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The Technology Bias: What Google Teaches Us About Child Rights

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ABSTRACT

Technology both helps and hinders what we know about human rights. Use of Google is of central importance to both the Sociology of Knowledge and the creation of internet literacy. In this study, different search engines are compared regarding content of "child rights" in the fifty United States. Findings include: importance of algorithmic loading of sites; number of hits may not reflect the importance or accuracy of a topic; different search engines produce different findings; and personalized searches result in different results. Personalization of searches in accordance to one's previous search history may result in people being given information that reinforces their views, not challenge them. This means that people opposed to child rights may not be afforded the same information as people who have a search history supporting them. Because searches do not necessarily yield the same information about human rights, scholars and the public must be attentive to assess the accuracy and comprehensiveness of a keyword search.

Key words: Child rights, Human Rights, Google, Computer Search, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The daily news is full of information as it pertains to the human rights of children and youth, information that is often confusing, complicated, and unclear. Consider these examples: Was the police shooting of a black adolescent male a violation of the youth's rights when the police officer was fearful of being harmed? When a toddler in foster care died, did child protective services do enough to protect the child's rights? When a parent swears at and smacks a belligerent child and a neighbor calls the police, whose rights are violated, the parent's or the child's? The issues surrounding child rights can be confusing.

Assume we want to learn more about the topic of child rights. We likely do what countless other people do who want to learn about something – we go to the search bar on Google and type in the keyword. What do we find? What are the chances that we find comprehensive and accurate information? How internet searches are conducted is a huge consideration in how information is transmitted. As scholars it is incumbent upon us to better understand the utility and limitations of information accessed from internet searches and how it can be used to shape the arguments for, and against, human rights. This study examines how a simple Google search yields complex information not just about the concept of child rights, but how that information is obtained and its policy implications.

In the Sociology of Knowledge there is a relationship between what we think and the social context in which it arises. Knowledge can be seen as the intersection between truth and belief. The converse of knowledge is ignorance, or gaps in information. Belief may, or may not, be grounded in "fact" or "truth" (Hoffer 2002). Howard Becker (1967) reminds us in his essay, "Whose Side Are We On?", that in public discourse, there is

usually a bias even when we strive to adhere to a Weberian view of value-free research (Ritzer 1996). Many people believe things that simply aren't "true". Unlike scholarly peer-reviewed journals that monitor the quality of publications, we think the internet has open access to diverse information. Some may be of high quality, others may be rhetorical or little more than ideological bantering, and some may be wrong and dangerous in their views. This makes it imperative that we understand where people get their information and how they use it to shape belief. In today's world of internet information reliance, technology helps shape belief; belief, in turn, impacts both personal behavior and social policy. Understanding how the internet influences knowledge is an important part of sociological inquiry, one that requires further research and analysis (Crawford 1994; Hine 2005; Kling 1997; Kling and Covi 1995).

Search information enlightens us, but how accurate is the information we find? Internet literacy has become a concern since some information found through searches may not be accurate (Brossard and Scheufele 2013; Cornell University 2015; Horner and Lu 2016; Lillis and Scott 2007). According to Foucault (1972), knowledge is a form of power and can be used to encourage others to see the world from a particular point of view. Extrapolating this to searches, links found on the first few pages of an internet search create the notion in the viewer's eye that these are the most salient sites of information that convey standard "truths." What pops up first and most predominately in a search makes us logically think that information is most important. "Popularity rank" is the main criterion used by search engines both to arrange web information and to reply to users' queries, yet the functional order criterion can be misunderstood when users

assume that the highest websites in the rank offer better content quality than others (Federici et al. 2010).

Computers are not just machines; while not sentient beings (yet) they are constructed to respond to the needs and desires of humans. What we are looking for, and how we feel about the topic, may influence search results. Computers are designed to take into account our behavior during the online foraging process. The emotional state of the user has been found to influence the initial keyword terms entered into a search bar, which then shapes the online environment that determines the online search outcome, as well as subsequent searcher behavior and choices (Flavián, Gurrea and Orús 2012). Marketing companies have made good use of this information, as they send us personalized ads based on our previous shopping or clicking history (Parish 2015). Google looks at 57 different signals to personally tailor someone's query results. Eric Schmidt at Google is quoted as saying, "It will be very difficult for people to watch or consume something that has not in some sense been tailored for them." (Parsier 2011). This means that someone can click on the same news link but receive very different types of news information, depending on where one lives and the interests one has expressed through previous searches. Even if multiple people search for the same word at the same time on the same site, it is almost inevitable that the information they receive will vary – sometimes a little and sometimes a lot (Parsier 2011). Thus, from the privacy of one's home computer, individual information and choices are being manipulated and controlled by nameless, faceless sources (Golsebee and Klenow 2002).

This control of information occurs through the creation of algorithms in which the computer logs all the clicks we make on different sites. It combines them together into a

data package that ultimately merges all these algorithms together to create a filter bubble. When we search in the future, computers will generate predictions that are uniquely tailored to us (Pariser 2011). History cache, geographic area where one lives, and what keyword typed in first can all impact search results. In short, computerized information searches now tell us *what the search engine thinks we want to know* in our searches instead of telling us what we want or need to know.

A problem with standardized personalized searches is that we don't really know what information exists or what we're missing. The computer is trying to read our mind. It may not load what we want into a search. If a key term generates over 5 million results, what we may actually be interested in knowing may be loaded so far down on the list that it will be almost impossible to locate it easily. The general public is largely unaware of the extent to which their internet lives are manipulated. In 2012, the Pew Internet & American Life survey studied individual's searching patterns (Purcell, Brenner and Rainie 2012; Rainie 2012) and found that three-quarters of people surveyed do not think it is appropriate for a search engine to keep track of individual's searches or use that information to personalize future search results. This was viewed as an invasion of privacy. About 68% reported they were not happy with targeted advertising because they don't like having their online behavior tracked and analyzed. Yet the Pew study found that most internet users do not know how to limit the information that is collected about them by a website; just 38% say they know ways to limit how much information about them is collected by a website (Purcell, Brenner and Rainie 2012).

The Pew study (Purcell, Brenner and Rainie 2012) also found that search users are generally confident that they are doing a good job searching and they believe their

searching has led them to find trustworthy and accurate information. Most search users say they are confident in their own searching skills and find what they are looking for most of the time. More than half of search users (56%) say they are very confident in their search abilities, while only 6% say they are not too or not all confident. The majority of searchers indicate they are able to find what they are looking for always (29%) or most of the time (62%). The more educated and knowledgeable the person searching, and the more often they search, the better they feel they are at finding information. These data could imply that individuals who do not have advanced education or those who are not savvy internet search users would be more likely to assume that the information loaded on the first page(s) of a search are the best and go no further. More experienced users have the ability to conduct more detailed searches that may yield better results for them. Respondents conveyed widespread faith in search results. This finding of fairness in searches has not changed much over the last decade. In fact, the Pew Internet and American Life survey (Purcell, Brenner and Rainie 2012) found that two-thirds of searchers (66%) said search engines were a fair and unbiased source of information; in 2004, 68% of search users said that search engines were fair and unbiased.

As the Thomas theorem reminds us, whatever we believe to be true will become real in its consequences (Thomas and Thomas 1928). Thus in doing a simple computer search to learn more about a phenomenon, how information is presented in searches becomes important in our social construction of reality (Berger and Luckman 1966). How does an internet search provide information on any given topic, especially one like human rights?

Child Rights as a Conceptual Topic

The world is confronted with threats of terrorism and human rights abuses. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is one of the most ratified human rights treaties in the history of the world (Arts 2014) and can be seen as a tool to teach children about honoring each other's rights. The treaty is credited for improving the well-being of children around the globe. Yet in the United States it has been met with significant opposition, especially from conservative and religious fundamental groups (Gautam 2010; Kilbourne 1999; Woodhouse 1999). The United States is now the only member country of the United Nations that has not ratified and implemented this treaty.   This is particularly ironic because in 1989 the US worked with UN members to craft the UNCRC. Under Presidents Reagan and G.H. Bush, the treaty was written to incorporate principles of the US Bill of Rights and Constitution. It was signed under President Clinton but never ratified, largely because Jesse Helms, head of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, misinterpreted the intent and impact of the UNCRC (Pangaea 2014). Senator Patrick Leahy unsuccessfully sought ratification in 1994 and announced the administration's resistance to ratifying the UNCRC was due to misunderstandings about the Convention. Contemporary opponents claim that it is anti-family or infringes upon states' rights but "the UNCRC does none of these things" (Rutkow and Lozman 2006; Sealander 2003).

At the 25th Anniversary of the UNCRC, an international audience gathered in the Netherlands, perplexed at why the United States, as a leader in human rights, refuses to ratify the treaty (Vissing 2014). While some people point out that the UNCRC hasn't eliminated rights violations of children in many countries or adequately addressed all

their needs (Howe and Covell 2007; Fortin 2009), the UNCRC is still regarded as a tool that will elevate the role of children in national and policy decision-making. A well-organized opposition group, led by Parentalrights.org, has waged a campaign to sway U.S. opinion against child rights while promoting a Constitutional amendment to make parent rights premiere. The result is a subtle war between child and parent rights at the local, national and constitutional levels.

Much of the battle on child rights is being waged on the internet. The discussion of child rights is often linked to the protection of adult rights. It appears that UNCRC ratifying nations see child rights and parent rights as part of the same phenomenon – protecting all human rights. However, the parent rights movement in the US tends to create an "either-or" mentality to this debate in the US. There is a sense in the promotions by the anti-child rights movement that if you support child rights you cannot support parent rights (Vissing 2016). The anti-child rights movement has effectively inserted its message into websites designed to promote child rights. The internet has become fertile turf for building support and momentum for both the child rights and parent rights movements. Given the importance of the internet, it seems fruitful to investigate how the topic of child rights is being presented to the public via Google searches.

Methodology

The methodology used in this study consisted of: a) identification of what search engine to use; b) identification of key terms to use; c) content analysis of key terms in the different search engines, and d) analysis of state ranking on child rights with respect to number of results and their support for child rights.

Search Engine and Key Term Identification. Google continues to dominate the list of most used search engines. The Pew Internet and American Life survey (Purcell, Brenner and Rainie 2012) found that 83% of searchers use Google. Google reports doing over 12 billioin searches each month on more than a billion topics. The next most cited search engine is Yahoo, mentioned by just 6% of search users. While there were a variety of search engines used a decade ago, today there is primarily only one – Google. Indeed, other engines exist and may be used, but Google continues to be the most popular search engine, by a wide margin, so this search engine was used in this study.

To substantiate the relevance of using Google over other search engines for the study of child rights, first a search engine analysis was conducted to confirm that Google should be the main search engine studied, and what should be the best keywords for the search. An analysis of four of the top ranked search engines[i] was conducted to see how many hits each generated for the same terms. The search engines used for the preliminary analysis of the key terms were Google, Yahoo, Bing, and AOL (SEO 2010).

What would be the best key terms for this search? This was a decision at stage 1 of the project. The term "child rights" was deemed to be important, but the term of "parent rights" seemed important to include for comparison purposes. When it came to selecting the broader human rights treaty term, which would be best? Our Google search found the term "child rights" yielded 1,070,000,000 results, the term "rights of the child" generated 904,000,000 hits, "children's human rights" resulted in 108,000,000 links, and the term "children's rights" had 38,000,000. The key term of "Convention on the Rights of the Child" yielded 169,000,000. While other terms generated more numerical results, the range of content in the searches was wide and varied; many of the links had

absolutely nothing to do with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We found that the keyword "UNCRC" generated terms that also included Cyclic Redundancy Code, Chemical Rubber Company or Cyclical Redundancy Checking. Including the terms "United Nations" or "UN" tended to load information that was not exclusive to the issue of child rights but to other UN programs. Because we wanted to target the search as much as possible to our topic of interest while reducing the probability of getting inflated numbers of irrelevant hits, it was decided to use "Convention on the Rights of the Child as the key term for the search.

In stage 2 of the project, we used the selected keywords of child rights, convention on the rights of the child, and parent rights to compare results with the main four search engines. The searches were all made the same day within the same hour, since we found that the number of items listed on a search can vary across time. The results from this second stage of the project are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Search Engine Comparison of Key Word Hits

	Child rights	**Convention on the Rights of the Child**	**Parent rights**
Google	1,070,000,000	172,000,000	552,000,000
Yahoo	502,000,000	31,200,000	168,000,000
Bing	485,000,000	31,400,000	168,000,000
AOL	1,100,000,000	182,000,000	591,000,000

Data indicate that Google and AOL have more hits than the other search engines. Google generated about twice as many hits for child rights as Yahoo or Bing. Child rights

is well represented in the searches; parent rights are about half of that amount, and links about the Convention on the Rights of the Child generate the least number of hits by far. This reaffirms the decision to focus on Google and to focus on the term child rights as the key term for searches in the rest of this study.

Content analysis of key term in the different search engines. It was hypothesized that the different search engines would not load information on child rights in the same way. Would a search engine that had fewer hits load results that were more on target with the key term because it eliminated extraneous links? Would a search engine that had fewer hits have less relevant information – and would engines that had more hits provide more and better information? In order to answer this, the first ten pages of results were analyzed to determine trends in type of content. Ten pages was selected as the upper limit with the assumption that most people we know do not go more than ten pages into search results unless they are intensely interested in a specific topic.

Analysis of state ranking on child rights. It was hypothesized that not every state would have the same amount of hit results for child rights, as it may be perceived to be a more talked-about, important issue in some states than in others. There may be different views towards child rights depending on the geography of where someone lived. There is substantial evidence that in the United States where one lives is associated with certain political views, values and ideologies (Pappas 2012; Taylor 2013). Some states may have more organizations or resources dedicated to child rights than others. It was hypothesized that the Northeast states may be more supportive of child rights and the South and Western states may be more supportive of parent rights than child rights. The number of hits were measured by Googling the following term in the search box: "Child

rights in (name of state)." Google automatically posts the number of results. This is the number that was used for analysis. All 50 states were analyzed and put into a chart that lists states in alphabetical order.

Would there be a direct correlation between the quantitative number of results for a search of child rights in a particular state and the qualitative status of child rights support within the first ten pages of that state's search? A content analysis, similar to that described above for the four search engines, was conducted on the first ten pages of results for the search of "child rights in (name of state)." A three-level ordinal scale was created for aggregated measurement of the content data, ranking them as high, medium or low. The code of High was awarded when the hits on the first ten pages tended to show support for child rights, as defined in the UNCRC or in ways that showed that child rights was a priority and being given due consideration in the state. The code of Medium was given if there was a reasonable amount of attention to child rights as defined in the UNCRC, but there was also a significant number of links to parent rights and divorce or abortion issues. The code of Low was selected when the bulk of hits did not reflect child rights and the majority of hits were either opposed to children having rights or focused on adult rights.

The third part of this analysis was the construction of a table that compares child support and number of hits to see if there is an association between the number of hits and the amount of support for child rights. These data were then mapped to determine if there are geographic trends of places that are in more support of child rights than areas that are less supportive along the criteria used in this study.

Findings

Searching for good child rights information is possible, but what we found is highly variable, affirming concerns raised by Pariser and the Pew Internet and American Life study (Purcell, Brenner and Rainie 2012).

Content analysis of key terms in the different search engines. To what degree did the four search engines give similar or different information on the key terms within the first 10 pages of content? Ten pages was selected as the cut-point for analysis with the assumption that most people did not scan more than ten pages of search results for routine searches. It was found that the content varied significantly between the search engines.

The Google search engine provided the largest number of hits for the term child rights. On the first pages there were listings that illustrated the complexity of the issue – some were ads from lawyers, some were legitimate international child rights sites like UNICEF, and some referred to parental rights, especially regarding health care, divorce issues, and even why "smacking" a child is not in violation of child rights. The first ten pages of the AOL engine yielded mostly international child rights articles and organizations. On most pages there were links to lawyers who advertised and organizations that wanted donations. There was not a heavy parent rights infiltration on the first ten pages of this site when using the term "child rights", and many of the articles did pertain to child rights issues. In the Yahoo search engine, lawyer ads popped up regularly at both the beginning and end of a page. There were international and US child rights links. By page 4, parent rights links were common, often focusing on custody and divorce issues. The Bing search engine yielded less than half the hits for the same term as

Google. While this site did contain child rights articles, it was noticeable that advertisements by lawyers, marketers, and parent rights and even grandparent rights groups were found on most every page of the first ten pages of child rights searches reviewed.

The search term Convention on the Rights of the Child was selected over UNCRC for this search because it was deemed more relevant for the issue of studying it in the United States, as compared to a more international view when adding the words United Nations and it avoided inclusion of other terms. An AOL search provided the most hits, even slightly more than Google. In the first ten pages of hits, there were no anti-child or parental rights links; links were informational or talked about the benefits of child rights. While there were ads on the right side of the page, they were neutral and less likely to be for lawyers or pro-parent rights groups. In reviewing the types of hits for this term in the first ten pages of a Google search, most of the hits were about the UNCRC either in the US or in the global arena. However, at the top of the second page, anti-UNCRC/pro-parent rights links were already loading high. The majority of hits, however, were found to be child rights, not parent rights, focused. The hits tended to focus on what the UNCRC was and positive impacts of it. The Yahoo search engine provided the fewest number of hits for the term, Convention on the Rights of the Child, or about 17% of those found in AOL. On the Yahoo search the majority of hits were directed at child rights, either nationally or globally, and they tended to be either informative or pertain to how rights benefitted children around the world. The only non-UNCRC/pro-parental rights hit was found on page 7. However, a series of pop-up ads on the right came up on each page, sponsored by lawyers, father rights groups or divorce groups. The majority of Bing hits

were about the UNCRC; it was not until page 5 that parent rights groups started showing up. While it had a few more anti-child rights hits than Yahoo, it did not have the pop-up ads for lawyers and father rights groups as did Yahoo.

In analyzing these four search engines and parent rights, the first hit on the Google search was from parentalrights.org, which is a vocal anti-child rights organization that has a high internet visibility presence. Many of the hits for this search were from lawyers, anti-child rights groups or people who seemed upset with "the system" for denying parent rights. The hits on this search were noticeably different than the type of hits from the child rights or UNCRC search, in that they seemed less scholarly, more focused on laws and legislation, and less global in their sweep. Understanding what parent rights were, conditions for their termination, and role in divorce, were also commonly found. There was more of a tone of upset, anger, and need to defend parents, as seen in the link overviews and in their advertisement by lawyer groups. AOL came in with slightly more hits for the term parent rights than did Google. It was more heavily weighted with links from parentalrights.org, and law firms, especially those related to divorce, custody and father's rights, than some of the other search engines. Having the most hits, there was also a wide array of types of links once one was willing to weed through the legal advertisements. Yahoo and Bing came in with the lowest number of hits for the search term, parent rights. Yahoo had more lawyer advertisements than Google. Parentalrights.org led the list of hits as well in this search engine. The hits were again more reactive toward the "battle against parental rights" and ensuring that parents get rights since "it's the American way", according to the byline on one site. Hits focused heavily on divorce, parental termination, adoption, and education. On Bing,

parentalrights.org and parentrights.org led the pack of these links. This search engine was similar to the aforementioned ones with most links being related to lawyers, divorce, custody, and education.

It is interesting to note that most of the child rights websites did not have blogs or chat areas; they seemed more "here are the facts" approach. Parent rights sites were more likely to have blogs or chat areas, and the comments seemed to come from people who shared the same ideology. Therefore, it was unlikely that discussion items contrary to the position of the rights organization may be present, leading us to the conclusion that these types of discussion forums were not vehicles to obtain neutral or consider opposite points of view. As a result, parental rights as a variable was eliminated from further analysis in this study.

Are keyword amounts an accurate reflection of how important the issue is? Logically, one could assume that the more hits, the more important the term is or more information may be present to yield an accurate reflection of the keyword. However, this was not necessarily found to be the case when analyses were conducted on content in the first ten pages. What we found was that even though there may occur many hits for the term "child rights" on a search, sometimes there was little or no actual information on the issue of child rights or the UNCRC. Instead, there was a focus on divorce laws, custody procedures, parent rights, particularly father rights, and unborn children's rights. This required that we create a way to measure the content of the first ten pages of links for each state.

State Data Results. Determining the number of Google hits for the keyword "child rights" was not as simple as it would seem on the surface. A team of investigators

went online to conduct the search. Interestingly, their numbers did not coincide. The investigators used their own home computers and were located in different cities in different states. When number disparities first emerged, there was a concern that some of the investigators may be using different key words or research strategies. One day we sat on the phone together at the same time doing the same keyword searches on Google, and we still found different numerical results for the identical keyword search. We conducted searches for the same key terms on adjacent days and found from one day to the next the number of results could vary, just hours apart. This finding reaffirmed what Parsier found – our own personal search histories came up with different results, even when the same keywords were used on the same search engine at the exact same time.

In a 2015 Google search on keywords, the states with the highest number of hits regarding child rights were California and Florida. States with the fewest keyword hits included Vermont, Maine, Nevada, Montana, Wyoming, and the lowest Rhode Island. See Table 2 for more detail.

Table 2: Child Rights by State

STATE	# hits child rights	Support of child rights	STATE	# hits child rights	Support of child rights
Alabama	65,800,000	Low	Montana	2,670,000	Low
Alaska	40,200,000	Low	Nebraska	12,600,000	Low
Arizona	70,800,000	Low	Nevada	3,790,000	Low
Arkansas	31,400,000	Low	NH	25,200,000	Medium
California	227,000,000	High	NJ	40,700,000	Medium
Colorado	77,400,000	Medium	NM	63,200,000	Low
Conn	52,300,000	Medium	NY	66,400,000	High
Delaware	28,000,000	Low	NC	27,400,000	Medium
Florida	114,000,000	Medium	ND	12,600,000	Low
Georgia	95,300,000	Medium	Ohio	22,900,000	Low
Hawaii	60,500,000	Low	Oklahoma	16,400,000	Low
Idaho	9,630,000	Low	Oregon	17,800,000	Low
Illinois	23,700,000	High	Penn	6,860,000	Low
Indiana	15,900,000	Low	RI	12,200	Low
Iowa	13,500,000	Low	SC	18,000,000	Low
Kansas	17,800,000	Low	SD	12,600,000	Low
Kentucky	12,200,000	Low	Tennessee	14,500,000	Medium
Louisiana	18,400,000	Low	Texas	38,900,000	Low
Maine	3,350,000	Medium	Utah	8,830,000	Low
Maryland	19,600,000	Medium	Vermont	4,330,000	High
Mass	19,900,000	Medium	Virginia	26,200,000	Low
Michigan	22,200,000	Medium	Wash	38,800,000	Low
Minnesota	18,700,000	Medium	WV	31,200,000	Low
Miss	12,100,000	Low	Wisconsin	17,000,000	Medium
Missouri	17,200,000	Low	Wyoming	2,480,000	Low

Looking at the support for child rights from content analysis of the first ten pages of results by state, 32 of the 50 states (64%) were ranked in low support of child rights, 14 (28%) were ranked as medium, and only 4 (8%) were ranked high in child rights support as found in the search. The states that ranked high in support of child rights were Vermont, New York, California and Illinois. California was also ranked high in the actual "hits" count, but Vermont, which was one of the most strongly ranked child rights states, was one with the fewest number of hits. This implies that the number of hits may not reflect the amount of support for a key term.

The majority of states were found to have low support for child rights. Nevada, Montana, Wyoming, and Rhode Island were ranked low in number of hits as well as in support for child rights. This would indicate that the number of hits a topic receives does not necessarily reflect the actual amount of support for child rights, but it is a pretty good indicator. Elaborating on how the quantitative number of Google hits for a state intersects with qualitative analysis of support for child rights, Table 3 divides states by the degree of support for child rights, as measured by the presence of UNCRC or non-child rights sites, by the actual number of results obtained in a Google search.

Table 3: Google Hits and Support for Child Rights by State

Support for Child Rights	75K + Hits	50-75 K Hits	25-50 K Hits	10-25K Hits	< 10 K Hits
High	CA	NY		IL	VT
Medium	CO, FL, GA		CT, NH, NJ, NC	MD, MA, MI, MN, TN, WI	ME
Low		AL, AZ, HI, NM	AL, AK, DE, TX, VA, WA WVA	IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, MI, MS, NE, ND, OH, OK, OR, SC, SD	ID, MT, NC, PA, RI, UT, WY

In Figure 1 a map of the United States is provided with a geographic depiction of where the states with high, medium and low support for child rights, as it intersects with the number of hits for the topic is provided. These data indicate that the states that did not convey high support for child rights either in the qualitative or quantitative data analysis were clustered in the West, Midwest, and South. States with more support for child rights, as found through the qualitative and quantitative data, were more likely to be found in New England, the northern part of the Midwest (Il, MI, WI, MN), and California.

Figure 1: States by Support of Child Right
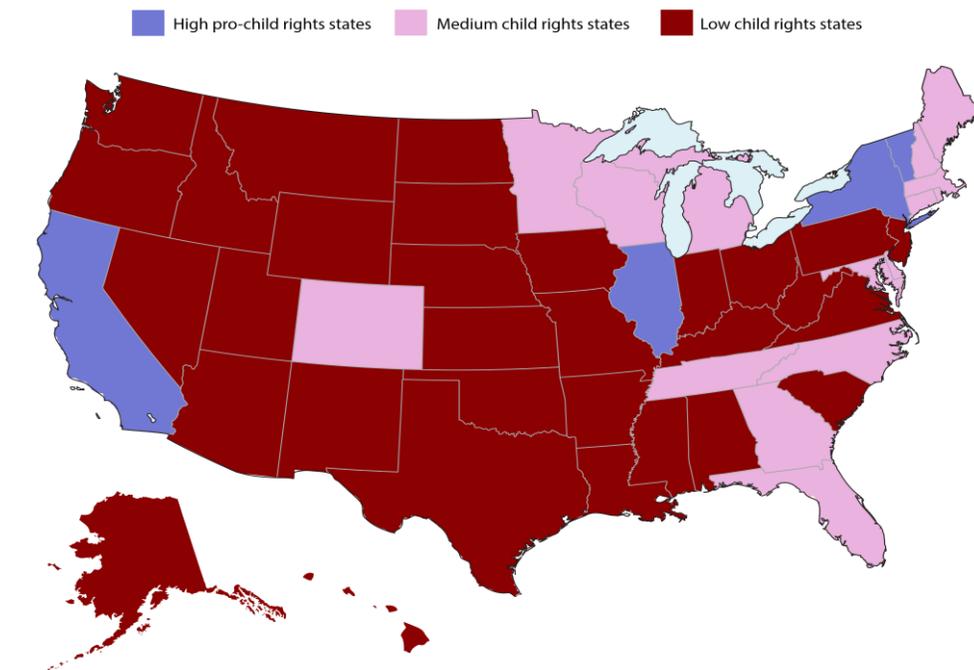
Summary

This project produced several findings of significance. Using the topic of child rights, as outlined in the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, what is the information being generated about it when one conducts a Google search? What are the strengths and drawbacks of relying upon this type of search for gaining general knowledge on the topic of human rights? We found that informational internet searches may provide important and

relevant information on a topic such as child rights, but it is important to realize that search results are tailored to reflect personalized and geographic differences. States vary widely in what child rights information is provided in searches, both in amount and content. Different search engines do not provide the same amount of information or the same content. We found that there was a systematic attempt to infiltrate child rights sites with parent rights sites, lawyer sites, and information that pertains more to family issues instead of issues outlined in the UNCRC. It reinforces the assumption that the term "child rights" may evoke a bifurcated view in the United States.

This study found that the number of hits for keywords does not necessary reflect the importance of the topic in a state or its trend. Only by going into the links and scrutinizing what the content is can one truly understand what is going on. It is important to note that the data concerning child rights in this study focused exclusively on internet data reports. It did not measure legal, legislative, funding, or other variables that would be important indicators of actual support for child rights. For instance, in Florida there is the Children's Rights Movement of Florida that is present in internet searches, but there is also a strong conservative pro-parent rights movement as well. There is significant public debate over the degree to which child rights are protected in that state (Institute for Women's Policy Research 2015). Conversely, Vermont is a small state and few hits for child rights resulted but it is ranked as one of the best states for children (O'Neil 2015). Understanding the reality of child rights in a particular state requires more digging than that which pops up in a traditional Google search. The links that one may need to find good answers may require a higher level of searching sophistication, pointing to the downside of traditional keyword searches.

Figure 1 shows how large segments of the nation are not talking about the issue of child rights as much as other segments, in terms of number of hits. If they do, the conversation may deal more around the issue of pro-parental rights than pro-child rights as shown from the content analysis. Will internet searches be a lifeline to expanding the dialogue and offering alternative points of view for the protection of child rights that are ensured by every other UNCRC ratifying country? Not necessarily. It is plausible that Figure 1 illustrates an example of information silo-ing, where certain individuals in certain locations, given their past search histories, may not be accessing the same information about child rights. The low support for child rights content on websites in states who have low number of child rights hits may indicate that people there may not be getting the same pro-rights information that people obtain, say in California, New York or Vermont.

In this study of child rights information, we see that the states that have the most negative views of child rights are those who are often linked with conservative ideologies, in the red-state/blue-state framework (Huffington Post 2015; Newport 2015). The number of hits may not be as big an indicator as the type of information being filtered to people who live there. So even if many hits are provided, it doesn't necessarily mean that the information is good, fair and representative. The relationship of number of hits, loading of particular types of sites, and the creation of information silos that give people reinforcements to believe that they are accessing information that helps them to see reality or a phenomenon accurately is a concern for everyone working in the human rights field.

Because access to information is complicated by how web-links are loaded into search engines, the issue of net neutrality is of utmost importance. It is clear that not all information is available to all people in the same way, speed and ease (Whilbey 2014). A common assumption

is that everyone has access to the same information on a given key term when conducting a search, but this is not necessarily true. Despite the plethora of information and links available, computer algorithms may lead to information silos instead of a true world-wide-web of one set of information for everyone. Parsier (2011) notes that today algorithm gatekeepers curate the world for us and tailor it to what we see. Traditional journalistic ethics sought to disseminate a fair distribution of factual information to all the people at the same time. There was a sense of civic responsibility embedded in journalistic reporting, as in the days of Walter Cronkite, Dan Rather and Huntley-Brinkley. But algorithms have no sense of civic responsibility coded into them to make sure we are all given access to the same information, which includes introducing us to new ideas, perspectives and people. If we look at people's reliance on a given website as their sole source of information, such as Facebook or Fox News, we become isolated into our own biased networks of like-minded people, who share information from limited or biased sources. We come to think what we believe is reality because that is all we are being fed. As a result, if everyone in our network sees and believes the same thing, we tend to think it is true and real. It is only by the fair exchange of divergent information that we see other points of view and become true critical thinkers.

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