of. Comments from other interviewees include:

> Int: Do you read the terms and services before agreeing to connect to free Wi-Fi? Why or why not?
>
> Sub: Only a little bit of it. Because it's a giant wall of text. Being who I am, I am too lazy to read it. (Interviewee 008)
>
> Sub: No. I just connect. I don't know. For example, here is Tim Horton's Wi-Fi, I just connect. (Interviewee 012)
>
> Sub: I browse through, but there's a lot to read. Sometimes I look at the short ones, but most of them are too much to read. (Interviewee 014).

The prevailing sentiment among interviewees was a lack of time, or a feeling of reluctance to engage with the TOS based on its length. As such, a question arises: is it a matter of individual "laziness", or are the TOS themselves—such as those detailed in the McDonald's Canada example—presented in a way that hinders responsible and realistic engagement?

As I explored these varying perspectives, it was clear that what constitutes sensitive information can differ significantly from person to person, influenced by individual

circumstances. For instance, while one individual may prioritize the privacy of their email content, another focuses on the security of their financial transactions (Interviewee 003), demonstrating the subjective nature of what is deemed sensitive:

> Int: Do you read the terms and services before agreeing to connect to free Wi-Fi? Why or why not?
>
> Sub: Usually not, if connecting to free Wi-Fi, it's not related to work, so I don't care about data privacy (Interviewee 006)
>
> Sub: Usually, I don't. I read just the top. Not the details. Quite honestly because of VPN, I have a secure connection and server. The free Wi-Fi grants access if you accept their conditions. It's for your safety. (Interviewee 004).

Some interviewees were outliers in reviewing the TOS. Interestingly, those in tech professions such as software development, expressed concerns about safety, choosing not to use free Wi-Fi due to perceived risks.

> Int: Do you read the terms and services before agreeing to connect to free Wi-Fi? Why or why not?
>
> Sub: I review it fast for the titles. Like the bold title. To be honest, I don't read everything, but I am looking for something interest, or something strange. The language they use to write these are very standard. These terms are very standard. If they state they're "using data" that's a red flag and I won't connect (Interviewee 010, Software Engineer).
>
> Sub: Yes, I read them. It's comfortable to read them before using the Wi-Fi (Interviewee 007).

Despite varying levels of awareness and concern about the terms governing Wi-Fi use, another pivotal factor that often comes into play for users is the quality of the connection itself.

> Int: Do you rely on the Internet provided for in public places?
>
> How would you describe your relationship with these places?
>
> Sub: I use McDonald's Wi-Fi, Starbucks, and Tim Horton's Wi-Fi. And here, the library. I like these spaces. When finding a café with Wi-Fi, it is really important point if there is Wi-Fi and if it is good. Like if I am at Tim Horton's and the Wi-Fi is bad, I move.

Connecting to Wi-Fi often involves a trade-off: immediate access for compliance with specified terms. As revealed in the interviews, people's attitudes towards this trade-off vary; some appreciate or depend on the access provided, and enjoy the spaces, while others choose to secure their privacy through VPN or understanding the TOS. This trade-off is stated in the Bell Mobility McDonald's Canada TOS, which illustrate the non-negotiable nature of these agreements.

> By accessing the Service, you agree to the terms and conditions contained in these Terms and Conditions. If you do not wish to be bound by these terms and conditions, you may not access or use the Service. Bell Mobility may modify these Terms (McDonald's Canada, 2023, Clause 1)
>
> Additionally, it states:
>
> If you do not agree to any modification of these Terms and Conditions, you agree that you will be unable to use the Service (Clause 1) Canada)

This arrangement showcases a "take it or leave it" scenario where users must consent to the terms as they are—or forego the service entirely. Moreover, the terms themselves are subject to change[8], which means that even after agreeing, users might find themselves bound by new rules they have not explicitly accepted. This conveys a significant power imbalance: users often consent to terms not out of agreement, but necessity, prompting questions about the true intent and fairness behind such corporate practices in providing internet access.

3.5. Overview: Assessing TOS and Free Internet Access

This chapter explored the VPL and McDonald's Canada provision of internet access, looking at their provision of internet as a resource or "service". The chapter included analyzing captive portals, external communications (such as websites), and the TOS or User Agreements. The provision of free internet materializes through an array of portals

[8] Users at Bell Mobility McDonald's Canada Wi-Fi hotspot are expected to occasionally read the TOS: "You agree to periodically review the then—current Terms and Conditions in order to be aware of any modifications and your continued use of the Service shall be deemed to be your acceptance of the modified Terms and Conditions. If you do not agree to any modification of these Terms and Conditions, you agree that you will be unable to use the Service" (Clause 1).

and documents which include different types of statements, clauses, and obligations. Furthermore, the provision of the Wi-Fi reflects the priorities of the providers, but both the legal clauses and the nature of the internet are often unnoticed by users. By examining both the provision of internet access from a structuration perspective and the tendency of patrons to bypass the TOS from the user perspective, a gap emerges between users' desires for straightforward internet access and the legal frameworks that govern it.

Despite the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission's (CRTC) mandate for clear communication in service provisions (2022, Section A), the legal language used in places like the Bell Mobility hotspot at McDonald's falls short of these standards. Future research might further engage directly with companies or policymakers to encourage and uphold accessible terms. Below, I outline key themes from the two TOS looked at in this chapter.

Community-Oriented vs. Data-Oriented Approaches

The contrast between the VPL's community-oriented terms and the data-centric approaches of entities like McDonald's Canada is stark. The library emphasizes respect for communal spaces and responsible resource use, indicative of its role as a public-serving institution. Conversely, a commercial entity like McDonald's focuses on individual data usage and legal protections, prioritizing personal responsibility and data management.

The VPL's portal is streamlined for ease of use, encouraging users to connect with minimal interaction with TOS. In contrast, McDonald's Canada's portal incorporates brand advertisements, along with TOS that include lengthy legal jargon. The design allows users to bypass the TOS to gain access, raising concerns about whether individuals fully understand what they are "agreeing" to.

User Engagement with Wi-Fi TOS

Despite the different strategies employed in Wi-Fi provision, a common theme emerged among interviewees: a general disengagement with the TOS associated with public Wi-Fi access. The desire for securing immediate internet connectivity often outweighs the inclination to read and understand the legal specifics of these agreements. Interestingly,

even among those working in tech-related fields, there was a notable reluctance to engage deeply with these terms which govern the nature of the free Wi-Fi. This disinterest indicates challenges in digital literacy and points to a need for clearer, more transparent digital agreements that can be easily understood and negotiated by users.

3.6. Conclusion

The provision of Wi-Fi can vary between venues. In this comparison, the nature of Wi-Fi provision was influenced by whether it is presented as a "resource" in the VPL or a "service" in commercial spaces like McDonald's. This non-neutrality is vital as it subtly but significantly influences user experiences. For example, public libraries generally adopt a community-oriented approach, promoting accessibility and offering direct assistance to users, which enhances communal benefit. Conversely, commercial venues like McDonald’s employ a data-oriented approach with legally binding terms that can be complex and difficult for users to navigate, potentially affecting their perceptions of privacy and utility.

The next chapter explores these data-oriented terms of service, further examining their implications for the responsibilities and rights of digital users. It particularly addresses concerns surrounding data collection practices embedded within digital agreements, considering their implications and ethical dilemmas.

Chapter 4.

How Spaces of Access Occupy People: *Spaces of Access and Datafication*

> *"I can't avoid it. I kind of have to accept it. It's the price to pay to access these services: that they're gaining this information." (Interviewee 013).*

The previous chapter focused on the ways free internet provision can be shaped, emphasizing that the internet is not a neutral resource. It looked at how free internet access TOS are often presented in a manner that users engage with superficially, containing the specific clauses or risks such as third-party control as outlined in the McDonald's Canada TOS. This chapter moves further into a pervasive aspect of digital experiences—datafication. Datafication refers to people's online being mined for value, a practice entrenched by digital entities (Mejias & Couldry, 2019; Srnicek, 2017; Zuboff, 2019).

Datafication creates a complex terrain for the experience of citizenship. Internet users are engulfed in a sea of targeted content, echo chambers, and often involuntary data collection. This environment presents a contradiction between the ideal of the informed, responsible "digital citizen" and the reality of individuals treated as data sources. A recurring theme from the previous chapter was the privacy concerns inherent in free, public internet services, calling attention to how people often accept the terms due to the desire for connectivity. In this chapter, I explore what materialization of internet connectivity reveals about experiences of citizenship through focusing on digital users as data sources. I consider two dimensions of digital connectivity: the physical 'where' of access, such as public Wi-Fi, and the 'what' of online activities, from social interactions to content consumption. Both dimensions are subject to data collection, illustrating how digital experiences are layered through multiple dimensions of interaction.

I begin by addressing how interviewees perceive data collection that occurs through online interactions. I integrate interview data with literature on datafication to discuss the complexities of citizens being treated as data sources, along with how this impacts rights and responsibilities within digital spaces. Furthermore, this data collection, which occurs

from internet providers, social media platforms, and other platforms, becomes normalized by the users. This raises critical questions: How do their responsibilities shift based on where people access the internet and what services they use? How can individuals effectively fulfill their roles as "digital citizens" within these scenarios? This analysis unpacks the dynamic between individual actions, regulatory frameworks, and the nature of data collection, offering insights into the lived experiences of those navigating digital landscapes.

4.1. Exploring Interviewee Responses to Data Collection

Building on the theme of Chapter 3, which investigated whether interviewees read the TOS at Wi-Fi hotspots, the interview questions also examined patrons' interactions with data policies from online platforms and applications they use. This inquiry aimed to understand how big data impacts digital technology users, balancing its role for businesses in the digital era against the repercussions for individuals, who the face data collection. I asked,

> Do you read the terms and services and or community guidelines for the social media sites you use?
>
> Are you concerned with the data collection that happens when using services?

The first question aims to gauge how interviewees engage with the legal and community frameworks governing their online activities, while the second seeks to understand their thoughts and concerns about the data collection practices they encounter. The responses are categorized into three main groups:

Indifference: Interviewees in this group typically do not engage deeply with TOS documents or data collection practices, either due to a lack of interest or an acceptance of the inevitability of these practices, or a belief that data collection is not particularly harmful.

Ambivalence: Those in this category may have mixed feelings about data collection. They might skim through TOS documents or have some concerns about privacy and data usage

but feel uncertain about the implications or feel powerless to change them. They may also express that their level of concern varies depending on their online activities.

Concern for Data Collection: This group includes interviewees who are worried about how their data is collected and used. They tend to more thoroughly express apprehension about the privacy and security of their personal information.

This section presents these perspectives organized by thematic categories to explore the relationship between internet users and the data-driven frameworks that shape their online experiences. Themes were developed through narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008), which involved deriving meaning from people's experiences, coding themes, and paying attention to recurring patterns. These categories are expanded upon starting on page 66.

Indifference to Data Collection

Several interviewees displayed a nonchalant attitude towards the data collection practices of the platforms they use. For instance, Interviewee 012, with a background in nursing and recent studies in language, acknowledges not reading TOS, comparing it to her approach to using new appliances:

> Int: Do you read the terms and services and or community guidelines for the social media sites you use?
>
> Are you concerned with the data collection that happens when using services?
>
> Sub: I know how to use it {the social media service}, so I don't read it. When I buy a microwave, I don't read the book for it, I just use it (Interviewee 012).

She also mentioned never considering the implications of data collection, a sentiment echoed by Interviewee 007. In the case of Interviewee 012, they appear to consider the TOS as a guideline on how to use the service.

Similarly, Interviewee 004 accepts the TOS without much scrutiny, primarily due to the extensive reading required, and states,

> I'm not concerned in a negative way (Interviewee 004).

Interviewees 012, 007, and 004 indicated a general acceptance towards TOS and the data collection practices of the digital services they use.

An interesting perspective on data collection comes from Interviewee 006, a tech company leader, who provided a view on the anonymity and utility of aggregated data:

> They can take any data. All data being collected slaps individualism in the face. All your photos, in iCloud, no one man is looking at it. It's just aggregates. It improves the services in more ways than may hurt it. Even targeted advertisements, it's just flags. It's not pure recognition. It's anonymous. ***It's not processed by a human.*** Let's say there are 10 Mercedes, an algorithm will say there's another Mercedes in Vancouver, not Jessica has a Mercedes. It's all about the numbers, more than the individual. I might be wrong, but it's about stuff being done rather. It's not Zach ate there, but 10 people ate there. Your habits are added to an interest group. It's possible it's more specific, but it's not easily possible to target back. That would be costly and ineffective. Most data collection is about making money. Individual information is not useful. ***Most people concerned with data collection don't understand it***. (Interviewee 006).

This perspective suggests that concerns about data collection often stem from a lack of understanding about how it works.

Ambivalence

Next, we delve into mixed feelings concerning data collection, recognizing its prevalence but feeling uncertain about its implications. For example, Interviewee 005 noted a lack of concern unless researching sensitive topics, indicating a context-dependent awareness of privacy issues. Interviewee 009 expressed a desire for a balanced approach to data usage, recognizing its utility in certain scenarios like security but advocating for privacy in others.

> Interviewee 005, conveyed a nuanced view by stating,
>
> Int: Are you concerned by data collection?
>
> No. I am not looking up how to make a bomb. But it depends on where I am. If it was looking up Hiroshima, I would be nervous about the data collection (Interviewee 005)

This response suggests that while generally indifferent, their concern can escalate depending on the sensitivity of the information they are accessing.

Similarly, Interviewee 009 expressed a sense of helplessness mixed with a desire for a balanced approach to data privacy, noting,

> In this area, I feel powerless. There are some things I do, where I think, they don't need to know, or sell to 3rd parties. But I believe in balance. For example, it should be used for a terrorist, but not for all (Interviewee 009).

This spotlights a sentiment among users who recognize the potential necessity of data collection in certain contexts while still feeling uncomfortable about the breadth of data sharing and usage.

Interviewee 010, a software developer, and entrepreneur, noted the inevitability of data usage by platforms but did not express concern due to his work in blockchain, which advocates for data ownership and user control. When asked about engagement with TOS for the platforms he uses, particularly Instagram, Interviewee 010, remarked:

> It doesn't matter, but we all know they're using our data (Interviewee 010).

This comment reflects that data collection is a norm within social media platforms. Despite not reading the TOS, Interviewee 010 is conscious of how data is handled. He also shared insights from his professional focus, stating:

> My main field of activity is Blockchain and decentralization in future, where you can choose with who you want to share your data. In a way, own your data. Choose to share what you have and with who (Interviewee 010).

Interviewee 010's perspective features a movement toward developing systems that allow individuals to retain ownership and control over their data. Yet, for interviewee 010, the acceptance that existing platforms will use his data remains an understood and accepted norm, illustrating a dual acknowledgment of both acceptance to current practices and action towards creating alternative platforms.

Overall, the responses categorized as ambivalent convey the complexity people experience regarding online privacy and data collection, reflecting a struggle to reconcile the benefits of technological advances with the potential risks and violations of personal privacy.

Concern for Data Collection

The active concern for data collection was articulated strongly by several interviewees, particularly those who had become aware of the implications through education or personal experiences. These accounts illustrate the personal and profound implications of digital data practices. Interviewee 003, a student, described feeling dehumanized by targeted advertising and data practices, which she learned about within an academic setting. Interviewee 008 distrusted certain platforms known for selling data to third parties, and Interviewee 013, a parent and government worker, voiced concerns about protecting her family's privacy, particularly in relation to her child who is a minor.

Interviewee 003 mentioned a personal experience where an advertisement appeared based on a conversation, intensifying her concerns about privacy and the ethical implications of data use.

> Int: Are you concerned by data collection?
>
> Now I am. I learned about data collection in a class at [retracted] college.
>
> I am aware of it being collected from apps. It's a breach. I wouldn't say breach, actually. It's data collected for the sake of profit. They create a perfect profile on what to sell to you. You are no longer a consumer: a pawn essentially. It's quite dehumanizing. My friend was talking about something and the next day I saw an ad for that. It was for periods. The ad came up based on our speech. There's the joke that an FBI man is watching. When you look into what they are collecting, kids and stuff don't know what they're saying yes to. There's ethics behind this. What was supposed to be a tool is now a tool for capitalism (Interviewee 003).

When inquired about her engagement with the TOS of the platforms she utilized, she responded with:

> No not really.
>
> It comes from knowing I don't post hate speech (..).

Interviewee 008, despite not regularly reading TOS, expressed distrust towards certain established platforms like Google, citing concerns about their data-sharing practices with third parties:

> Google can do sketchy things. They sell to 3rd parties. I am aware and concerned about that.

Interviewee 011 differentiated his trust based on the platform's popularity, stating he generally trusts well-known platforms and is more likely to scrutinize lesser-known ones.

> Int: Do you read the terms and services and or community guidelines for the social media sites you use?
>
> A: As far as it is a popular platform, I don't read it. If it's a new platform or not popular, I prefer to read the terms and services. I trust the popular platforms.

Moreover, his concern about data collection varies depending on the type of data involved.

> Int: Are you concerned with the data collection that happens when using services?
>
> A: Depends on what type of data, if it's personal, yes I am concerned.

Interviewee 013, a government worker and parent, voiced concerns about data collection, particularly regarding her family's privacy. She avoids using many apps to protect her data and expressed frustration over unauthorized sharing of her child's photos by relatives.

> Int: Do you read the terms and services and or community guidelines for the social media sites you use?
>
> A: I don't read them.
>
> They're really long. Years ago, I tried to read them. But they're boring and long.
>
> Int: Are you concerned with the data collection that happens when using services?
>
> A: Yes, I am concerned. I don't like it. Which is actually why I don't use more apps.
>
> It's really hard to avoid it. For example, I use Google, and then of course Gmail, if I use them, I can't avoid it. I kind of have to accept it. It's the price to pay to access these services, that they're gaining this information (...) It has made me more cautious of the Internet. I am nervous about the collection. As a parent, I am concerned because my child is a minor.
>
> I don't want them providing their data when they're too young to understand what it means.

> I get mad, angry when people post of my kid. Sometimes my extended family posts pictures. I had decided not to.
>
> My kid is 10 years old, this isn't a teenager.
>
> These pictures are always there for people to access, years from now too.

Interviewee 014 shared an incident where her sister's data was hacked while using a public Wi-Fi, which led to professional and personal complications, flagging impacts of data breaches.

> Int: Are you concerned with the data collection that happens when using services?
>
> A: Yeah, because it's weird.
>
> My sister, her got hacked. And she works for [retracted]. She was using her laptop in a café. It got her into trouble at work. And the people who pay her. They took her personal information, and their personal information.

A Critical Analysis on Perspectives of Data Collection:

This section will explore the themes emerging from these responses, and examine how different experiences and understandings shape the narrative around data collection and digital experiences.

Contrasting Views from Tech Creators and Users and the Influence of Technological Biases: Technology professionals like Interviewee 006 and 010 typically viewed data collection as an unavoidable component of digital use. They displayed a nuanced understanding, though sometimes mixed with acceptance, about data practices (Interviewee 010). In contrast, people who do not work in the tech sector, such as students and parents (example: Interviewee 003, 013, 014), express significant concerns about privacy and the personal repercussions of data usage, as long as the repercussions for family members (Interviewee 013 and 014). This division stresses the differing levels of concern regarding data practices based on one's proximity to technology creation versus consumption, emphasizing a gap between those who design digital systems and those who use them.

The perspectives offered during the interviews suggest that even those within the tech industry may underestimate the implications of data collection, reflecting industry biases. Works like Noble's (2018) *Algorithms of Oppression* and Benjamin's (2019) *Race After Technology* challenge the supposed neutrality of technological advancements by demonstrating how they can perpetuate existing societal biases. This challenges the assumption held by some tech "insiders" that concerns over data practices stem from public misunderstandings of technology.

Metaphors and Realities of Data Surveillance: The metaphor of an "FBI man watching," used by Interviewee 003, captures public concerns about personal data management, symbolizing common fears about privacy violations. This metaphor portrays the anxiety someone may feel about being under constant surveillance due to data collection practices. The theme of data collection emerged strongly particularly with Interviewees 003 and 006. Interviewee 006 attempts to dispel concerns by emphasizing that data collection is mostly automated and does not involve direct human oversight. However, Interviewee 003's metaphor humorously but pointedly conveys the personal impact of targeted advertising, suggesting a sense of being watched.

The dichotomy between the impersonal nature of data algorithms, as described by Interviewee 006, and the personal experiences of surveillance, as felt by Interviewee 003, captures the complexities of datafication. While technical explanations suggest that data processes are neutral and benign, the emotional response from users often reflects a different story—marking concerns about privacy and the potential misuse of personal information.

This discourse resonates with the theories put forward by Hintz et al. (2019), who assert that datafication results in enhanced surveillance of citizens, echoing the metaphor of an "FBI man watching." The vivid personal stories and metaphors relayed by the interviewees spotlight the effect of data surveillance on personal perceptions of privacy. These narratives bring a human dimension to abstract data collection concepts, illustrating how these practices are experienced daily by individuals and reinforcing the need for a critical examination of digital surveillance and its impacts.

Engagement with TOS: User engagement with these digital agreements varies significantly. Some individuals, like Interviewee 012, believe they understand the service well enough to skip reading them, while others find their complexity and length daunting. This situation aligns with Draper and Turow's concept of "digital resignation," where users feel powerless against the mechanisms of data collection and surveillance, leading to passive acceptance rather than active resistance. Draper and Turow (2019) explore the barriers posed by privacy policies, giving prominence to their lengthy and complex language (p. 8), which contributes to a sense of helplessness among users. They coin the term "digital resignation" to describe the feeling of powerlessness among users regarding surveillance and privacy. Digital resignation often involves an inability to act: “One implication of the corporate cultivation of digital resignation is that it turns individual concerns about surveillance and privacy inward, leading individuals toward confusion and indecision (rather than toward collective action)” (p. 10). As pointed out, this sense of resignation typically results in confusion, deterring any action against digital policies.

The routine acceptance of TOS without full reading or understanding, as researched in a study by Obar and Oeldorf-Hirsch (2018), reveals the difficult-to-maneuver framing and presentation of digital agreements. This study involved 543 undergraduate students who interacted with the TOS of a fictional social media platform. 74% of these students consented to the TOS without reading them, despite the inclusion of an absurd clause requiring the surrender of their first-born child for service access. Only 15% of participants raised any concerns about the policies, and 1.7% noticed the extreme child clause. This lack of engagement with governing documents is attributed to their length and the ubiquity of such documents, which discourage thorough reviews.

Digital resignation (Draper & Turow, 2019) brings forth a systemic issue: privacy policies are not merely a personal challenge but represent a concern that demands comprehensive policy and procedural reforms. Interviews conducted for this project also revealed this resignation felt by users, driven by the complexities involved in understanding data collection policies, in both the digital agreements for social media services, along with the TOS at Wi-Fi hotspots. Digital agreements can appear at different levels of connection: from Wi-Fi access points to the platforms used while online. Experiences of datafication

and their implications for citizenship are therefore layered as people's experiences of connectivity materialize in multiple ways. Despite the need for more transparent digital policies, it is also important to consider what this might look like when people encounter multiple services and how this can impact their ability to stay informed about the platforms they use.

4.2. Complexities of Datafication and Privacy

This section explores the concept of datafication, focusing on the extensive gathering of personal data as discussed by Birch in "Data Enclaves" (2023). Birch differentiates between personal data and more generated data such as health records (p. 22) and outlines that personal data can be both actively provided by users and passively collected by services (pp. 24-25). Here, I review a few national approaches to data collection. I also analyze McDonald's Canada's handling of personal data to discuss its implications for citizenship. This includes considering how spaces of access utilize individuals as data sources.

Globally, approaches to regulating and managing personal data vary. The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) provides robust protections by imposing stringent obligations on data processors (European Council of the European Union, 2023, paragraphs 1 & 3). In contrast, companies like TikTok have come under international scrutiny for their data practices (Maheshwari & Holpuch, 2023). Meanwhile, Canada's proposed Bill C-27 aims to bolster personal data protection (Government of Canada, 2023) with measures such as enhancing transparency, allowing Canadians to transfer their information securely between organizations, and enabling users to request the deletion of their data when no longer necessary (para. 3).

These initiatives mirror the GDPR's emphasis on strengthening individual data rights and holding service providers accountable. For example, both the GDPR and the proposed Canadian regulations support the principle that individuals should be able to request the deletion of their data when it is no longer needed, demonstrating ongoing international efforts to standardize data protection laws.

The presence of datafication for digital interactions raises ethical questions, for example, to what extent is data integral to our identity? This explores deeper the essence of digital existence more deeply, where personal information extends beyond simple data points to represent significant aspects of our lives and identities. Interviews conducted during my research brought forth a range of concerns about personal data usage, from targeted advertising to issues with third-party data handling, echoing broader themes in data privacy discussions. This challenge was particularly apparent with McDonald's Canada Wi-Fi, where the TOS provide little chance to review or discuss the terms in detail with a representative of the service provider. This situation provides a basis for the need for deeper discussions and robust policies on data protection and digital rights.

Further, this dialogue covered the issue of personal information being sold to third parties, an aspect partially explored in Chapter 3 through the examination of the TOS at Wi-Fi hotspots provided by Bell Mobility and McDonald's Canada. Their TOS includes clauses for third-party access, specifically stating: "Your messages may be the subject of unauthorized third party interception and review" (McDonald's Canada, 2023, Clause 9). Additionally, McDonald's Canada's "Privacy Policies and Principles" state on their website that users should not expect privacy when using their in-store Wi-Fi: "You should have no expectation of privacy with respect to use of the free Wi-Fi" (2024, para. 12).

McDonald's defines personal data in their privacy statement as:

> For the purposes of this privacy statement, "personal information" means any information about an identifiable individual including, without limitation, your name, address, telephone number, email address, birthday information, demographic information and account information. We may collect personal information about you when you visit our restaurants, use our websites or mobile apps ("online services"), and otherwise interact with us (collectively, "services"). These services range from visiting restaurants to applying for a job.

This explanation conveys a power dynamic where McDonald's exercises extensive control over its users, reflective of a larger trend where platforms and corporations capitalize on extracting user information (Zuboff, 2019). According to Hintz et al. (2019), "those who hold, manage and control the personal data of digital citizens are offered unprecedented

insights into our lives, minds, and bodies. Agency shifts from the digital citizen to those who process his or her personal data" (p. 37). These policies reflect the broader implications of digital privacy and the power dynamics involved, where companies like McDonald's exert substantial control over user data, a practice mirrored across various platforms and corporations that exploit user information. Hintz et al. (2019) note the shift in agency from individuals to data controllers, marking a significant transformation in citizenship itself, which now includes a dimension of surveillance and data relinquishment.

The Economist in 2017 famously declared that "the world's most valuable resource is no longer oil, but data,", pointing to the lucrative nature of user data for businesses, with giants like Meta and Google basing their business models on this resource (Mejias & Couldry, 2019; Srnicek, 2017; Zuboff, 2019). Data collection methods are extensive, from mining personal information through platform interactions to capturing data via IoT devices like smartphones and watches[9] (Government of Canada, 2022). Additionally, urban dwellers can unwittingly serve as sensors, contributing to data pools simply by moving through city spaces (Gabrys, 2014).

Digital citizenship, traditionally defined by responsible internet usage, paradoxically contains many instances where users become data sources for the very platforms they use. This contradiction challenges the conventional view of digital citizenship, suggesting that navigating the internet conscientiously is at odds with the involuntary data production roles users often assume. While it can be argued that the collection of data improves the services used, an assertion supported by interviewee 006, users have the right to understand how their data is utilized. Interviewee 013, who expressed concern about photographs of her family members being shared online, raised important points about what constitutes 'data' and emphasizes the need for companies to be more transparent about what they collect, and how it informs their services. This discussion highlights the need for clearer communication regarding how user information is handled, empowering individuals to

[9] Firstly, personal information can be mined from interactions on platforms including likes, viewed content, searches, and demographic details and more (Birch, 2023, p. 23-24). Metadata, the data about data, is also significant (van Dijck, 2014). Secondly, data can be captured from IoT devices like smart phones, watches, and fitness trackers (Government of Canada, 2022).

make informed choices about their digital interactions. The interviews revealed that the data collection processes are often materialized in ways that remain vague for many users. Additionally, as data collection becomes increasingly normalized, it becomes challenging for individuals to act or assert control over their information.

4.3. Conclusion

This analysis has shown that datafication is inextricable to digital experiences, examining whether digital users are active participants or merely subjects within this expansive data landscape. Users are shaped by the platforms they interact with, where TOS are frequently too extensive for thorough understanding. There is a general acceptance that personal data collection is a prerequisite for accessing services like social media platforms. The sentiments towards data collection expressed in my interviews included those of concern, others accepted the inevitability of datafication.

The interviews revealed that personal concerns about datafication can change depending on the circumstance, such as parents worried about their family's privacy. In thinking about how the internet is materialized in the era of big data, traditional concepts of citizenship—defined by rights and responsibilities within a community—become complex. With digital dimensions adding layers to citizenship, questions arise about the ability to fulfill one's duties while being treated as data sources. The normalization of datafication amongst internet users emphasizes helplessness in confronting privacy issues concerning online platforms. As the roles of citizenship increasingly shift online, from work and learning to voting and social engagement, the dynamics of being datafied and participating in society require closer attention.

How current datafication practices facilitate or hinder meaningful societal engagement prompts us to reconsider the balance between embracing digital advancements and protecting individual rights. Despite the mixed views on data collection among those interviewed, the significant influence of internet providers and social media platforms on the digital landscape has been normalized. This normalization carries crucial implications, potentially leading users to unwittingly consent to terms not in their best interest.

This chapter explored how datafication manifests in spaces of access and how this phenomenon is experienced by individuals. The next chapter examines how digital users engage with spaces of access.

Chapter 5.

How People Occupy Spaces of Access: *The Materialization of Access*

This chapter builds on the spaces of access explored in this work by examining how patrons utilize the spaces. Additionally, it explores how the Covid-19 pandemic influenced digital engagement for individuals. An insight from the field work is the dual nature of spaces, revealing a juxtaposition between the intention of connectivity and how people use it. The community area at the VPL was observed facilitating professional activities, while the consumer space at McDonald's fostered leisurely activities. This led to the observation that the provision of free Wi-Fi in these spaces in indicative of an evolution in public spaces and digital lifestyles. In these environments, where Wi-Fi is presented as a resource at the library, the space enabled work-related activities, whereas Wi-Fi is presented as a "Service" at McDonald's, the space enhanced leisure and communal experiences. These observations challenge notions of space utility and demonstrate the dynamic nature of public environments as influenced by connectivity.

This distinction between Wi-Fi as a resource and Wi-Fi as a "Service" characterizes the functional diversification in these spaces but also reflects their adaptive nature. These environments are designed to meet patron needs, demonstrating how digital infrastructure can be tailored to support productivity, entertainment, or social interaction. Ultimately, the usage of these facilities depends on the individual users, reflecting their personal preferences and necessities (Sandvig, 2003; Marler, 2021; Halegoua, 2019). The dynamic use of Wi-Fi at access points indicates a shift towards multifunctional public spaces increasingly equipped to cater to digital experiences. Digital technologies contribute to the evolution of public spaces, creating new opportunities for engagement (McGuigan, 1996) and reinforcing Lefebvre's notion of space as socially constructed (Lefebvre, 1991; Jansson, 2013; Fuchs, 2019). Examining how these spaces are utilized is relevant, particularly as their use often contrasts with the policies that govern them (Sandvig, 2003). This consideration was timely given the pandemic's recent impact on digital engagements.

Insights from interviews conducted reveal a deepening reliance on the internet, although this reliance is not uniform. Some individuals prefer public internet access over home connectivity, raising critical questions about those who are unable or unwilling to connect. This calls for a mindful approach to inclusivity in digital engagement.

Inspiration for this chapter came from real-life vignettes recorded during participant observation: youths in a restaurant sharing content on a smartphone, library patrons isolated within digital bubbles amidst physical proximity, and a patron struggling to utilize a digital kiosk at McDonald's. These vignettes serve as a lens through which I assess the underlying assumptions that connectivity is universally desired or accessible.

My findings suggest that experiences of connectivity materialize in different ways across access points. The rights and obligations associated with these spaces are fluid, altering the nature of citizenship in the digital age. This spatial and political organization of digital environments shapes our digital interactions, demonstrating the importance of understanding how the organization and regulation of each digital environment (physical points and digital platforms) shape experiences of citizenship.

5.1. The Influence of Connectivity on the Observed Spaces

In my participant observation sessions, I sought to question the anecdote that *everyone is always on their phone*—a claim frequently made nowadays. Rather than accepting or critiquing this statement, I engaged in a critical examination of connectivity within the research sites, asking what this anecdote might look like upon observation. I paid close attention to the physical environments and the role of technology within these spaces, including how the patrons behave in them, which led to subtle insights of these spaces categorized below by theme.

Table 1. Materialization of Connection at the Sites of Study

Accessibility and Infrastructure

Vancouver Public Library:	**Use:** Patrons can use their own devices, at desks enabled with charging ports and power outlets	**Example:** I count 20 patrons next to me and observe that out of all of them, they are all plugged in in some way: whether through a device whether a phone, laptop, or headset. Though a few people are reading, they are also wearing headphones or charging their phone on their desk. —September 20th, 2022.
McDonald's Canada:	**Use:** Charging ports and power outlets available but not conveniently located on tables	**Example:** Fast-paced restaurant environment sees people coming in and out for food. Those who stay to eat in restaurant often use a mobile device like phone
Design and layout of Spaces		
Vancouver Public Library:	**Use:** Public Computers for patrons to use are available. Desks are available, which includes co-working desks and personal desks. Single couch chairs available.	**Example:** Various groups of people working together or alone.
McDonald's Canada:	**Use:** Standard tables available along with a few options of lounging chairs Personal seating areas are available along with booths and tables for more than one person. Some couches available at locations.	**Example:** A group of high school students gather together and are chatting and laughing. The space is optimal for group gatherings — October 8, 2022.
Technological Interfaces		
Vancouver Public Library:	**Use:** Public computers/monitors for accessing the library's databases.	**Example:** Patrons looking up books or other media.
McDonald's Canada:	**Use:** Self-ordering kiosks, usually include 4 or more of these devices with patrons using them to order.	A lady has trouble making her order through the kiosk and asks for help from other clients — October 8, 2022
Human Presence		

Vancouver Public Library:	**Use**: Librarians available and check out desks and available at help desks.	**Example:**
McDonald's Canada:	**Use:** Managers on site. Cashiers present but not always accessible.	**Example:** Long line-ups encourage customers to use self-check out kiosks. I noticed managers interviewing people on a few occasions.
Other		
McDonald's Canada:	**Use:** QR codes within the space: on posters. These QR codes lead to more information on McDonald's Canada, such as collecting points or applying for a job.	**Example:** QR codes located on the back of the receipt along with links to McDonald's Canada website — October 8th, 2022.

In the Vancouver Public library, Wi-Fi is provided as a resource, aligning with its mission to provide access to information. This was evident during participant observation and through interviews, where participants indicated that the space supports academic and professional activities (Interviewee 003, 004, 006, 007, 010, and 011), reinforcing the library's role as a knowledge hub. The library's perspective, outlined in a 2015 document, emphasizes that the Internet fosters community and contributes to a connected city. This is manifested in the provision of both public computers and wireless internet to its patrons (VPL, 2015, para. 5). Furthermore, the library offers desk spaces well-equipped with the necessary infrastructure to support personal devices, thereby creating an ideal environment for prolonged digital engagement. Here, the internet does more than just provide access; it significantly enhances the library's ability to meet the educational and research needs of the community. The library thus serves as a vital space for experiences of citizenship, providing a place where individuals can belong, access services or platforms like news, and engage with information even if they do not have personal devices. It becomes a welcoming environment that invites diverse experiences of citizenship, fostering a sense of community and shared engagement. Conversely, at McDonald's, where Wi-Fi is offered as a "Service," the space reflects this operational philosophy. While charging cables are available, their placement within the walls can be inconvenient. The design choice indicates that extended periods of sitting and digital use are not central to McDonald's operational strategy. This setup aligns with the fast-food chain's focus on quick turnover

and efficiency, prioritizing a fast service model over a space designed for prolonged interactions. The experience here is often characterized by brief moments of relaxation, utilizing facilities, consuming content for shorter periods, or socializing with peers. These activities, while fostering a sense of community, differ significantly from the library's role as a space for opportunity and use of resources which can contribute to one's well-being and status within society.

Mosco utilizes Lefebvre's concept of space to discuss how media technologies break down the traditional barriers of geography and time in social interactions (1996, p. 173). The internet facilitates a globally connected society where physical location no longer limits access to information or interaction, leading to a seamless global exchange. Applying Mosco's perspective on businesses leveraging technology to consolidate their market positions (p. 199), I consider corporations like Bell and McDonald's strategies of offering free Wi-Fi. The companies strategically engage customers with their brands through a variety of products and internet services. This approach illustrates the commodification and spatialization of social life through digital means. By integrating Wi-Fi into their in-store offerings, McDonald's creates an environment that encourages increased consumption with their brand, enhancing customer engagement and brand loyalty. This tactic capitalizes on the necessity of connectivity but also transforms these spaces into integral nodes within the digital landscape, affecting how individuals interact with and perceive their social environments.

The VPL firmly establishes itself as a cornerstone for community engagement. Its walls, filled with posters, announce various gatherings such as movie nights, educational talks—creating a hub for community interaction and learning. In contrast, McDonald's Canada establishments include signs enforcing a 25-minute seating limit, promoting a model of efficiency and quick turn over, viewing customer interactions through a transactional lens.

However, my observations reveal an intriguing juxtaposition in the utilization of these spaces. The library transcends its traditional role of being a 'quiet space' for reading, evolving into a workplace for students and remote workers, with its desks and seating areas becoming "hotspots" for productivity. This aligns with literature conveying that libraries

are critical spaces for community engagement and empowerment (Durrani & Smallwood, 2006) Conversely, McDonald's, known for its fast-food ethos, was noted as a zone of relaxation and social interaction. The 25-minute rule frequently goes unenforced, allowing patrons to spend extended periods chatting or engaging with their phones, thus repurposing a space designed for quick-dining into one of leisure.

These scenarios subvert expectations about the purpose of these spaces. The library, synonymous with quiet study, enables an extension of professional activities, while the fast-food restaurant, based on a model of consumerist efficiency, enables a casual and leisurely environment. These observations challenge notions of space utility and demonstrate the dynamic nature of public environments as influenced by connectivity.

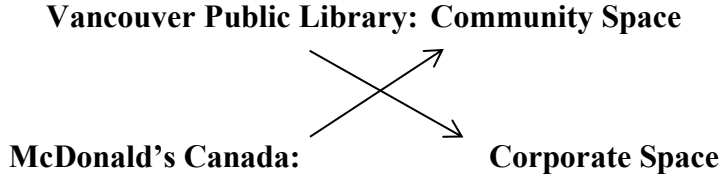


Figure 5. Subversion of Spaces

The provision of free Wi-Fi at both the VPL and McDonald's not only increases their attractiveness as venues for spending time but also signifies the shifting role of public spaces to support digital lifestyles. As explored in Chapter 3, the nature of internet provision—either as a resource or a "Service"—deepens our understanding of how these environments function within the digital ecosystem.

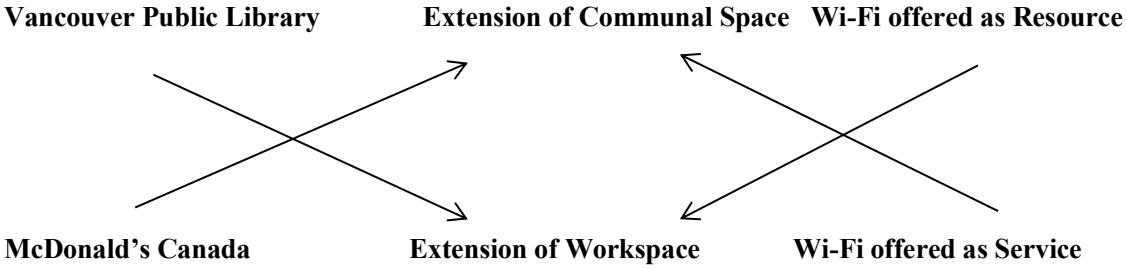


Figure 6. Extensions of Spaces and Wi-Fi Provision

Analysis

The studied venues offer a spectrum of engagement possibilities, ranging from passive content consumption to active participation in work or social activities. The integration of free Wi-Fi at these spaces enhances their functionality and transforms their nature.

Henri Lefebvre's assertion that space is inherently social is also relevant:

> We have already been led to the conclusion that any space implies, contains and dissimulates social relationships - and this despite the fact that a space is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things (objects and products) (1991, p. 82-83).

His theory that space reflects social relationships beyond physical entities was seen in how venues like McDonald's, traditionally sites of dining and socializing, also become settings where digital connectivity enables others forms of social interaction.

The analysis suggests that connectivity serves more than a singular function; it reshapes the identities and functionalities of spaces, making them adaptable to the needs and behaviors of patrons. The interplay between digital access and space utilization speaks to the impact of technology on public environments, indicating a redefinition of public spaces in the digital age. Halegoua's research offers a compelling illustration of this redefinition of public spaces. In Kansas City, a McDonald's was repurposed as a "makeshift community center" (2019, p. 67), becoming an essential internet access point for students excluded from the Google Fiber Project—finding that exclusion from significant internet infrastructure initiatives can heighten dependence and transform the use of commercial spaces like McDonald's for digital connectivity.

5.2. Covid-19 and Internet Usage

When comparing access points like McDonald's and the library, it is evident that they serve different functions. I observed how the library transformed into a venue conducive to remote work. This shift, is perhaps, facilitated by the availability of remote work which increased during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, the concept of personal space—people's homes and 'bubbles'—also underwent a reorganization. The internet was a critical tool within these personal spaces, enabling connections to the outside world, fulfilling work responsibilities, providing entertainment, and more.

Here, I examine the influence of the pandemic on personal technology use and internet habits. Responses to the interview question of "How did the Covid-19 pandemic affect your habits related to the internet?" revealed different aspects of people's lives during this period. Themes which emerged included: changes in communication patterns, transformation in work and learning environments, and lastly, access to technology and information. Below, they are categorized thematically.

Communication Patterns

> It increased the time spent online. I was socially isolated. There are habits now integrated from it (Interviewee 004).
>
> Higher dependency. Need for contact with people. More FaceTime. Being online killed the time. Less going out. Increased screen time. All my classes online (Interviewee 003).
>
> Oh good Lord, it changed everything. The Internet was the only time I saw human beings (Interviewee 005).

Transformation in Work and Learning Environments

> To be honest, I was Covid-proof before it happened. My lifestyle was compatible. My lifestyle was on the Internet. We started to work more, but I am comfortable with work from home, etc, though the industry did change. More of the industry is virtual now. There was more face-to-face before (Interviewee 010).
>
> I didn't use to work from home, and I'm relying on the Internet now to work remotely (Interviewee 013).
>
> I work remotely after the pandemic started. After the pandemic, I continue to work from home remotely. So, it affected my habits in the sense that I know prefer to work remotely (Interviewee 011).
>
> I feel like we were all overworked. It was difficult to have "this is my work time and not work time". I stayed home most of the time. I was more connected to the Internet. It was difficult to find a boundary (Interviewee 001).
>
> Oh, and I didn't have a graduation. Some of my friends started crying. They had a lot of emotions (Interviewee 014).

Access to Technology and Information

> I ordered more on Amazon. Groceries online from the store down the street. I was living in a bubble. (Interviewee 005).
>
> With the pandemic, we relied on the Internet to look at how many cases there were (Interviewee 007).
>
> I had medical appointments online through video conferencing. I began to use videoconferencing more in general. I didn't use to as much (Interviewee 013).
>
> I tried to keep with the news more and what to do. I used it more to communicate (Interviewee 008).
>
> When the pandemic was happening, I made my own YouTube channel videos. I spent a lot of time watching, and I felt bored, so I decided to make my own. I do the video, editing, and everything (Interviewee 012).
>
> Research to hear more about variants. But there were also times I didn't want to hear about it. I'm not good with germs (Interviewee 009).

5.2.2. Towards a Reevaluation of Digital Citizenship

The pandemic introduced new habits like remote work and necessitated a flexibility to adapt to new lifestyles. Digital and physical lives became more entwined, which prompts a redefinition of digital citizenship. Below are themes from the interviews applied to changes for the experience of digital citizenship.

Table 2. Summary of Themes from Interviews on Covid-19 Impact on Internet & Technology Use

Theme	Description
Redefining Community Engagement	Shift to digital platforms for maintaining personal and professional relationships
Accessibility to Technology	Internet was a necessity for accessing various services like medical appointments and news information
Challenges in Digital Workspaces	Transition to remote work introduced increased screen time and the need for boundaries in digital spaces.

Essential Skills for Digital Engagement	Increased reliance on digital platforms highlighted the need for digital literacy, with some individuals developing new skills like content creation.

A common theme from the interviews was an increased reliance on the internet for work and educational purposes, as noted by Interviewees 001, 002, 003, 011, 013, and 014. This shift ensured continuity in professional and academic activities but also introduced challenges such as managing workloads, increased screen time (Interviewee 003), establishing boundaries in digital spaces—a struggle noted by Interviewee 001. Interestingly, some individuals, like Interviewee 010, were already accustomed to remote work before the pandemic and described their lifestyle as "COVID-proof," experiencing minimal disruption to their daily routines. Nonetheless, they still observed significant shifts within their industry, such as a move towards fewer in-person meetings and more remote work.

Overall, the pandemic's impact on individuals demonstrates how people utilized the internet to adapt to new changes, while also experiencing challenges like the need to occasionally avoid news (Interviewee 009), missing in-person events (Interviewee 014), and experiencing less face-to-face communication. For some, the pandemic shifted perceptions of the internet from a luxury to a necessity, crucial for accessing information, services, and entertainment, as expressed by interviewees 005, 007, and 013. They emphasized the critical role the internet played in their daily routines during the pandemic, facilitating everything from basic communication to essential services and leisure activities. This period also influenced individuals' preferences for digital platforms and content, as well as made clear the importance of digital literacy and skills. For example, Interviewee 012 started a YouTube channel, developing a new hobby and skill set.

The reliance on the internet for routine tasks like grocery shopping, even from nearby stores, fostered a unique experience for some individuals. Interviewee 005 described this phenomenon as creating a sense of "living in a bubble." Through the shift towards utilizing platforms for everyday necessities, the pandemic accelerated the transition to a more virtual existence, impacting the sense of connection to one's immediate physical community.

5.3. Exploring Diverse Perspectives on Connectivity: Not everyone wants to, or can integrate digitally

Despite the ongoing evolution of digital citizenship, some individuals do not keep pace with changes due to personal preferences or limitations. Though above we saw interviewees who work from home, which typically requires a computer, the methods by which individuals' access and utilize digital connections can vary. For example: evidenced by about 470,000 Canadians, or 1.5% of the population, who have a mobile data plan but no home internet connection (Statistics Canada, 2021). One such example is Interviewee 005, a retiree who relies solely on his cellphone for internet access. He explained,

> My phone is my computer (…) I didn't want a computer. My phone has unlimited data. It is absolutely essential. It is my only source of computer on a day-to-day basis. If I didn't have unlimited data, I would have been adding constantly when I run out (Interviewee 005).

Challenges and Obstacles in Connectivity

Though digital engagement increased during the pandemic, it also deepened technological disparities, as noted by Lashley et al. (2020, p. 1245), along with 2.9 billion people still offline (International Telecommunication Union, 2021). Halegoua notes, "People without a stable at-home internet connection experience place differently... they need to search out stable internet connection hubs in a variety of public spaces" (2019, p. 67). Moreover, those who do spend time online, can enhance their capital. Those unable or unwilling to engage online might miss out on opportunities.

Lack of desire to connect: Individual Choices

An often-overlooked aspect of the study of connectivity is the lack of desire to connect. What about individuals who choose not to engage digitally in the same manner as the majority? I encountered two individuals, Interviewee 005 and 009, who did not have home internet connection. This observation is particularly relevant in a city like Vancouver, which typically exemplifies a neoliberal, individualized way of life, yet still hosts diverse connectivity preferences.

Interviewee 005, for instance, uses his phone as his primary computing device, connected to mobile data throughout the day. As a retiree, his professional life does not require constant internet access. He shared,

> I did graphic design for 25 years with international clients. I had to move to Paris to get things done. I am happy about the Internet, but it came too late for my career (Interviewee 005).

His use of the internet is limited to specific needs:

> Int: How do you rely on the internet?
>
> Sub: News. Weather. Research for the news. Like if there's a news story and I want to hear more. Sometimes they give you a headline. And they use acronyms and I don't know what they mean, so I research it.

Interviewee 009's situation also showed individual choices impacting digital connectivity. With a broken tablet and no personal data plan, this interviewee relies on public internet access at the library, citing a dislike for prolonged exposure to blue screens as a significant factor in his connectivity habits.

> My tablet is broken. I preferred it over the computer. I use my email at the library. Right now I can't update my tablet, but it is the most convenient.
>
> (…) I have a flip phone.
>
> I don't like looking at blue screens. I am mindful of the blue screens.

Both individuals frequent the library to access the internet, suggesting a preference for designated times and places for digital engagement rather than connectivity home connectivity.

These cases demonstrate the importance of recognizing diverse digital preferences. While technological integration has increased, with more individuals relying on digital platforms during the pandemic, there remains people who are either unable or undesiring to digitally integrate. From a citizenship perspective, it is crucial moving forward that policies and services are designed to accommodate varying levels of desire and necessity for connectivity.

5.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the practical uses of spaces of access, drawing on interviews and participant observations to explore how people interact with the internet technologies and access spaces. My main finding is that the experience of connectivity varies across spaces. This became apparent as I noticed the VPL transformed into extensions of the workplace, accommodating those working remotely, while the McDonald's primarily served as a venue for leisure activities. The transformation of the library may have been influenced by the pandemic, reflecting changes in how and where people choose to work.

Through talking to patrons at the sites of study, the pandemic also heightened many individuals' reliance on the internet. The pandemic contributed to transforming personal spaces, in that people had to rely on the internet more to maintain outside connections, along with later influencing public venues when they reopened, where people's habits of "working" remotely during the pandemic have accompanied them at public access points.

The rights and obligations associated with different internet access points (public spaces, private spaces) continue to evolve, demonstrating the fluid nature of digital experiences. This evolution within internet access points is evident in how spaces are spatially and politically organized, which structures our experiences of a mediatized citizenship.

My work looked at the locations of internet access highlighting the fluidity of rights and obligations across various digital environments. This variability was touched on in Chapter 4, which demonstrated how governance at different digital access points leads to implications like data collection. In Chapter 5, I focused on how individuals utilize each space. It is observed that while each environment adheres to its unique set of rules, it also fosters different types of digital engagement—some environments support work-related activities, enhancing productivity, while others are chosen for relaxation and leisure.

This investigation reveals the nuanced ways in which spaces that offer digital amenities like free Wi-Fi are tailored to meet specific user needs and emphasizes the importance of understanding both the physical setup and the regulatory frameworks that govern these environments. Such insights are crucial for shaping effective experiences of citizenship, as

they influence how individuals interact with and utilize technology in their daily lives. By understanding these dynamics, policymakers and designers can better ensure that structural environments serve the needs of its patrons.

Chapter 6.

Conclusion

This research has endeavored to pause and reflect on the spatial experiences and digital citizenry in Canada through the materialization of internet experiences at two Wi-Fi access points. While the fieldwork was geographically limited to participant observations in two provinces and interviews within the Metro Vancouver area, I hope these findings illuminate broader themes related to access points and their implications for people.

The work finds that the provision of internet access shapes our experiences of citizenship, pointing to the importance of closely examining and responding to how internet and platform services are offered across different interaction points. However, expecting digital users to independently navigate these complexities is unrealistic, as evidenced by findings in this research showing that most people primarily seek straightforward internet connectivity. This preference for straightforward connectivity is influenced by a culture that promotes and sustains constant connectivity. Additionally, digital users often interact with numerous access points or platforms within a single day, further complicating the landscape of assessing each access point and digital media service.

To achieve a balance between digital integration and the preservation of individual rights, it is important for policymakers and corporations to understand and promote fair digital engagement. Furthermore, enhancing digital literacy from educational initiatives to reflect broader digital experiences is essential to ensure individuals can navigate the digital environment with an informed understanding of their rights and obligations across different contexts.

6.1. Summary of Main Themes

Access points were used as a focal point in this study to look at experiences of people within a culture of digital engagement. I looked at how spaces use digital users as data

sources, and people's relationship to spaces where internet and technologies are available. This work also considered the TOS that govern digital amenities.

This project focused on a gap in current research which is that of digital citizenship and public space. Alternative research approaches can expand our understanding of how citizenship experiences are shaped by internet provision.

Chapter 3 compared two access points, revealing that despite differences in provision, internet users crave simplicity in connectivity, often overlooking the detailed terms to which they consent to connect. Chapter 4 examined these TOSs as grounds for privacy concerns, along with how access points and social media services utilize internet users as data sources. It was observed that people's perceptions of data collection have become normalized, whether they are concerned or ambivalent about it. Chapter 5 demonstrated that people use spaces of access in diverse ways, with digital interactions redefining how spaces are utilized. The study also explored how the COVID-19 pandemic heightened internet dependency in Canada. After the pandemic restrictions eased, it became a critical time to assess these increased dependencies, how spaces are utilized, and citizens' experiences with the internet.

The analysis chapters explored how digital citizenship is both enabled and constrained through space and mediated space. This concluding chapter will outline potential directions for further research, both in theme and methodological approach.

6.2. Research Contribution

Re-evaluating Digital Citizenship

While digital citizenship is often theoretically understood through media literacy concepts and resources, there is a notable gap between these theoretical frameworks and the experiences of individuals. Digital citizenship is a relatively recent concept, and this project contributes to our understanding of it through suggesting that the assertion that people should adopt responsible internet behaviour is more difficult than suggested.

My interactions with numerous patrons who depend on public access points for both work and personal endeavors raised critical importance of such facilities. This research also looked at individuals who do not have home internet connections, a situation that may seem surprising to those like myself who depend on home internet for work.

Additionally, conversations with digital users of varying ages, backgrounds, and lifestyles unveiled complex experiences and perceptions of internet technologies. This work necessitates that while citizens' experiences are shaped by a broader internet infrastructure, the diversity found within these experiences defies uniform characterization of labelling people “digital citizens”. Acknowledging and responding to these differences is vital for developing policies and strategies that ensure all citizens have equitable access to digital resources and can participate fully in a digitally mediated society.

A Note on Free Wi-Fi

The examination of free Wi-Fi at various access points, such as the VPL and McDonald’s Canada, raises important discussions. For instance, a taxicab offering “free Wi-Fi” is not entirely free since it is contingent upon using a paid service. Similarly, McDonald's customers often purchase something before using the Wi-Fi, which could imply that the Wi-Fi is not truly free but a part of the purchasing package. In contrast, it can be argued that the VPL offers a “genuine” free Wi-Fi, aligning with its philosophy of providing resources openly, which is especially beneficial for marginalized groups like unhoused individuals who might use library computers.

During my research, it was apparent that while Wi-Fi is advertised as free, in places like McDonald's, it could potentially come at the cost of users’ data. This points to a need for transparency; the term "free" might be misleading if it involves a trade-off with privacy or data security. Understanding the real cost of Wi-Fi and how it is utilized by different users brings insights into the ethics and implications for digital citizenry at Wi-Fi hotspots.

Overall, this thesis aims to extend the discussion on what constitutes free Wi-Fi and digital citizenship, advocating for greater clarity in how digital services are provided and experienced.

Methodological Contributions

This thesis introduced alternative qualitative research by integrating three distinct research methods, which facilitated a comprehensive and layered analysis. For instance, in Chapter 5, I examined how the McDonald's restaurant, despite signage limiting seating to 25 minutes and its reputation for fast service, often hosted patrons for extended periods. This observation, derived from participant observation and interviews, contradicted the official signage and expectations of the fast-food environment. By combining research methods, I was able to explore insights that single-method studies might miss.

A significant methodological contribution of this research was the use of "on-the-fly" interviews with patrons. Instead of pre-arranging interviews, I engaged with individuals who were using the spaces of the restaurant and library as part of their daily routines, making them ideal subjects for spontaneous discussions. This approach allowed me to gather immediate, authentic insights into people's relationships with technology in public environments. Arguably, these interactions were among the most enlightening aspects of the research, revealing lived experiences and perspectives outside the academic setting. This technique also helped remove the formal barriers often associated with research, such as the requirement to sign up for studies, while still maintaining confidentiality with informed consent.

While this approach to research methods yielded valuable findings, there are additional methodologies that could further expand this work. For instance, the use of citizen juries, as discussed by Kennedy et al. (2022), employs citizens in a jury-like setting to deliberate on specific issues. This method could provide a structured yet community-centric way of gathering diverse opinions and insights about digital citizenship.

6.3. Considerations for Future Research

This research looked at various aspects of digital engagement, from the ubiquity of Wi-Fi hotspots to the complex dynamics of digital citizenship. This raised discussion about the inclusivity and implications of increasing reliance with digital technologies. Future research could address:

Geographical Comparisons of Internet Access: Future research could expand to study different restaurant locations, both in remote areas and urban centers, to understand how geographical factors within the same country influences digital access and usage patterns.

Similarly, considering how digital citizenship manifests in different regulatory and cultural contexts, such as the research on youth in China by Fu (2021) focusing on censorship and protest, can provide comparative insights that highlight global digital divides and commonalities.

Digital Adeptness: Continuing to investigate how individuals assess their own digital skills could address further digital literacy. Understanding self-perceived digital adeptness is crucial as it affects how individuals engage with technology and navigate the digital world.

User Agency and Data Ownership: Research could explore how individuals are taking control of their data, such as through creating their own platforms or using technologies like Bitcoin, which offers a decentralized approach to currency. This taps into broader discussions about techno-futures and how individuals envision their roles and rights within these futures.

Societal Reflections on Digital Futures: It is important to critique and reflect on who benefits from technological advances. In this work, we see how some see a future enhanced by digital technologies, and others are left out or choose to opt-out. This discrepancy raises fundamental questions about the inclusivity of digital progress and who is entitled to the rights promised by a techno-future.

The Role of Private Internet Use: Exploring how people use private internet services, such as home Wi-Fi, can provide a contrast to public access points and offer insights into the different security, accessibility, and usage patterns that characterize private versus public digital engagements.

Considerations for Future Research based on Methodological Reflections

In considering this work's methodological design, several considerations arise. I categorize these considerations by the methods used in this project along with considering collaborative research methods and different forms of field work.

Participant Observation and Interviews

Demographic Focus: Studies focused on specific demographics, such as the elderly or youth capture a precise understanding of digital experiences and challenges faced by certain groups of people. A focus on specific demographics, such as the elderly, children, or women could include nuanced understanding of digital experiences and challenges.

Timing of Research: the time of year during which research was conducted could potentially have influenced the findings by means of who was available for interviews. For example, I collected data for around 3 months leading up to and during the winter holiday season. This might result in different data than if conducted in, say the summer, especially when considering factors like schedules and frequency of library visits during certain times of the year.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Walkthrough Method: Incorporating the walkthrough method, as suggested by Light et al. (2018), can enhance understanding of user interactions with access points and their digital platforms. This approach involves researchers actively engaging with digital applications to gain deeper insights into the user experience and interface dynamics over time—this could be applied to utilizing Wi-Fi hotspots and capturing their captive portals and other information like TOS over a period of time.

Social Media TOS: Analyzing the TOS of platforms like Meta or TikTok using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) could uncover the complexities users face when agreeing to these conditions. Research could explore how long it takes users to read these terms, identify points of confusion, and assess the overall transparency of the agreements.

Expanding the Field Work:

Collaborative Research Methods:

Focus Groups: Employing focus groups to collaboratively dissect the TOS of digital services can provide collective insights into user perceptions and misunderstandings. This method fosters a deeper collective understanding of digital rights and responsibilities among participants.

Mobile Application Analysis and Integrated Systems: Investigating mobile apps that combine services such as ordering and banking can reveal the interconnected impacts of online behavior on broader aspects like credit scores and purchasing habits. Utilizing the digital walk-through method alongside focus groups could yield comprehensive insights into how these apps engage users and integrate various service aspects.

Future research could integrate these varied methods and topics to explore significant issues in digital citizenship comprehensively. By examining how digital interfaces, user agreements, and the integration of services influence citizens and perceptions, researchers can contribute valuable insights into the evolving landscape of digital engagement and its implications for individual rights and societal norms.

6.4. Trending Topics in Internet Studies

The Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation states that humans are entitled to rights online and offline:

> Universal human rights apply equally online as offline – freedom of expression and assembly, for example, are no less important in cyberspace than in the town square. That said, in many cases it is far from obvious how human rights laws and treaties drafted in a pre-digital era should be applied in the digital age (2019, p. 16)

Future research could delve deeper into how digital rights are being formed and reshaped online, closely monitoring the development and implications of legislation such as Canada's Bill C-27, which pertains to data privacy.

Perceptions and Accessibility of the Internet

While some may take the ubiquity of the internet for granted, this project has highlighted that not everyone experiences or desires connectivity in the same way. Issues of choice, data privacy concerns, and geographic disparities in internet access are critical areas for further exploration. Research could focus on how different communities across Canada and beyond experience these disparities and what measures can be implemented to ensure equitable access to digital resources.

Increased Automation

The *McDonaldization Thesis*, as theorized by Ritzer (1996), describes a societal shift towards efficiency, predictability, control, and calculability, elements that are increasingly evident in public settings through features like self-checkout kiosks at grocery stores and restaurants. Future studies might examine how people adapt to increased automation in everyday settings.

Critical Digital Citizenship Studies

This thesis attempted to consider digital citizenship critically: by saying: *we have this concept that is being used by various groups of people, but does it encompass lived experiences?* Organizations such as Civics of Technology (n.d.) are pioneering grassroots approaches to redefine digital citizenship, providing tools and resources that challenge conventional definitions.

Conclusion

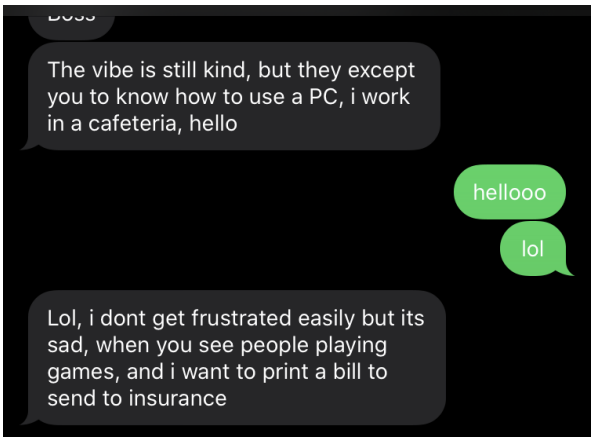
It is easy to recognize the pervasive presence of the technology in our daily lives within private and public spaces; it was the intent of this work to have looked more into challenging components of public internet connectivity. Digital experiences are enmeshed in a nexus of autonomy, power dynamics, and changing conditions that shape our interactions and understandings within the digital landscape. By exploring these dimensions, this thesis voiced the varied ways people experience digital technologies and challenges us to consider the broader implications of digital engagements.

It is relevant to continue examining how digital policies evolve and their implications for individual rights, responsibilities, and experiences. As public spaces increasingly adapt to

digital connectivity, there is potential for further research focusing on how these environments continue to transform in the digital era. This ongoing exploration will help us better understand the impact of connectivity on public spaces and the experience of individuals within them.

Epilogue

When I was in undergrad, my mother sent me a text message about not being able to use the public computers while she was at her municipal library, and that, moreover, staff was not available to help her us the public computers.



Getting my mom to send text messages was itself a journey. She writes the words "Lol" in the text message, for laughing out loud, something I taught her. But *writing* laugh out loud, or even *physically* laughing out loud do not come natural to her. She's a serious woman. Raised with an ethos of working through physical labor, and enacting citizenship practices like banking with people at the bank—not online. She writes: "I work in a cafeteria, hello" conveying that she's does not use computers much. At work, she walks back and forth serving students, interacting with undergraduate students. She's not around computers all day. But she expected that someone would help her when she encountered difficulty at the library using a public computer.

Something strange was signaled to me: here I was, using a laptop, furiously typing away a university assignment as I did almost every day, and yet, my mother was struggling to complete a task in a public library that was part of her citizenship duties.

When writing this thesis, I rediscovered the reason behind capturing and preserving a conversation screenshot from years ago. The dialogue, humorous at the time, encapsulates several core themes explored in this work: how the internet shapes our experience of citizenship.

As internet technologies and their influence continue to grow, I hope we can all look around and ask how those close to us, or not so close to us, might be affected: whether positive, negative, or everything in between.

References

Abu-Laban, Y. (2014). Citizenship and foreignness in Canada. In E. Isin & P. Nyers (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of global citizenship studies*. Routledge.

Ali, S., Osman, T., Mannan, M., & Youssef, A. (2019). On privacy risks of public wifi captive portals. *arXiv*. http://arxiv.org/abs/1907.02142

Arendt, H. (1958). *The human condition*. University of Chicago Press.

Badr, A. M. N. A. A., Mohamed, T. I., Osman, N. A. Q., & Mikhaylov, A. (2022). A review of social media website users' interaction paths with governmental accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Informatics*, 9(3), 50. https://doi.org/10.3390/informatics9030050

Bakardjieva, M. (2005). *Internet society: the Internet in everyday life.* SAGE.

Bakardjieva, M. (2017). Navigating the Mediapolis: Media, Citizenship, and Power in an Age of Digital Mediation. In R. Butsch & S. Livingstone (Eds.), *The Mediatization of the Public Sphere* (pp. 123-142). Palgrave Macmillan.

Benjamin, R. (2019). *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Polity.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (Anchor books, Ser. Anchor books, a589). Doubleday.

Bilodeau, H., Kehler, A., & Minnema, N. (2021). Internet use and COVID-19: How the pandemic increased the amount of time Canadians spend online. *StatisticsCanada*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2021001/article/00027-eng.pdf

Birch, K. (2023). *Data enclaves*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Brock, A. (2018). Critical technocultural discourse analysis. *New Media & Society*, 20(3), 1012–1030. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816677532

Bucher, T. (2017). The algorithmic imaginary: exploring the ordinary affects of Facebook algorithms. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20:1, 30-44. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1154086

Buchholz, B.A., DeHart, J., & Moorman, G. (2020). Digital Citizenship During a Global Pandemic: Moving Beyond Digital Literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 64(1), 11–17. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.1076

Carey, J. W. (1989). *Communication as culture: Essays on media and society*. Routledge.

Castells, M. (1996). *The rise of the network society*. Blackwell.

Castells, M. (2001). *The internet galaxy*. Oxford University Press.

Castro, D., Atkinson, R. & Ezell, S. (2010). Embracing the Self-Service Economy. *The Information Technology and Innovation Foundation*. April 2010.

CBC. (2016, June 14). Toronto libraries partner with Google to offer WiFi internet you can take home. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-library-wifi-1.3634855

Cheney-Lippold, J. (2017). *We Are Data: Algorithms and the Making of Our Digital Selves*. New York University Press.

CIRA. (2018). The gap between us: Perspectives on building a better online Canada. *Canadian Internet Registration Authority*. https://www.cira.ca/resources/state-internet/report/gap-between-us-perspectives-building-a-better-online-canada

CIRA. (2020). https://www.cira.ca/en/resources/documents/about/canadas-internet-factbook-2020/

Civics of Technology Project. (n.d.). *Critical digital citizenship*. Civics of Technology. https://www.civicsoftechnology.org/criticaldigitalcitizenship

Coleman, S., & Blumler, J. (2009). *The Internet and democratic citizenship: Theory, practice and policy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511818271.007

CRTC. (2019). Communications Monitoring Report 2019. https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/publications/reports/policymonitoring/2019/

CRTC. (2022). The Internet Code, simplified. https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/internet/codesimpl.htm

Datavalet. (n.d.) Datavalet terms of use. https://datavalet.com/datavalet-captive-portal-on-site-wi-fi-terms-of-service/

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. Macmillan.

Diakopoulos, N. (2014). *Algorithmic accountability reporting: On the investigation of black boxes*. Tow Center for Digital Journalism.

Draper, N. A., & Turow, J. (2019). The corporate cultivation of digital resignation. *New Media & Society*, *21*(8), 1824–1839. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819833331

Durrani, S., & Smallwood, E. (2006). The professional is political: Redefining the social role of public libraries. Progressive Librarian, 27, 3-22.

European Council of the European Union. (2023). The General Data Protection Regulation. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/data-protection/data-protection-regulation/#gdpr

Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher: using our selves in research*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Polity Press.

Fu, J. (2021). *Digital citizenship in China: Everyday online practices of Chinese young people*. Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-5532-6

Fuchs, C. (2019). Henri Lefebvre's Theory of the Production of Space and the Critical Theory of Communication. *Communication Theory*, *29*(2), 129–150. https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qty025

Gabrys, J. (2014). Programming Environments: Environmentality and Citizen Sensing in the Smart City. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 32(1), 30–48. https://doi.org/10.1068/d16812

Gaudet, S. & Robert, D. (2018). *A journey through qualitative research: From design to reporting*. London: Sage.

Giddens, A. (1986). *The constitution of society*. Polity Press.

Government of Canada. (2016). Discover Canada, rights and responsibilities of citizenship. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/discover-canada/read-online/rights-resonsibilities-citizenship.html

Government of Canada. (2022). Digital technology and Internet use, 2021. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220913/dq220913b-eng.htm

Government of Canada. (2022). Internet of things (IoT). https://www.cyber.gc.ca/en/guidance/internet-things-iot-security-itsap00012

Government of Canada. (2023). Bill C-27: An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts. https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/pl/charter-charte/c27_1.html

Government of Canada. (2023). Bill C-27 summary: Digital charter implementation act, 2022. https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/innovation-better-canada/en/canadas-digital-charter/bill-summary-digital-charter-implementation-act-2020

Government of Canada. (2023, March 27). High-speed Internet for all of Canada—Home [Home page;]. https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/high-speed-internet-canada/en/high-speed-internet-all-canada

Habermas, J. (1962). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. MIT Press.

Habermas, J., Lennox, S., & Lennox, F. (1974). The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964). *New German Critique*, *3*, 49–55.

Halegoua, G. R. (2019). *The digital city: Media and the social production of place*. New York University Press.

Harvey, D. (1989). *The condition of postmodernity: An enquiry into the origins of cultural change*. Blackwell.

Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press.

Harvey, D. (2005). The political economy of public space. In S. Low & N. Smith (Eds.), *The politics of public space* (pp. 17-34). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203390306

Hertz, G. [Garnet-Hertz]. (2017, June 2). Alison Powell and Garnet Hertz go for a Datawalk in Vancouver. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8NtDLufj3M

Hintz, A., Dencik, L., & Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2019). *Digital citizenship in a datafied society*. Polity Press.

Humphry, J. (2021). Looking for Wi-Fi: Youth homelessness and mobile connectivity in the city. *Information, Communication & Society*, 24(7), 1009–1023. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1670227

Hong, S. (2020). *Technologies of speculation: The limits of knowledge in a data-driven society*. New York University Press.

IBM. (n.d.). What is the Internet of Things? https://www.ibm.com/topics/internet-of-things

IEEE Xplore. (2023). Terminology. https://developer.ieee.org/Terminology

International Telecommunication Union. (2021). Measuring digital development: Facts and figures. *ITU Publications*. https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/FactsFigures2021.pdf

Isin, E. F., & Turner, B. S. (2002) 'Citizenship studies: An introduction'. In E.F. Isin and B.S. Turner (Eds.), *Handbook of Citizenship Studies* (London: Sage).

Jansson, A. (2013). Mediatization and Social Space: Reconstructing Mediatization for the Transmedia Age. *Communication Theory*, *23*(3), 279–296. https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12015

Jensen, K. B. (2011). New Media, Old Methods—Internet Methodologies and the Online/Offline Divide. In M. Consalvo & C. Ess (Eds.), The Handbook of Internet Studies (pp. 43–58). Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444314861.ch3

Kennedy, H., Steedman, R., & Jones, R. (2022). Researching public trust in datafication: Reflections on the deliberative citizen jury as method. In A. Hepp, J. Jarke, & L. Kramp (Eds.), *New perspectives in critical data studies* (pp. 391-414). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-96180-0_17

Kuznar, L. and Werner, O. (2001). Ethnographic mapmaking: part 1 – principles. *Field Methods, 13* (2): 201–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X0101300206

Lashley, M. A., Acevedo, M., Cotner, S., & Lortie, C. J. (2020). How the ecology and evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic changed learning. *Ecology and Evolution., 10*(22), 12412–12417. https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.6937

Lauricella, A. R., Herdzina, J., & Robb, M. (2020). Early childhood educators' teaching of digital citizenship competencies. *Computers and Education*, 158, 103989. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2020.103989

Lefebvre, H. (1968). *Le droit à la ville* [The right to the city]. Anthropos.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Blackwell.

Liddicoat, J. (2021). *Human rights and the Internet*. Intersentia Ltd.

Lievrouw, L. A. (2014). *Materiality and Media in Communication and Technology Studies: An Unfinished Project*. In T. Gillespie, S. J. Jackson, P. J. Boczkowski, K. A. Foot, W. E. Bijker, G. C. Bowker, … G. J. Downey (Eds.), Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society (pp. 21–51). Cambridge, United States: MIT Press.

Light, B., Burgess, J., & Duguay, S. (2018). The walkthrough method: An approach to the study of apps. *New Media & Society*, 20(3), 881–900. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816675438

Lister, R. (2007). Inclusive Citizenship: Realizing the Potential. *Citizenship. Studies*, 11(1), 49–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621020601099856

Livingstone, S. (2003). The Changing Nature and Uses of Media Literacy. MEDIA@LSE Electronic Working Papers. https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/13476/1/The_changing_nature_and_uses_of_media_literacy.pdf

Locke, T. (2004). Critical discourse analysis. *Continuum*.

Mackenzie, A. (2010). *Wirelessness*. The MIT Press.

Maheshwari, S. & Holpuch, A. (2023). Why countries are trying to ban tiktok. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/article/tiktok-ban.html

Mansell, R. & W. E. Steinmueller. (2020). *Advanced Introduction to Platform Economics*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Marler, W. (2021). "You Can Connect with Like, the World!": Social Platforms, Survival Support, and Digital Inequalities for People Experiencing Homelessness. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, zmab020. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmab020

Marshall, T. H. (1950). Citizenship and social class and other essays. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McDonald's Canada. (2023). Terms and Conditions. Screenshotted in 2023. Accessed on McDonald's Canada Location.

McDonald's Canada. (2024). Privacy policy & principles. https://www.mcdonalds.com/ca/en-ca/privacy.html

McGuigan, J. (1996). Culture and the public sphere / Jim McGuigan. Routledge.

McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. McGraw-Hill.

McLuhan, M., & Fiore, Q. (1967). *The medium is the massage: An inventory of effects*. Penguin Books.

MediaSmarts. (2023). What is digital citizenship? https://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/general-information/digital-media-literacy-fundamentals/what-digital-citizenship. Accessed 2023.

Mejias, U. A. & Couldry, N. (2019). Datafication. *Internet Policy Review*, 8(4). https://doi.org/10.14763/2019.4.1428

Mortari, L. (2015). Reflectivity in research practice: An overview of different perspectives. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *14*(5), 160940691561804. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406915618045

Mosco, V. (1996). *The political economy of communication: rethinking and renewal*. Sage Publications.

Mossberger, K., Tolbert, C. J., & McNeal, R. S. (2008). *Digital citizenship: The internet, society, and participation*. MIT Press.

Mozilla. (n.d.). *The Mozilla Manifesto*. https://www.mozilla.org/en-GB/about/manifesto/

Mullet, D. R. (2018). A general critical discourse analysis framework for educational research. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *29*(2), 116–142. https://doi.org/10.1177/1932202X18758260 Noble, S. U. (2018). *Algorithms of oppression: How search engines reinforce racism*. New York University Press.

Noble, S. U. (2018). *Algorithms of oppression: How search engines reinforce racism*. New York University Press.

Obar, J. A., & Oeldorf-Hirsch, A. (2018). The biggest lie on the Internet: ignoring the privacy policies and terms of service policies of social networking services. *Information, Communication & Society*, *23*(1), 128–147. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1486870

Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. (2014). Metadata and privacy: A technical and legal overview. https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/opc-actions-and-decisions/research/explore-privacy-research/2014/md_201410/

The Office of the Procurement Ombudsman. (2021). *Force majeure*. Government of Canada. https://opo-boa.gc.ca/forcemajeure-eng.html#s1

Ohler, J. B. (2010). *Digital community, digital citizen*. Corwin Press. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452219448.n3

Pangrazio, L., & Selwyn, N. (2019). 'Personal Data Literacies': A Critical Literacies Approach to Enhancing Understandings of Personal Digital Data. *New Media & Society* 21 (2): 419–37.

Park, C. H., Richards, R. C., & Reedy, J. (2022). Assessing Emergency Information Sharing between the Government and the Public during the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Open Government Perspective. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 45(4), 828–859. https://doi.org/10.1080/15309576.2022.2048400

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Sage Publications.

Ribble, M. S., Bailey, G. D., & Ross, T. W. (2004). Digital citizenship: Addressing appropriate technology behavior. *Learning & Leading with Technology*, 32(1), 6-9, 11. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ695788.pdf

Ribble, M. (2015). *Digital citizenship in schools: Nine elements all students should know.* International Society for Technology in Education.

Ritzer, G. (1996). The McDonaldization of society: an investigation into the changing character of contemporary social life. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press.

Sandvig, C. (2003). Public Internet access for young children in the inner city: Evidence to inform access subsidy and content regulation. *The Information Society*, 19(2), 171–183.

Sennett, R. (2018). *Building and dwelling: Ethics for the city*. Penguin Books.

Silverstone, R. (2007). *Media and morality: On the rise of the mediapolis*. Polity Press.

Spradley, J.P. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Srnicek, N. (2017). *Platform capitalism*. Polity.

Statistics Canada. (2021). Access to the internet in Canada, 2020. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210531/dq210531d-eng.htm

Statistics Canada (2021). Table 22-10-0081-01 Location of Internet access by age group and household income quartile, inactive. https://doi.org/10.25318/2210008101-eng

Statistics Canada. (2021). Table 22-10-0144-01 Internet access locations by age group and family income quartile. https://doi.org/10.25318/2210014401-eng

Statistics Canada. (2021). Working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, April 2020 to June 2021. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210804/dq210804b-eng.htm

Statistics Canada. (2022). Digital technology and Internet use, 2021. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220913/dq220913b-eng.htm

Telus. (2023). Internet in Vancouver. https://www.telus.com/en/internet/vancouver

Tilly, C. (1996). *Citizenship, identity, and social history*. Cambridge University Press.

United Nations, High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation. (2019). The age of digital interdependence: Report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation. https://www.un.org/en/pdfs/DigitalCooperation-report-for%20web.pdf

Vancouver Public Library, VPL. (Revised 2015). Public internet and computer usage. https://www.vpl.ca/policy/public-internet-and-computer-usage

van Dijck J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: a critical history of social media*. Oxford University Press.

van Dijck, J. (2014). Datafication, dataism and dataveillance: Big Data between scientific paradigm and ideology. *Surveillance & Society*, 12(2), 197–208.

van Es, K., & de Lange, M. (2020). Data with its boots on the ground: Datawalking as research method. *European Journal of Communication*, 35(3), 278–289. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323120922087

Wavrock, D., Schellenberg, G., & Schimmele, C. (2021, November 9). Internet-use typology of Canadians: Online activities and digital skills (11F0019M No. 465) [PDF document]. Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2021008-eng.htm

Williams, N. (2021). Working through COVID-19: 'Zoom' gloom and 'Zoom' fatigue. *Occupational Medicine*, 71(3), 164–164. https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqab041

Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2001). Methods of critical discourse analysis. SAGE Publications, Ltd, https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857028020

Wiyono, B. B., Indreswari, H., & Putra, A. P. (2021). The utilization of "Google Meet" and "Zoom Meetings" to support the lecturing process during the pandemic of COVID-19. *2021 International Conference on Computing, Electronics & Communications Engineering* (ICCECE), 25–29. https://doi.org/10.1109/iCCECE52344.2021.9534847

Zuboff, S. (2019*). The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for the future at the new frontier of power*. Public Affairs.

Appendix A.

Suggestions for Conducting "On-the-Fly" Research Interviews

1. **Detailed Consent Form:** Have a comprehensive consent form that outlines the purpose of the research, what will be done with the data, and the rights of the participants.

2. **Organized Research Package:** Keep a well-organized "research package" with you. This should include all the necessary documents, like the detailed consent form, extra copies for participants, and any equipment you might need.

3. **Open Dialogue:** Begin the interview session by allowing the interviewee to ask any questions they might have, setting the tone for mutual understanding.

4. **Expect Declines:** Not everyone asked to be interviewed will accept. Respect their decision and thank them for their time.

5. **Be Open to Onlookers:** If the interviews are in a public space, be prepared for curious individuals. Always be willing to explain your research briefly if necessary.

6. **Recording Decision:** Decide in advance if you will record the interview. If you choose to record, ensure you have the right equipment and ensure consent was provided for recording.

7. **Decide how you'll start the interview:** You can begin the interview with an open question like "Tell me a bit about yourself". This allows the participant to set the tone and share what they think is relevant–and what they feel comfortable sharing. Or you can delve right into the interview with a specific question which sets the tone for the interview as a more formal interview. Each have their benefit.

8. **Pace Yourself:** Determine how many interviews you can effectively conduct in a day without comprising the quality of each interaction. For example, 2 interviews

a day at 30 minutes each might be a reasonable number of interviews based on your capacity.

9. **Post-Interview Reflection:** After each interview, take a moment to reflect, jot down notes, and stand-out points. This will be important when analyzing the data. Ensure you allocate time for post-interview reflection.

10. **Respect Interviewees' Time:** Remember that interviewees are often giving personal time for your research, which may or may not include compensation. Ensure your interview time frame is reasonable, such as not taking more than 40 minutes.

11. **Wrap-Up:** Conclude the interview by giving the participant another opportunity to ask questions or share final thoughts. It is good practice to leave them with your contact information in case they have follow-up questions or concerns.

Appendix B.

Interview Questions

Interview Questions
SFU Ethics Application Number: 30001057

Please share a bit about yourself.

How do you rely on the Internet?

Does your profession rely on the Internet to carry out tasks?
What kind of space do you work in?

Relating to your everyday life, do you have any relied upon information and communication technology (ICT) devices? (Phone, laptop, computer)

Do you have an at home Internet connection? Does your cellphone have a data plan?

How often are you connected to the Internet through your phone or most used device?
How often is your phone connected to the Internet?

Please reflect on how often you use public Wi-Fi.
This entails Wi-Fi provided for by restaurants, libraries, and municipalities.
Do you rely on the Internet provided for in public places?
How would you describe your relationship with these places?

Are you satisfied with the Wi-Fi in public spaces provided by corporations?
Are you satisfied with the Wi-Fi provided for by the library?
(McDonald's Wi-Fi, municipal Wi-Fi provided by Shaw in Vancouver, etc).
Are you satisfied with the Wi-Fi provided by private companies?
(Home Wi-Fi).

What activities do you spend the most time using the Internet for? (Work, school, communicating).
Can you expand on any of these practices?

Which online services do you rely on the most?
Examples include email, social media, and streaming.

Which platforms do you use most?

Examples include Facebook, Gmail, Netflix, TikTok.

Do you rely on the Internet in any way to be democratically involved?
(Such as voting, advocating, writing to politicians)

Do you rely on any community groups for local participation?
(Such as neighborhood marketplaces, town meet-ups, etc)

Are you part of any community groups that are not specific to a specific geographic location?
(Such as Discord servers for a specific community with people from around the world; email chains)

How did the Covid-19 pandemic affect your habits related to the Internet?

How would you describe your effectiveness at using digital technologies?

Do you read the terms and services before agreeing to connect to free Wi-Fi?
Why or why not?

Do you read the terms and services and or community guidelines for the social media sites you use?

Are you concerned with the data collection that happens when using services?

Appendix C.

Interview Participants

Participant	Location	Profession
001	Simon Fraser University	Student
002	Simon Fraser University	Student
003	VPL	College Student and barista
004	VPL	Full time worker and part time student; technical background
005	VPL	Retired
006	VPL	Leadership position in a tech company
007	VPL	2 international students interviewed together, attending language school
008	VPL	Undisclosed
009	VPL	Security
010	VPL	Software developer and entrepreneur
011	VPL	Software engineer
012	VPL	Content creator
013	McDonald's	Government worker in engineering
014	McDonald's	Taking a gap year, previously in hairdressing school