

Caribbean children in the digital age – rights and/or needs?

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Key themes

- Young children in the Caribbean **have more access to smart phones, tablets, computers and WiFi** than ever before.
- Digital **roll-out has been market-based**, primarily
- Apparent **ambivalence re: rights** as a digital access framework leaves **gaps in policy and provision**

The cultural “ground zero” (starting point) for Caribbean **thinking on digital access** may not be rights after all, but **needs**

My presentation - overview

- Preliminaries
 - Research being undertaken
 - Limitations of presentation & research
- Access and use of digital media
- The “problem” with rights
- Final thoughts

Questions

- How do Caribbean children, parents and other stakeholders **view “child’s wellbeing”** in the digital age?
- To what extent is **child rights** (UNCRC) **accepted as a framework** for children’s engagement in the digital age?

Research – early stage



Preliminaries

■ Limitations

- Insufficient data on children and media use
- Patchy information across Caribbean territories
- Jamaica-focus

■ Literature sources

- OCA (2016). Social Media Manual. Kingston, Ja.
- ECLAC (2014). Challenges, No. 18.
- Henderson, A. (2013) 'Mature Audiences' JECS
- Websites of regional, international organizations

The Caribbean . . .



. . . and her child



- UNCRC definition – an individual 18 years or younger
- **8.7+ million children** (UNICEF, 2012)
- **Varied countries,** backgrounds, ethnicities, **cultures,** socioeconomic contexts, **all postcolonial,** different pop'n sizes
- **Diversity . . .** like elsewhere

Presentation

- Digital access and use
- Opportunities and risks
- UNCRC adoption in the Caribbean
- Working through the “rights problem”
- Final thoughts

A popular viewpoint

“A certain level of privacy is not afforded [to you] until you pay the rent and turn your own key” (Kevin, parent of child with mobile phone).

(Henderson, 2013)

A particular history

- The Caribbean digital environment is a child of its **metropole-periphery past**, and global economy present
- “**Colonial histories** influence patterns of uneven development which can be reinforced by the **uneven spread** of new technologies” (Kleine and Unwin, 2009).

Parallels over time



World Internet Stats (2016) – Caribbean penetration 42% avg

Haiti 12%

Cuba
28%

Turks
30%

Barbados
77%

Antigua
89.3%

St Lucia
87%

Increase in Net access 2003-2013

- Aruba 58% (pop. - 110,000)
- St Kitts and Nevis 57% (pop. - 46,000)
- Bahamas 52% (pop. - 379,000)
- Suriname 32% (pop. - 530,000)
- Jamaica 30% (pop. - 2.7 million)
- Haiti 9% (pop. - 10.3 million)

(ECLAC, 2014)

Online activities – Jamaican kids

- **67.4%** of Jamaican boys and girls in recent study (n=543, 12-18 yrs) have **social media presence**
- **82.7%** have **shared videos** of selves online

OCA Social Media Survey,
2016



Online activities – Jamaican kids

- 75% of surveyed children **use Facebook**
- 79.3% use **Youtube**
- 54% of the kids use **Google+**

OCA Social Media Survey, 2016



Online activities – Jamaican kids



- **Whatsapp** is the most popular smart phone app – **92.2% frequency**
- **FaceTime** is used with **50% frequency**
- **Google Hangouts** – **43.2% frequency**

Jamaican kids use social media to

Keep up with their friends

Stay in contact with family

Follow entertainment issues

View pictures and videos

- There is a **natural connection** between many online activities children are having and rights of freedom of expression, and access to information (Articles 13 and 17).

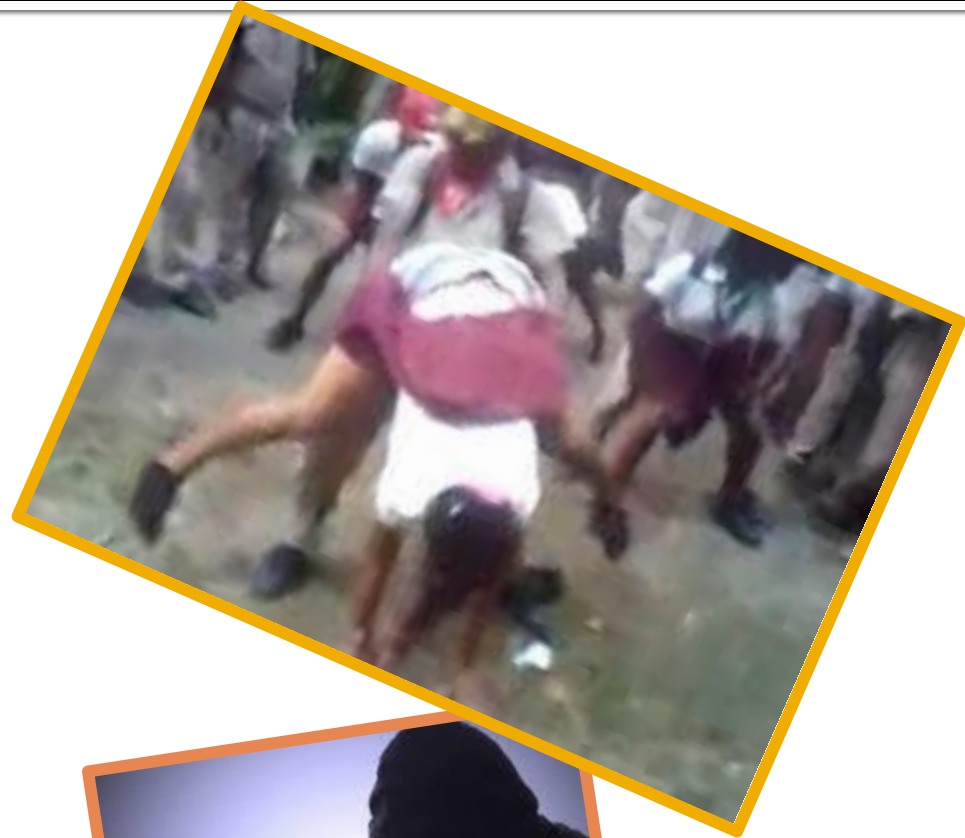
However, possible risks . . .

- Have you ever had an experience online that **made you feel closer** to another person? Yes = 58.3%
- Have you ever received online **messages** that were clearly **inappropriate** for your age? Yes = 48%
- Have you ever **said that you were older** than you are to access a website or sign for online account? Yes = 52.1%

OCA Social Media Survey, 2016

Risks . . .

- Sharing of inappropriate information (Maggotty High 2011 incident)
- Sharing of personal information to predators (Centre for the Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse)



The matter of rights

- All Commonwealth Caribbean countries **ratified** the UNCRC within **3 years**
- Policies, laws, budgets and institutions have been implemented to support child rights across Caribbean
- Jamaica is **not lacking** in institutional presence in matters of child rights – Office of the Child's Registry, Office of the Child's Advocate, Centre for the Investigation of Sexual Offenses and Child Abuse, Child Development Agency, and Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica

The matter of rights

- A Google search pairing 'ICTs' with 'Caribbean child rights' provides **1.6million results** (July 2016).
- **Much material on right of access to information, freedom of expression,** the right to be consulted - but mainly from UN organs – UNICEF and ECLAC, etc.

Important gaps

- **Weaknesses** in the regional implementation of the UNCRC (Barrow, 2008)
- **No focus on digital rights** for children in state-level conversations
- **“Cultural anomie”** regarding the notion of “child rights”

Article 12 “more than any other, seems potentially to give credence to the belief held by many parents that to give children rights would **undermine the authority** of the parents and would **provide children with an autonomy** that they are not yet equipped to handle” (Thomas-Ahye, 2004).

“Many people regard families as autonomous units that the state, much less an international treaty, has **no business to interfere in**”

(Barrow, 2008; p. 3)

- The cultural “ground zero” (starting point) for Caribbean thinking on digital access may not be rights, but needs
- Children must “know their place” but should be provided
 - Good nutrition
 - Nice clothes
 - A satisfactory education (Barrow, 2008)

Perspectives of parents

- Kevin (father of child with mobile phone): a certain level of **privacy is not afforded** until **you pay the rent** and **turn your own key**
- Colin: Yes, **check everything**.

(Henderson, 2013)

Rights in the digital age - Caribbean



Re-casting “needs” in digital age



**social
constructvm**

- constructing in (digital) context
- social distinctions

ontological

- psycho-spiritual qualities
- required for each child

Re-casting “needs” in digital age

Livingstone (2002) - constructivist

Diverse, motivated, meaning-making digital engagement of kids

Children’s everyday culturally significant activities with media

Ellison(2003) - ontological

Belonging – being united with others

Competence – choice, adequacy and success

Identity – self-recognition, patterned choices

Needs and capacities intersect with the
idea of **rights**, but
approach the matter differently –
perhaps for the Caribbean context, more
'agreeably'.

An example or two

- ListenMi.com - developing digital content for children – focusing on cultural themes and self expression - League of Maroons (an app), and Greater Cakes Workshops



Greater Cakes Workshop

- <http://www.loopjamaica.com/content/video-trench-town-children-build-writing-skills-confidence-greater-cakes-workshop>

Final thoughts – a broadened conversation

- Seeing rights as being connected to who children are as individuals, with **place**, history, **identity** and **responsibility** to a wider community that desperately needs them to succeed in the digital age.
- **Participation is natural** when you are part of something bigger.

Notes

- Map of Caribbean - <http://www.caam-hp.org/> (accessed August 30, 2015).
- Photo of Caribbean children - <https://cotni.org/sites/default/files/gallery-images/friends.jpg> (accessed August 30, 2015).
- Henderson, A (2013). “Mature audiences – content, child rights and mediation”, *Journal of Eastern Caribbean Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 4.
- Kleine and Unwin (2009). Technological Revolution, Evolution and New Dependencies: what's new about ICT4D? *Third World Quarterly*, June 11.
- Girl on cell phone – www.rollout.com

Notes contd.:

- Social media icons – www.iconion.com
- Whatsapp icon – www.iconarchive.com
- FaceTime – www.iphonehacks.com
- Google Hangouts: www.play.google.com
- Boy with remote: www.motherhoodinstyle.com
- Maggotty High School dance:
www.jamaicaobserver.com
- Cyber criminal: www.alarmforce.com
- League of Maroons:
www.leagueofmaroons.com
- Greater Cakes Workshop: www.listenmi.com

Feedback is welcome . . .

Thank you!