**Annotated Readings for peers**

[Shaping Youth Discourse About Technology: Technological Colonization, Manifest Destiny, and the Frontier Myth in Facebook's Public Pedagogy](#)
**Summary:** While this article is about 22 pages long, it offers valuable insight into an angle of the technology argument that many do not consider. Large social media companies like Facebook are perpetuating colonist-type behaviours by having users create *habitus* and seeking to promote their space as safe within the untamed web. The article contends that Facebook seeks to create expansionist movements like Manifest Destiny (spoiler alert: they did) by buying up other companies and constructing manufactured norms in those spaces to shape the identity of the users.

[The Digital Divide in Canada](#)
**Summary:** For those who enjoy a more quantitative read, this article from Statistics Canada discusses information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the gap, known as the Digital Divide, that it is creating in our country. Mainly covering Internet use, this article provides the data to prove that the digital divide matters and covers a scale of "haves" versus "have nots".

[Without A Net (Documentary)](#)
**Summary:** The documentary discusses the three challenges of the Digital Divide in the USA: securing up-to-date working devices, connectivity, and teacher training. Alongside these three societal difficulties, the documentary further goes on to explain the issues schools have with funding when it comes to technology and the help provided by nonprofit organizations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and large for-profit companies like Verizon. The documentary itself was made thanks in part to Verizon.

**Supplemental Resources link:**
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Oblu2LHUapbYIG3UTqtzEX3n3SublyDWPAgHQXgPpk4/edit?usp=sharing

**Youtube video link (Opening statement):** https://youtu.be/hLjAdFMXRos

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**SCRIPT - Opening Statement - Made on CapCut**

**Accessibility: Digital technology helps bridge educational gaps by providing resources to remote and underserved areas.**
**Personalized Learning: Adaptive learning platforms cater to individual student needs, making education more tailored and effective.**
**Interactive Learning: Tools like virtual reality and gamification enhance engagement and make learning more dynamic.**
**Teacher Support: Technology assists educators by automating administrative tasks, allowing them to focus more on teaching.**

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**Technology has led to a more equitable society.**
When you see this loading screen how does it make you feel? Does it create stress, anxiety, make you want to throw your device out the window? Now, imagine you have a class cart of Chromebooks collecting dust because

there is no wifi. Or picture your class trying a Kahoot and you get the "Opps, something went wrong. Please try again later." message.The Digital Divide is driving a wedge into society, slowly widening the gap between achieving opportunity and utterly falling behind in an ever-changing technologically advanced world.

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When asking AI to create an image for our debate statement, this is what it gave us. Even technology knows that technology deepens the cracks in our inequitable society. Which is why we are here to argue that technology has not led to a more equitable society.

It is important to consider what we mean when we say technology and equitable society.

Technology blankets anything that encompasses tools, methods, or systems that improve various areas of our life like communication, health, fun, and more. Technology is ongoing and advancing nearly everyday.

and…

An equitable society is one where fairness and justice prevail, ensuring that everyone has equal access to opportunities, resources, and rights. It aims to eliminate systemic inequalities based on factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, or disability.

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The digital divide is the gap between those who have access to technology and the skill set to use it. It affects areas with low economic growth, language barriers, and little education. It typically exists between urban and rural areas or the less industrially developed countries. However, with advancements in technology the divide has further exposed inequalities within gender, power, and democratic voice.

"...addressing the digital divide requires a multi-faceted approach that involves collaboration between the government, the private sector, and civil society organizations" (Turner, 2023)...but can they navigate the unique and individual climates of our world to create more equitable access? Historical patterns say not.

"Overall, according to the without a net documentary, making things equitable does not mean every student gets a device (1:1) because every student may have the **hardware** but will also need the **connectivity** and even then, if you could provide that, you would still need to ensure that **teacher training** is in place to be able to use the devices in a way that creates equitable learning opportunities for the students in all classrooms and schools

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Technology is the new Frontier…but have you ever stopped to think about what the word Frontier actually means? Frontiers follow a colonist mindset that sets "official boundaries" created by authority figures. Social media giants like Facebook, Tiktok, X, and more…step in place as these sources of authority to offer safety from the "wild" and "untamed" web. It is this type of mindset that allows the inequitable parts of our society to begin reflecting within online spaces - handcrafted by the norms set by the platforms.
Text on screen: Habitus is understood as the 'formal and informal curricular components that constitute public education or the way in which we learn, about learning, and about culture in general' (Giroux, 1983, 88-9)...

Habitus taught through the public pedagogy of Facebook creates norms and expectations for behaviour, leading youth to recreate existing social, cultural, and political hierarchies, 'limiting the possibility of agency' where 'people act as they do in order to ensure the continuation of the forces which shape them, as represented by shared symbols, meaning, and strategies.' (St. Clair 1988, 10)" (Freishtat & Sandlin, 2010, p. 506).

Don't you find it sus' that each generation of learners has their own equivalent to the global fake trend of the "Skibidi Toilet Syndrome"? This is habitus at play. It is unlike our small scale language spreading of the past. While Freishtat and Sandlin (2010) focused their research on Facebook in the article "Shaping Youth Discourse

About Technology", the sphere of social media is much farther spread now with places like TikTok and SnapChat coming into the mix. This shared meaning of language is intentional and being used to create exclusionary norms that leave the older generation often grasping to understand what their kids and students are even saying. This manifests the public pedagogy that is formed using technology, and while seemingly offering a great deal of freedom of expression, is mostly manufactured to commodify the users of social media spaces.

Don't believe us? Our classmates have already been debating that technology isn't equitable.

ENDING NOTE:  https://www.youtube.com/shorts/ZCAmU4xBIXg

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## Rebuttal Points

The affirmative side has based several of their arguments around access. Access to information, opportunity, inclusion, and community. However, we'd like to preface this rebuttal with the simple fact that this access to those equitable outcomes is only a possibility if people have access to technology to begin with. And to pass a shout out to Stacey: We also Wish we had enough $$$ for 1:1 student to device ratios 😔

Sciadas notes in Digital Divide in Canada that we need to understand the barriers to access that exist, and affordability is not the only solution as evidence exists that shows even those with higher income levels are also not able to gain access. In a video interview by Aljazeera, interviewee Billy Buffalo, a resident of a reservation in central Alberta, showcases his communities struggle to gain internet access and funding to maintain it. He created the wifi access point for the community to give, in his words "the gift of information" to those without. Unfortunately, his project wasn't able to get funding and was shut down, leaving his reserve without basic internet access.

- Tech companies don't act think like educational entities, they do 100% commodify users to have them behave in the norms they set - habitus
- Affirmative has a key focus on potential - which means that equity has not been achieved, which is the premise of our debate. Having to mention solutions means that problems still exist.

### Easy Access to Information
- The affirmative side has claimed that the Internet has created access for all socioeconomic backgrounds to access educational resources. There is simply no solid foundation for this and the research will tell you otherwise.
   According to the Without a Net documentary, there are many kids having to share bandwidth, resources, or no computer at home. Speeds are similar to the days of dial-up.

30% of students without connectivity having to use technology at the district office on the weekends. This proven limited access to resources keeps students held back from potential with technology.

## Educational Opportunities
- The US Department of Labour notes that "By 2020, 77% of all U.S. jobs will require computer skills." Which in turn means that those who haven't had the opportunity to learn those skills in school (or home) are put at a social disadvantage when it comes to the job market.
- As discussed in our opening statement, securing up-to-date working devices and having the bandwidth and connectivity are but a few of the issues that schools face with educational technology opportunities. A lot of the time, there is useless tech given or no wifi for the new shiny Chromebook just sitting in the corner of a library.

## Employment Opportunities
- The income disparity. A report from HuffPost on employment in the fishing industry in Newfoundland says, "The (Internet) connection is frustratingly slow and unreliable, but it's now a required tool for one of the province's most important industries. Eamon Hoey, a telecom analyst, was interviewed stating, "I see young people today who will be without jobs if we continue down this course because we're in a knowledge economy and knowledge transfer depends on high-speed networks and we do not have that in Canada — at least not in rural areas."
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## Social Inclusion
- As previously stated in our opening statement, social media spaces operate in similar ways to that of colonial powers who competed for resources and land in North America to develop colonies. By commodifying our interactions online, we are becoming the resource to help social media giants gain power.
- When thinking about online interactions people vie for attention instead of monetary gain. If we have too few friends, we aren't cool. If we have too many we have shallow relationships, and are a "Facebook whore." There is no "winning." Social media is a reflection of the imbalance of power in the physical world.
- Freishtat and Sanlin also state that " Despite being an American myth, international users draw on the cultural myths of the American frontier and incorporate them into their own personal narratives."

## Healthcare
- Research posted in the [Journal of Medical Internet](#) Research posted on National Library of Medicine website finds that "Health inequalities caused by the adoption of digital

health technologies in health care services can be reflected in the following two dimensions: the inability of citizens to obtain and adopt technology and the different disease outcomes found among citizens under technical measures. This emphasizes our point that without access or understanding of how access works, the improvements in healthcare will do little to promote equity.

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**Resources from other peers' debates**

- "Not surprisingly, women and minorities are underrepresented in college study of computer science and in careers in the field. And for women, the situation is steadily worsening over time" (Warschauer, 2010)
  - Technology isn't being created by those who are using it - it is catered to white man
  - From an article from the *technology doesn't enhance learning team*

- The data that isused for AI training is often obtained through convenience and, combined with the demographic makeup of the programmers that design these systems (white and male),the outputs of AI tend to encode this bias (Broussard 2019, 2023). - (2024 Kehlenbach article from AI's against group.)

- "As an immediate consequence, the data-poor regions have been further excluded and put at long-term risk of being colonized by the standards embedded in the GPT models. The current ChatGPT models are trained on data from online users which reflect the values and norms of the Global North, making them inappropriate for locally relevant AI algorithms in data-poor communities in many parts of the Global South or in more disadvantaged communities in the Global North" (2023 UNESCO article - from pro AI debate group).

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**Access**

- Most schools have access - but some have a lot of diversified tech while others struggle to get the tech that they have (Without a Net)

- Going to the library during lunch to get access and not getting a full meal (Without a Net) Having to give up things to get ahead

- In a Canadian study on student Internet access, those with home computers were more likely to have developed technical literacy than those who went online at their school or library (Looker & Thiessen, 2003). (Howard et al., 2010) Income is tied to access and skill gains

- Switching to online testing has proven to be a chore for schools with limited connectivity. This hinders their ability to do well. "North of a million classrooms in the country don't have wifi access." (Without a Net)

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**Social Media and the Frontier**

- The outcome of the teaching of social media's public pedagogy is often unequal relations of

power  (Freishtat & Sandlin, 2010) More power = more voice

- Facebook crafts users to behave in a certain way by squelching, trivializing, and disciplining dissent. They do this through rhetoric that lies under the surface because they appear invisible and omnipresent - Facebook's habitus  (Freishtat & Sandlin, 2010) Users are trained to be a certain way, given a false sense of freedom, when in actuality they are being controlled

- The frontier myth, along with Manifest Destiny, weaves together the concepts of physical expansion, economic development, and social justice. Facebook's rhetoric positions individual users as having more power and control in the newly colonized regions of cyberspace.     False security and seemingly promoting messages of equality

- Facebook's message culture's deepest and most cherished convictions about accessing and conquering undiscovered spaces…plays to the American cultural myth that boundaries and frontiers exist only to be crossed, conquered, and turned into profit  (Freishtat & Sandlin, 2010)
- We are becoming the modern day "explorers" even though those explorers are now recognized as ruthless colonizers
- Not uniquely an american problem
- E-frontier offers control of the public pedagogy and the way information is spread

**Consumption and Politics**

- Society should not blindly cast technology as a neutral, apolitical tool (Freishtat & Sandlin, 2010)
- Technology is driven by habitus and that affects the way we use it

- Lured into a sense of empowerment through consumption, and democratic voice and consumer conformity (Luke 2005, 10)  (Freishtat & Sandlin, 2010)  Provides a false image of change for the good while perpetuating the inequalities that still exist in society

- Getting tech from nonprofits and big company (Without a Net) students becoming commodities to be sold in order to get access they need

**Oppression and Biases**

- While French and English are Canada's two official languages, the lack of content in French and about French Canadian communities diminished the incentive for Internet use. (Howard et al., 2010) Ties back to the idea that technology can perpetuate oppression due to it being Eurocentric

- There is significant evidence of a gender gap in Internet access, especially in terms of technical means, social support, skills, autonomy of use, and forms of online activity such as civic engagement. While there are public policy and education initiatives to encourage technology use by women—particularly at the high school level—there are few Internet access programs targeted specifically at women (Boulianne, 2003; Crow & Shade, 2005; Shade, 2004). (Howard et al., 2010)
- Who is creating the technology?

- Searching for a satisfying code to live by, and code-tasting and testing, are features…something a dangerous feature of the lives of today's youth  (Freishtat & Sandlin, 2010) Identity

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| | manipulation and removal from cultures |
| **Others** | ○ Equitable practices requires - Teacher Training is an afterthought - too close to rollout of tech - increased fail rates.  60% of teachers feel inadequately prepared to use technology - Samsung Electronics America<br>○ The affirmative side also mentioned that we should not alienate or disconnect students, but isn't that EXACTLY what is happening right now? The students in underfunded schools know it and they know that other people do. They know that this means society is telling them they are not important. (Without a Net) Setting up self-fulfilling prophecies |

Conclusion

The affirmative side has mentioned that they have 5 guidelines for suggestions: THESE ARE JUST GUIDELINES, how many of those are really followed through on?

The targets are just that: targets. Not requirements. [when speaking about broadband] - (Muzaffar, 2016) Access is offered but it isn't being made mandatory

I just want to add I appreciate the affirmative side's efforts for an interesting debate. Schools (and society) are often failing to prepare students (and citizens) for a digital future either through lack of access, lack of knowledge, or lack of advancement in a technological world that sees AI technology get better with each passing day. This inability to help online users understand the habitus they are being encultured into creates an unequal advantage to large companies who are often pushing Eurocentric colonist behaviours or to those who do have access and are able to function within a technological society, staying informed. This is just not a reality for everyone. We see it everyday when we log on. Intersectionality of identity and members who can help to bridge a solution is not part of our patterns of history nor is it a part of our current reality. Solutions means that problems still continue to exist.

Technology is simply not measuring up in the global economy (Without a Net) where once "great" nations are falling behind due to the inability to help students learn with and about technology.

According to Muzaffar (2016), we should be planning to provide unlimited, inexpensive and efficient internet service to rural and remote households, as well as Wi-Fi hotspots in community centres, libraries and public housing. Those services won't mean anything, still, unless rural and remote communities have access to affordable hardware through which they can make use of them.