MONASH University

Intersecting fields: Young people, Internet-based practices and education

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Submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy - 0079

Faculty of Education

Monash University

2017

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on a select group of senior secondary school students and their Internet-based practices. Research was conducted to explore the intersection of the participants' values when they considered their educational and Internet-based contexts. As the Internet continues to be used more in a formal classroom environment, students have the opportunity to explore different content and communicate with a variety of unique individuals. However, these opportunities could have an impact on the way students perceive their educational context. The research questions of this study reflected those concerns and identified the changes occurring when students bring their personal values into education. To investigate the phenomenon surrounding this research topic, I interviewed and observed eight secondary school students. The research explored the participants' online and educational cultural practices and the values formed within those contexts. A comparison was then drawn between those values and practices, as well as the impact they had on each other. This facilitated an understanding of the participants' context and gave them the opportunity to voice their concerns, experiences and beliefs.

To structure this investigation, I used Pierre Bourdieu's interpretation of society and culture. This helped build upon the contemporary literature, which discussed the educational context and the Internet. Bourdieu's key terms of capital, field and habitus further allowed me to form a way to interpret the participants' experiences. During the data analysis it was discovered that the participants placed substantial value on their Internet-based practices and the achievement of high grades. They appreciated that access to the Internet allowed several forms of communication and personal interaction. Overlap between the two contexts was noted, as Internet-based practices were used for both educational and personal needs. This was apparent as participants were able to research social news and entertainment media alongside academic content. However, participants often desired to discuss their use of the Internet to relieve stress and anxiety associated with their education. Without the Internet, participants noted they felt disconnected from certain avenues to counter that stress. This had further implications for their formal educational spaces, including how the participants approached their educational context and other individuals. These findings suggest that the selected participants have become reliant on the practices associated with the Internet. Despite the high value placed on attaining sound grades, participants often sacrificed time in

the classroom to access online content. This could have further implications for the educational context. Educators need to be made aware of these concerns in order to promote a sound classroom environment and understand the values of their students.

Candidate's declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.
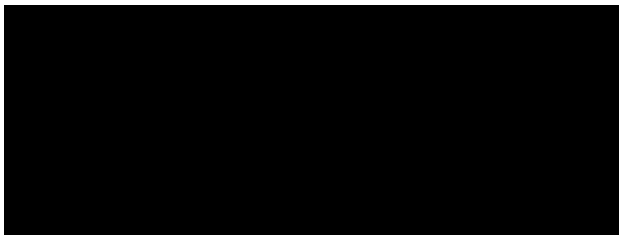
Acknowledgements

When I first began my undergraduate degree there was a letter sent in to the school newspaper. It was about a student who was in their final year of a Law degree. The writer described themself as a bunch of cats in a human suit, not knowing how they were about to graduate from Monash with a Bachelor of Laws. That story stuck with me. No matter how long you hold onto and fight for the things you want the most, sometimes it isn't easy and you feel that you are just different parts trying to hold it together. But I had some remarkable people to help me.

Firstly, I would like to thank the research participants. I have always enjoyed listening to people's stories and you had some great ones. When I was growing up with the Internet, I never thought about what it could one day achieve, and I was wrong. It wasn't the Internet; it was the people behind the Internet. I was fortunate enough to meet some of those people. They were outside my context, they had different reasons for using the Internet and I learnt so much from them. I wouldn't want to relive a minute of thesis writing, however, I wouldn't at all mind if I got to talk to my research participants again. I'm sure each and every time there would be a new story and it would be just as wonderful as the last time. You don't waste a minute on the Internet and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Keep making the meaning which is important to you.

I remember the first day I meet Nicola Johnson. The drive to the Gippsland campus was long and I got lost along the way. But there was someone at the other end and she was always there. Each time there was a comment, which was surprisingly diplomatic, that helped to make my writing better. There was very little I could have done without her help. Not only was I able to get through this period, I also had the chance to contribute to the world of literature. A lot of things have happened that made that dream seem impossible; however, thanks to the significant contribution she made, any fears and limitations were soon overcome. There have been very few educators that have conducted themselves in the same manner as Nicola. I could not imagine anyone else who could have been my principal supervisor.

I also recall when I met my associate supervisor, Tony Taylor. He was finishing his lunch and I interrupted him eating his pudding. But he stopped and talked with me. I wasn't in the best place when we met, but through his calm demeanour and focused instructions I left that first meeting feeling very confident. Fortunately, it paid off, as I continued and completed the thesis. The support network has always been there and it is another aspect I am grateful for.

Friends, too, have been important. Some of my friend I have known since primary school. Some I have only known for the past few years. Either way, I hope that I have changed for the better since our first meeting. If I have, that is in no small part due to everyone. There were a lot of late night conversations and silly laughing moments. Unfortunately, there were some heavy moments as well. In light of all those moments, the most important thing that many of you did was help me to overcome my doubt. Although mistakes were made, you all made me feel better about myself and what I was doing. I hope that I have spoken to you all and you know what your actions meant to me. If I haven't, let me do it now. Thank you.

My dear sweet family. You have given me so much support. Sometimes you just let me be, typing away at midnight and not saying a word. Other times you gave me an opportunity to escape. But always, you always reminded me how to smile, never letting me forget the journey that I was on and where I once was. Despite that support, I was ready stop at any moment. But every time I stepped into my home, I was reminded why I wanted to do this. The dream never stopped. Not on the first day, not on the last. I didn't need to stop, even if I thought I would and, regardless of those thoughts, I wasn't able to stop. That was because my family taught me the opposite. It was a lesson I have had to relearn over and over, but I trust that it has sunk in and that it will be a lesson I get to teach.

Nobody said it would be easy, and I didn't expect it to be. A part of me didn't want it to be easy. The best things in life are the ones you have to work hard for. I feel that I am a better person for doing this. Throughout this experience the best part of it all was being able to hold my head up high. I was able to do this, even in the dark times, because of all these remarkable people who were there in my life. I have never walked alone and I never have to.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter One: Overview and introductory remarks

1.1 The Internet and me

I didn't have the Internet when I was in primary school. Research was done at the library with books. This is how it had always been done, or at least that's what I was told. My parents and teachers often remarked that the assignment wasn't going to do itself. If I wanted to complete the task and get a good grade for it, I would have to go to the library. So that is what I did. If I was lazy and didn't get the books before anyone else, I wouldn't have the information I needed. There was no other way to get the information and that was the educational culture I was raised in.

During this period, between 1996 and 2002, most forms of electronic technology were limited in their range, scope and application. Television was restricted in the classroom and it was often boring. While at home, I was told to stop watching the 'idiot box' and read a book. However, at this time new practices were beginning to enter the educational context. The New London Group (1996) proposed that educators needed to rethink what they were teaching. They also considered what the learning needs of a new literacy pedagogy might address. This became known as *multiliteracies* and accounted for the technological, cultural and personal needs of students (New London Group, 1996). The concept placed a focus on the realities of increasing local diversity and global connectedness. Their initial assumption was that

> [e]ffective citizenship and productive work now require that we interact effectively using multiple languages, multiple Englishes, and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community, and national boundaries (New London Group, 1996, p. 64).

The culture of education that I was bought up within was based upon the values held by my parents and teachers. But, for the most part, that changed when I entered secondary school. Without really knowing it, I and many of my friends were drawn to the computer. It was then that we received our first true multimodal lesson. The first time we were allowed to use the computer was to send electronic mail (email) to each other. We had spent the better half of the Information Technology (IT) class sending mail, despite not sitting very far from anyone else. These were different educational practices to any I had previously encountered. I knew only a handful of people who had computers, and only a few of them had the Internet. While

we were online, nothing was unfamiliar. We were just talking about the things that we would normally talk about. But now things were different. We had time to read what someone had written, time to think of a response and time to look over that response. Our online social lives had started. Before long, the class had found a place where we could chat, play games and take care of funny-looking animals. The website *Neopets* allowed us to see and explore a stimulatingly creative place. In this environment, there was an assortment of themed worlds, various achievements and the freedom to customise a *Neopet*, NeoHouse and even NeoShop. While on *Neopets* we interacted and continued to build our friendships, open our social circle to others and participate in the wider practices of multiliteracy. Outside the online setting, we talked about ways we could improve our *Neopet* and its world, sharing tricks and strategies. A large part of this was done at school when we probably should have been doing our school work.

Then, in 2002, my family invested in getting access to the Internet at home. It was a slow dial-up connection, but it allowed me to continue to socialise with my friends. It also, as stressed by my parents, was there to 'help with school work'. To my surprise it did. I didn't have to go to the library anymore, or worry that I was being lazy, since I had all the information there in front of me. For example, when I was online I could research all the notes for Shakespeare's plays and sonnets; I was able to make some sense of his metaphors and symbolism. Current newspaper articles were available online, which provided broader understandings of the issues brought up in my English classes. Historical dates and events were listed in front of me, as well as several different interpretations from commentators in the field. The information was all there, equally for anyone who wanted to read it. I didn't have to worry about going to an under-resourced library and missing out on information.

In the later years of my time at high school, the social networking website *Myspace* became popular. It enabled me to communicate in a different medium with my friends. In this space, we could share photos, update our status and customise what our profiles looked like – a more grown up version of *Neopets*. It was during this period that I began studying for the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). These were the final two years of secondary school and the stage where students begin to consider what they want to do after they graduate. I wanted to go to university. My grades become vital as I competed for a position that was dependent on my final overall score. This result was based on my marks throughout the year in addition to the grades from my exams. All students were then ranked among others in the

state and the overall score was adjusted. Because of the nature and competition of the VCE, we did more than socialise on *Myspace*. My friends and I talked about our classes and what we needed to do for the next assessment. We also shared online sources that could aid us in the understanding of what we were studying. Besides the academic work, we sometimes just had a chat, just like we used to do with the emails. Although I cannot speak for my friends, it certainly helped me keep a level head which, at the time, was vital. The opportunities I was given changed the way I conducted myself and how I approached my schoolwork while I was studying for my VCE.

Those opportunities existed because I had access to the Internet. This access gave me the chance to learn something new, and the content online helped me to learn and understand what was important. In addition, it was done in a setting which was comfortable. When I was researching the topics for class, I also had the option to socialise. In doing this, my friends and I had a virtual classroom to ourselves. It was created by us in the way that we wanted it to operate. Even if it was not a feature we realised at the time, the Internet had offered us something that was not possible at the library or in class. It seemed then that we had the power to change the educational culture that had been built for us by parents and teachers; we could now build it ourselves.

At this point in my education, the experiences I was having were far removed from those I had experienced in primary school. In Yan's (2006) terms, the Internet had allowed the artificial elements (the computer screens and keyboards), social factors (communications with people), and mental systems (virtual anonymity) to merge together. These factors were relatively new for me and they demonstrated that a blending of these boundaries was not only possible, but beneficial. Although limited to the setting of *Myspace*, I was still able to contribute to the social conversation online and develop my personal relationships (Buckingham, 2007; Livingstone, 2009). As my profile could be customised, I could build a virtual environment for others to see (Gee, 1990, 2000; Yan, 2006). The page customisation, photographs, and how many friends I had were all becoming important. This was especially vital when I communicated with people online and in the real world. 'Did you see it on *Myspace*?' become a common expression, as the lines between these two different social spaces began to intersect.

There was, however, much more than social interaction. At the time, I thought it was quite impressive to contribute an article to *Wikipedia*, the then-much criticised free online

encyclopaedia, which anyone could (and can still) edit. This ability to contribute was helpful to me in developing my thought process. For example, after a particularly difficult philosophy class, I was sometimes overwhelmed by new themes and concepts that were troubling me. Placing the article online allowed others to view that content. It also let me organise my thoughts and become a part of the production occurring online. This was another way I was able to interact with the online world. Even more exciting was the thought that future individuals could do the same. The information I contributed in 2006 is still there today, and I have every confidence that what I contributed remains relevant for those who need help with that topic.

Despite my experiences, I cannot claim that others used the Internet for similar purposes. I did not have the Internet on a mobile device or a smartphone in secondary school. Yet Brown, Campbell and Ling (2011) identified this as an emergent trend among students, playing a central role in their lives. Furthermore, as I still research and socialise, it seems that there are several new ways to interact online. Using social networking websites, both traditionally on a computer and now on a smartphone, I have witnessed frequent arguments that occurred online. Almost anyone can see what each individual had written and often this affected others within my offline contexts. As with *Myspace*, there are several new social networking websites where an entertaining post or status could yield several 'likes' or 'reblogs'. Or it could cause passionate debates to occur. Personal views can be critiqued, sides are then formed and ideas are challenged. Also, as I didn't make an immediate switch to the massively popular *Facebook*, there was a lot of social content I missed out on. Judgement was then passed on me, as I didn't want access to this form of social networking or participate in these practices.

Thinking back to when I first gained access to the Internet in 2002, there were several ideas and practices that were still in their infancy. I could not comprehend how, or if, the Internet would become a significant part of my life. Furthermore, I could not possibly account for how my friends would act in this setting. But the Internet did give me a chance to speak. When I participated there were no imposed age, race or gender restrictions. The responses I gave could be judged on the content of what was written, rather than who wrote them. It was on these experiences that I wanted to draw when I began my research. Detail into these areas allowed me to explore how current students make meaning. Maybe it is not the same place to

socialise and research that it was for me, but I wanted to understand if the Internet still has meaning for those who participate.

Given my learning experiences as a VCE student, I thought it would be interesting to view those kinds of experiences in the present context and as the researcher. This would enable me to take into account what has changed since I undertook the VCE in 2005. In this dissertation, I investigate whether the Internet has had a significant impact on the current learning practices of students. A central focus is also placed on the practices that are formed and valued as senior secondary school students use the Internet. This is centred on their participation in social and academic contexts. The online formal and informal learning opportunities the participants of this study identify with are explored as they articulate the intersection of the Internet and their educational contexts.

To form this analysis, I needed a way to view and understand the participants' practices in context. This began with Pierre Bourdieu's (1990) outline of culture:

> Culture is that sort of freely available and all-purpose knowledge that you acquire in general at an age when you don't yet have any questions to ask. You can spend a lifetime increasing it, cultivating it for its own sake. Or else, you can use it as a sort of more or less inexhaustible box (p. 29).

Within this distinction, Bourdieu (1990) argued that individuals have the ability to symbolically acquire and consume knowledge. This can be undertaken at any age and is cultivated for its own sake. Importantly, the 'all-purpose knowledge' is defined by the individual involved. This helps to not only characterise them but also the culture they function within (Bourdieu, 1986). This supports the formation of the fields an individual participates within and describes what is valued in their social spaces. In this context, Bourdieu's (1986, 1990) conceptualisation of culture acts as a valuable starting point. It helped me explore the reasons behind a student's motivation to use the Internet. This facilitated a way to explore their practices, both online and within their educational space as well as any overlap between them. With this interpretation, I had the opportunity to consider why the Internet has become a place to develop new ideas considered significant by a wide range of online users.

The influences of the Internet and the practices that form online are explored in the context of this research. Once these Internet-based practices are identified, a comparison can be made between how the participants understand their formal education and how they are able to utilise the Internet. An investigation into these themes can be used to characterise the effects that this Internet-based context is having on the participants' interpretation of their education. The following section defines what is meant by 'Internet-based practices' as well as other terms that are used in this thesis. Furthermore, the next section clarifies the significance of the study and the importance of focusing on contemporary secondary school students' liberal use of the Internet.

1.2 The Research Context

For this thesis, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) is the research context. It is the school leaving qualification that can be obtained by secondary school students in the Australian state of Victoria. The full VCE program typically involves the final two years of grade schooling. In this time, students are usually separated into units 1 and 2 for year 11's and units 3 and 4 for year 12's. However, a year 11 may complete a unit 3 or 4 subject if they have completed the first two units in a previous year. The VCE offers a variety of subjects that a student can participate within. These include units in the disciplines of English, humanities, mathematics, languages, sciences and the arts. However, individual subjects which are taught are dependent on each school or learning institution. All students who participate and complete the requirements of the VCE will receive an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) at the conclusion of their year 12 studies. This score, which is given by a number ranging from 0 to 99.95, reports an individual's rank position relative to all other students. If a student wishes to further their education at university the ATAR is important as most higher educational degrees have a set number of places with a minimum ATAR required for admission.

Due to the high amount of pressure present for a student completing the VCE and to obtain a high ATAR, stress and anxiety are often associated with their academic progression. It can occur within many aspects of the VCE experience and affects individual students in a variety of unique ways. Test anxiety is a more common example of this and can be defined as the emotional, physiological, and behavioural responses surrounding the negative thoughts and

feelings surrounding upcoming or past examinations (von der Embse, Barterian & Segool, 2013). A substantial amount of research has been conducted on this topic, especially with regards to the final years of schooling. Such areas include the role of a school in relieving stress (Banks & Smyth, 2015), the role of fear before examinations (Putwain & Symes, 2011) and high stakes anxiety on a teacher's pedagogy (Polesel, Rice & Dulfer, 2014). These themes are echoed in the context of this research.

It is now vital to now understand how I will define the terminology used to explore stress, anxiety and my participant's perception of their contexts in the data analysis. I wish to investigate the intersection of Internet-based practices and education via my participant's practices. Importantly, this can take two forms; the first covers the formal Internet-based and educational practices. These are the practices my research participants engage with to further their VCE education. They can take place both within and outside of their schools and such practices can include online research for content related to the curriculum (a formal Internet-based practice) or reading a textbook (a formal educational practice). Contrastingly, there are the informal Internet-based and educational practices. In the case of Internet-based practices this would centre on entertainment media, social networking or online shopping. Again, this can occur both inside and outside of school. Informal educational practices cover my participant's academic pursuits which do not fall under the VCE curriculum. This can include research for hobbies or interests that are outside of their selected subjects.

Previously published studies have explored the use of the Internet in education (Theocharis, 2012; Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear & Leu, 2014) as well as students' personal uses, such as the formation of social spaces (Boyd, 2014) and identity creation (Gee, 2000). However, to date there has not been a sophisticated look at how a student's own capitals, practices and cultures are shaped, with regards to the way the Internet is able to interconnect with educational fields. To acknowledge these ideas would allow insight into the cultural progression of the Internet for senior secondary school students. Alternatively, considering these concepts would benefit those with interests in education as more information communication technology is used in a formal educational context. If this study accomplishes its goals then teachers and educators would be able to understand the meaning students give to the fields of the Internet and education and what valued practices are formed there. This could allow them to build upon their own teaching or educational philosophies to better equip those young individuals with skills they need for their futures. As stated above, I also make use of

Bourdieu's theory of society and culture to help me address this contribution to the educational discussion. A full explanation of Bourdieu's theory and key terms is completed in the third chapter. This will additionally acknowledge how Bourdieu will be used in the data analysis. The next section reviews the research questions of this study which direct the use of this terminology and represents how I began to think about my research.

1.3 Organisation of the thesis

The educational experiences, structure of the study and collective cultural practices of the researcher have led to the formation of the following research questions. These questions focus the research.

1. How do participants socially and academically position themselves in educational and Internet-based fields?

2. What forms of capital do participants consider the most valuable within their educational and Internet-based fields?

3. What effect does the participant's relationship with capital have on their educational field?

The first question focuses on students' interactions with their educational context and the Internet. It allows an exploration and working definition of the cultural practices that are popular within both contexts. An understanding of how the participants position themselves both on the Internet and at school can then be formed from this analysis. The second question supports an examination of the way senior secondary students interact with Internet-based and educational practices. It also explores the impact this has on their social lives as it explores what they determine as valuable. The final question then studies the effects of the participant's relationship with capitals. This includes the cultural and symbolic capital students gain from Internet usage and its impact on their educational field.

Alongside the above research questions, this study provides a definition of the Internet. This is placed within the context of the research. Consequently, further discussions outline Internet-based practices found within formal education. Investigation into these additional

areas ensures that both contexts are understood as social spaces and that the multiple avenues of interpretations from the participants can come forth.

With these considerations in mind, the central concerns surrounding the study can then be fully discussed. The primary aim of this research is to scrutinise how the research participants are able to use their valued practices to intersect two prominent fields they participate within. If the proposed research is a success, there will be three main contributions. Firstly, a more contemporary analysis on how some students position themselves can be acknowledged. This will be achieved with a review of the participant's educational and Internet-based fields as a means to understand what issues they define as important. Secondly, with the consideration of participant's capitals, this research can make clear what these students find truly valuable and challenge the perceived falsehoods on what they think is important. Finally, if the Internet's impact on the education field can be made clear, future researchers would then be able to use this research as a framework to build upon current teaching practices and provide unique ways to implement effective learning.

1.4 Synopsis of the thesis

The literature review begins with a synopsis of the history of the Internet. It starts in this manner to provide an overview of the way Internet-based practices have formed. I provide contemporary examples to demonstrate why these practices were important. Additionally, I review their continual progression within a historical analysis. Paralleling these concepts can account for values placed on Internet-based cultures. The practices outlined also inform the data-collection process when the Internet is considered. Following this is an overview of the formal and informal Internet-based practices in education. Inquiry into these practices reveals how students are interacting with Internet-based cultures. This reviews student meaning making online, and investigation into these themes further supports the data analysis by considering the student perspective.

The Internet, student practices and students' formal and informal learning are all considered in the literature review. Following that discussion is an outline of the methodology. The conceptual framework of Bourdieu's interpretation of society is presented in Chapter Three. Bourdieu's (1986, 1993, 2000) concepts help to identify the values, or capitals, which form in

a students' context. These notions can examine the meaning making that students experience online. They can also represent the intersection between student practices and values. Bourdieu's (1986) concept of field is also used to define the participants' contexts. This can identify their social position in relation to their capitals. The fourth chapter explains the data-collection methods of the study. Certain philosophical theories are used to focus the data collection. In addition, the research approach is presented to consider the literature reviewed. In that chapter, I explain the paradigm and epistemological framework to gain rich data (Yin, 2003; Carter & Little, 2007). They are all used alongside Bourdieu's conception of society and culture. This assists in framing the study and analysing the data. Further deliberation explores participant interaction and the underlying ethical considerations which protect those involved.

The data collected is then grouped into categories to begin the data analysis. There was careful consideration of the research questions and methodology. This ensured a clear interpretation of the data could be formed (Biesta, 2007). In addition, the literature reviewed was also carefully contemplated to ensure the study could build on established knowledge and address the gaps in the current research. A primary finding examines how the participants interpreted their educational and Internet-based contexts; this is presented in the fifth chapter. Further review of the data indicated that different types of value were placed on certain practices. This was evident in both the educational and Internet-based contexts. The sixth chapter builds upon these discoveries to understand what the participants deemed important. It was revealed that participants felt a significant amount of stress and anxiety, especially with regard to their educational contexts. As a result, they utilised Internet-based practices to challenge those undesired feelings. The participants' perceived position, within each context, was then investigated. These considerations are reviewed in the seventh chapter, which completed the data analysis. Chapter Seven also considers how participants approached their educational context.

The conclusion summarises how the data-analysis chapters explored each of the research questions of this study. The participants' experiences and their personal narratives are reviewed. Bourdieu's framework is again revisited, in conjunction with the participants' remarks. This outlines the intersection of the educational and Internet-based contexts. Final considerations on this study are given to direct further research so other themes can be explored within this research area.

To begin investigating the research questions, the next chapter explores the history of the Internet. It comments on the practices that resulted from the advancement and development of technology. The historical progress of the Internet is outlined and divided into separate periods and relevant examples from recent literature are given. This enables an integration of the research surrounding multiple Internet-based practices.

Chapter Two: Internet cultures and education

2.1 Introductory remarks

This chapter is divided into two parts. It begins by identifying the early practices associated with the Internet, focussing particularly on the military's use of the Internet for communication and information storage and retrieval. Following this, I explore the growth in academic access in the 1980s and the World Wide Web. Contemporary and possible future advancements of the Internet are also considered. I investigate and review the ideas and practices important to those who interacted online during this period. Alongside the historical summary is an exploration of the cultures inherent within Internet-based practices. Formation of these cultures is examined in context; this provides background detailing how the Internet affected and influenced individuals in real-world settings (Rheingold, 1995).

The second part is titled the Internet and Educational Interaction, and the focus shifts to the educational context. Further considerations review the influence of the Internet on education and secondary school students. As in the first part, the cultures and practices of this context are reflected upon, and the learning experiences and quality of education due to the incorporation of the Internet are scrutinised. Various academic uses of the Internet, social learning, identity formation and online personal concerns are all explored. Investigation into these concepts allows me to form a balanced review of the student experience. I then highlight the cultures in which students contribute to, and help form, in their use of the Internet.

2.2 Internet cultures and education

Previously published literature has discussed the importance of the Internet in education. Additionally, several sources have reported on the significance of the Internet in a student's life. In the classroom, it can promote learning, networking and communication (Lankshear & Knobel, 1995; Lee, 2008; Chandra & Briskey, 2012; Doumas, 2015), thereby potentially expanding a student's educational horizon. The literature review begins with an analysis of the Internet itself. It opens by providing a brief history of what has occurred since the formation of a networked information source. A focus is also placed on what the Internet is

for different individuals and what it can mean for others. This is done in order to theorise how these participants internalise and reproduce the practices of the Internet; in the context of Bourdieu's (1986, 1993, 2000) conceptual framework, this is also important to review. Reproduction of valued practices contributes to the way an individual understands both their context and themselves. While this is explored in further detail in the next chapter, these ideas are acknowledged in the following sections.

I comment upon the literature surrounding the Internet and education in order to form a foundation for analysis, but it also helps me to acknowledge the issues surrounding students online. Recognising those aspects can help categorise the social space and student practice. While this does not cover experiences of all individuals, an investigation into these themes can challenge predetermined views on Internet culture (Shields, 1996). I can then provide a commentary on the overlapping of Internet-based practices for personal and educational use by my participants; there is limited discussion of this idea, causing a gap in the literature. Analysis in this study seeks to address this oversight and contribute to the established literature. To achieve this goal, the next section commences with a definition of the Internet, including the possible ways the Internet is represented. This provides a basis to guide the historical account of the Internet and is then related to the practices and cultures formed within the current context.

2.3 What is the Internet?

> But one thing it [the Internet] most certainly is, nearly everywhere, is, in fact, a series of tubes. There are tubes beneath the ocean that connect London and New York. Tubes that connect Google and Facebook. There are buildings filled with tubes, and hundreds and thousands of miles of roads and railroad tracks, beside which lie buried tubes. Everything you do online travels through a tube. Inside those tubes (by and large) are glass fibres. Inside those fibres is light. Encoded in that light is, increasingly, *us*. (Blum, 2012, p. 8, emphasis in the original)

The statement above shows two different sides of the Internet. In one sense the Internet is a physical router. It operates via cables to connect packets of information through various protocols. Central to this formation are the tubes which run through buildings and are buried in the ground. This was explained by Briscoe (2008), who identified that the Internet is based on communication links and interconnecting cables that help form the backbone of local area

networks. The cables' function, in this regard, is to distribute and share access to the Internet for the thousands of individuals surfing the web. However, Blum (2012) goes on to conjecture that the tubes are *us*. This view argues that individuals are embedded within the tubes and work with the Internet to transform it. As a result, the Internet becomes something that has changed the way an individual can communicate and relate to one another. With the availability of mobile phones, laptops and other devices, individuals can use the Internet on various media. They can add content, communicate, live, work and do business (Saban, 2010; Page, 2014). The opportunity to exchange ideas and build relationships without physically meeting other people is present within this setting. Those who participate have the option of becoming a part of the virtual world created by the tubes connecting them to the Internet (Rheingold, 2008; Blum, 2012).

Although Blum (2012) theorised that the tubes are increasingly *us*, there exists more than the presented duality of physical tubes and personal input. The Internet itself began to take shape well before this mass connectivity. Its evolution and history has spanned many decades and much of this time was devoted to developing operating systems that worked. As a result, several protocols, practices, cultures and values evolved. Some of these incorporate Blum's binary interpretation, but the Internet is constantly being defined by the individuals involved. The following sections explore this history and the evolution of the Internet. Special attention is paid to the practices and cultures created at each stage of the Internet's advancement. These are identified in order to understand the formation of particular social spaces that are present when using the Internet.

2.4 DARPA's ARPANET and the NSFNet

The idea of a virtual library predated the construction of the Internet. This network was imagined as a 'thinking centre'. Individuals could network with each other as well as store and retrieve information (Licklider, 1960). Users would additionally be able to access the network virtually, rather than visit a physical space, like a library, to retrieve information. In this proposed system, computers would hold vast amounts of data. They could then be connected to one another by 'wide-band communication lines and to individual users by leased-wire services' (Licklider, 1960, p. 9). These early concepts represented a desire for a system that could hold large amounts of accessible information. A major stage in achieving this goal was the formation of the Defence Advanced Projects Research Agency (DARPA).

In 1969, DARPA explored the feasibility of a long-distance packet-switching network. The first of these to work was known as the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET). ARPANET's initial purpose was to help distribute DARPA-supported research and connect scientists. This wide-reaching communication promoted a sharing of computer system resources – but this was only between users at the various sites within the network (Perry, Blumenthal & Hinden, 1988).

As a result of the above aims, several practices and cultures emerged. All were overseen by the military-managed DARPA. After they were implemented by the U.S. Department of Defense in 1982, computers on this network could support many other functions. Such operations included sending electronic mail, transferring files and remote computer interaction (Arms, 1990; McHugh, 2000). While not all computers supported all the possible functions, the network capabilities showed a distinct advance on Licklider's (1960) concept of virtual information storage and retrieval and promoted wide-band communication. The sharing of packets of data across the country allowed researchers and investigators the opportunity to view the work of others. They could also build upon and contribute to the project, as long as they had government clearance (Barbaroux, 2012). With the formation of these new practices, questions surrounding this system began to emerge. Central to that discussion was the idea of opening the network to other users (Lukasik, 2011).

It would be many years before the Internet would become a commercial and public medium. This was because, in the early stages, the Internet was shaped by military and academic purposes. The transmission of data and electronic communication was therefore limited to government agencies and their associated control of this information. Consequently, if Bourdieu (1986) had theorised about the Internet, he would probably have argued that the cultures and practices present in that context were defined and reproduced by those in control. As a result, the values in this context were determined by the military. However, Denning (1989) suggested that a new environment could be formed where different individuals could have the opportunity to come together and share their ideas. As a result of its efficacy, more universities began to request a connection to ARPANET. Growth of the network beyond military use occurred in the 1980s, as universities were connected to the network. This provided them with an effective way to share data obtained from research (Swain, Bridges & Hresko, 1996). Eventually, this proved to be a security risk for the Department of Defense. In 1986, the National Science Foundation began a network (NSFNet)

that linked supercomputing centres across the United States. As the network expanded to several research institutions, NSFNet fully replaced ARPANET.

Corbin (1991) identified that the network was intended for use by engineers and computer scientists at all connected institutions. These researchers did not have total control, as many organisations had to adhere to the rules set by DARPA. Yet, they did have the opportunity to use the system of shared communication and interaction. According to Walsh (1988), the focus of these new users allowed research institutions to take part within a community, because the same community of users were involved and were able to connect to the network. Together, they had the opportunity to improve the efficiency of sharing data. The practices established during this period by academic researchers represent the convergence of different individuals with different ideas. The above commentary has not only focused on communication and networking (Walsh, 1988; Corbin, 1991), but also addresses the idea that NSFNet was the backbone to localise the community of users.

The use of the Internet by research and educational institutions supported the emergence of new practices and cultures and afforded new opportunities for networking and content creation to occur. Although NSFNet made sharing and collaboration possible, it was only a modest beginning. Progress toward virtual environments (Rheingold, 1995; Doumas, 2015) or wider public use (Singh & Gulati, 2011) was not contemplated. This was because, at this time, the Internet was a rough skeletal structure of what it would become. Furthermore, it only provided the very basics of what was needed at the time (Corbin, 1991). Despite the Internet being used in the 1980s by several individuals, its user base was still limited to those in the military and academia. The Internet itself had advanced significantly for academic purposes, but it had not yet matured to the level needed to provide information to a wider audience. However, what has been noted was the value placed on the networking structure and the practices which lay within these contexts. The following section explores some of the uses applied to the networking cultures. This analysis further shows the progression of the Internet and the practices and cultures formed by those involved. This details the value placed upon the content and relationships built online.

2.5 Application of 1970's Internet culture- Investigative virtual practices

An isolated application of the Internet came in 1975. William Crowther, a former employee on ARPANET, designed a Multiple-User Dungeon (MUD) game entitled *The Colossal Cave Adventure*. Breaking away from military-based research and communication, the program was an adventure game that placed the player in a first-person perspective; they then had to solve problems to advance the plot. The player collected objects, learned processes, accessed information from a variety of sources and interacted with non-player characters (NPCs). They then used multiple modes of information to solve problems they encountered. LeNoir (1998) suggested that MUDs were originally designed to allow participants to interact with others in 'real time' exchanges. Despite the general use of MUDs for role-playing games, their format has developed as a medium that ranges from socialisation to research (Anstadt, Burnette & Bradley, 2011). The intrinsic fantasy formed in a MUD provides an example of how skills picked up in these games may be used in the real world; this is apparent as players can create knowledge networks that emphasise social interaction and negotiation through roleplaying (Zhao, Sullivan & Mellenius, 2014). A player then has the ability to blend social and problem-solving information together. This information can be obtained from a variety of sources and used to perform actions based on the players' informed conjectures (Dickey, 2006).

The sharing of data by researchers, and the practices formed via MUDs, can be seen as representing several educational outcomes. Users have the opportunity to control a character and, therefore, control how they want to learn. These concepts were acknowledged in the study conducted by Calvert, Strouse, Strong, Huffaker and Lai (2009), who investigated pre-adolescent students in a MUD-based environment. Their primary goal was to understand the way their participants communicated and represented themselves in a virtual world. In all, 126 students participated and were allowed two sessions of ten minutes on wireless Internet-connected laptops. While online they could interact and play in the programmed MUD. Once participants had created their avatar, they were free to interact and roam the virtual environment, which was designed as a small suburb. During the interaction, Calvert et al. noted that playing games (hide-and-seek, peek-a-boo) was the most common activity. Role playing between participants was also popular. This may have been enabled by the students' ability to choose from a variety of avatars, including a punk rocker, wizard, athlete, 'normal' teen etc. Analysis was also conducted into the choice of avatar chosen. Calvert et al. found that only a third of participants maintained their avatar identity from the first session. Further,

20 per cent changed their gender between sessions. Changing gender and identity in this way may have allowed the participants to identify with real-world gender issues (Gee, 2000). Calvert et al. also noticed that where participants used a different-gendered avatar, they still acted in the same way as when using an avatar of their own gender. In this context, they had a platform to explore different identities and interactions with each other (Steinkuehler, 2008). Participants in the above study demonstrated that they had the ability to focus on the way meaning is made. They also illustrated how content knowledge is built, via their image choices and actions in a MUD-based environment (Khan, 2001). Despite these findings, analysis into a formal educational setting was limited. Representation of how participants' social and academic environments overlapped could have been useful. This would have represented the potential for social integration within an academic context (Sidelinger, Frisby & Heisler, 2016). However, these practices should still be acknowledged, as they occurred at a period when the Internet was still widely restricted and limited in use. The next section compares another application of this early era of the Internet and describes how real-world actions were able to be embedded in an Internet-based setting to further develop their meaning.

2.5.1 Application of 1980s Internet culture – Mass communication and interaction

In addition to the formation of practices and the networking of individuals in MUDs, other environments were formed. In 1985, Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (WELL) provided another destination for conversation and discussion. Rheingold (1995) commented that the WELL was used as a computer-conferencing system that enabled individuals to carry out public conversations. All conversations were conducted via electronic mail and with a computer at hand. Access to the Internet was still limited at this point; however, some access to the public sector allowed new practices to emerge. In this context, virtual communities could be as diverse culturally, demographically, ethically and politically, as actual communities. These concepts are still present today and were noted in the study conducted by Chen (2011), who investigated the social networking website *Twitter*. Exploring how the interpersonal nature of the website gratified users' social needs, Chen (2011) surveyed 321 individuals. An anonymous 21-question online survey collected the data; this included short-answer questions about their use of *Twitter*. Chen represented that the medium supported a change in the interactional landscape. Participants, in this case, felt more comfortable conversing with others in this setting. Additionally, Chen found that those who spent more time on *Twitter*

needed more interaction. This helped to gratify their social needs. It can be considered that options for meeting social needs are limited in their offline settings. As a result, these individuals are using the online medium to satisfy these needs. But the analysis provided by Chen suggests that there is more than simple communication with others involved; the interaction allows *Twitter* users to be a part of a community. Consequently, the community being built acknowledges what it means to be a part of a network (Hillyard & Bagley, 2015). Although the WELL was designed as an academic base, and *Twitter* as a social networking stage, both endorsed interaction between participants. Furthermore, they both provide avenues for connectedness. Therefore, Chen's (2011) and Rheingold's (1995) perspectives are both important. Individuals, in each context, can exchange pleasantries and argue. They can also engage in intellectual discourse, share emotional support, make plans, fall in love and find friends. All are actions evident in real life. It is apparent that the individuals involved can bring their personal values into this online context. With these examples as a model, it would not be difficult to understand how these practices and values can be recreated, especially if other social spaces and the Internet intersect.

The analysis in the previous two sections outlined that most things that can be done in the real world can also occur on the Internet. With the exception of bodily sensations, the virtual community can be used, or participated in, to connect with others. The boundaries of the online context additionally help shape the way those individuals communicate. This could be on levels that may not be available to them in a real life setting. The building of an online community illustrates how networking can create different practices and cultures; if this did not occur the content would not exist. Likewise, the sharing of content in Rheingold's (1995) virtual community, Chen's (2011) analysis of Twitter and Calvert et al.'s (2009) implementation of a MUD, enabled the formation of participants' own cultures to be built upon. The next section explores the emergence of this process as a public activity; as Internet use and access became more varied with the development of the World Wide Web.

2.6 The 1990s and the World Wide Web

The commercial Internet of the 1990s superseded much of the previous networking systems. Just as NSFNet replaced ARPANET, hypertext information and management continued the process, opening access to a larger community of users. Morgan (2011) pinpointed the catalyst for this change as the formation of the World Wide Web (WWW). Originally, this started as a hypertext project at the European Particle Physics Laboratory (CERN). The hypertext system was able to present the reader with a document that had 'links' to other documents. These 'links' related to the original document and provided further information about the topic. Documents presented in this format could point to items not only on the local computer but on other computers.

Further explaining this concept, Berners-Lee, Cailliau, Groff and Pollermann (1992) distinguished that 'computers give us two practical techniques for human-knowledge interface. One is hypertext, in which links between pieces of text (or other media) mimic human association of ideas. The other is text retrieval, which allows associations to be deduced from the content' (p. 52). Hypertext links send hypertext documents across networks using computers that operate on different systems. This is due to the HyperText Transfer Protocol (HTTP), and the HyperText Markup Language (HTML). Berners-Lee et al. noted that computers are programmed to mimic human association of ideas. This allows the organisation of different sets of data to be modelled on the way knowledge is produced by humans. As a result, these different computing platforms provided the ability to create more powerful applications, open new avenues of interaction and enable different types of technological practices (Witt & Metzing, 2010; Morgan, 2011).

These notions were explored by Forte, Dickard, Magee and Agosto (2014), as they studied American secondary school students. Their investigation focused on how students asked and answered questions on social networking websites. A survey of 158 students, aged 14 to 18, was undertaken, and the research group then interviewed 80 of those participants. Preliminary findings showed that 91 per cent of participants checked *Facebook* more than once a day. It was the most common social networking website used for asking and answering questions. Forte et al. found that participants were far more likely to ask questions about factual knowledge, such as 'do we have school tomorrow?' or 'what were the homework pages for math?'. However, questions also included topics incorporating social activities ranging from

health to religion. The interview data revealed that students were asking questions in this context as they perceived the 'invisible audience' as a potential resource. This parallels the findings from Chen's (2011) study in the previous section, as the student participants in this setting may feel comfortable asking a question in the virtual medium. Forte et al. also concluded that answering questions online helped students build web skills, content knowledge and social capital among peers. The research did not, however, explore how this was achieved.

Despite the study containing limited discussion of why students answered and asked questions online, it provided a sound representation of the consumption of knowledge. It also showed the distinctive way in which participants retrieved and accessed particular data. This is comparable to the considerations by Berners-Lee et al. (1992), as they had noted that the World Wide Web was programmed to mimic human association of ideas. Further reflection on this subject could have represented the development of question and answering practices. Considering a perspective from Boyd (2007), it may have also identified how participants group and consume appropriate knowledge.

During the early years of the 1990s, individuals with access to the World Wide Web had the opportunity to explore a new medium of information. Berners-Lee et al. (1992) additionally suggested that unlocking that information allowed new interpretations and opportunities to form. While not all the users on the World Wide Web may have used the Internet to gather content, the possibility existed for individuals to research and communicate online (Hermida, 2012; Chawner & Lewis, 2013). The movement to a public sphere allowed the Internet to grow into what is now known as Web 1.0. Characteristics of this changing context are explored in the following section, which explores how content was presented to the wider world, how individual users consumed that content and what practices were formed.

2.7 Movement to Web 1.0

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Internet supported military and academic practices. Users at this time had access to a network that allowed them to share and present data to each other. With the programming of the World Wide Web, more individuals could access more public content. This became an overarching concept for what became known as Web 1.0, or the first decade of wider public access to the Internet (Lynch, 1998). Web 1.0 practices enabled

individuals to present and discuss information. This is in a similar vein to an electronic library, thinking centre or, as then-Senator Al Gore remarked, as an information super-highway. However, the tools associated with Web 1.0 only allowed website owners to collaborate or manipulate the information displayed (Hiremath & Kenchakkanavar, 2016). As a result, there was little in the way of user interaction; it was only the producers who could present content, and users could only consume that information. But this limitation served as a vital practice for website owners. It allowed them to establish an online presence. On the Internet, they could upload their own messages and make that information available to anyone at any time (Singh & Gulati, 2011).

The culture surrounding the Internet, at this stage, was therefore entrenched in Web 1.0 practices. Hargittai, Fullerton, Menchen-Trevino and Thomas (2010) investigated the transmission of content online between a producer and a consumer. They researched the content-seeking and browsing behaviours of young adults to explore their attitudes towards credibility of online information. Web 1.0 practices were embedded in their study, as the researchers focused their investigation on how the participants consumed and analysed online content, without contributing to the content themselves. The study involved a questionnaire completed by 1060 participants in their first year of college in Chicago, Illinois. A random sample of 102 students also participated in interviews and observations. One initial finding was that participants placed a certain level of trust in search engines with respect to the credibility of information. To complete their academic assignments, the student participants often turned to a particular search engine as their first step and, when using the search engine, clicked on the first search result. A quarter of respondents selected that website solely because the search engine returned it as the first result. One participant acknowledged that they did not know what the website was when they clicked onto it but selected it because it was the 'first thing that came up' (Hargittai et al., 2010, p. 479). This was a common theme throughout the study, as virtually all participants relied on the search engine *Google*. Hargittai et al. were able to determine that this was a result of Google's name brand recognition, which encouraged their participants to trust the content being provided in a Web 1.0 context. Another finding was that most participants had *Google* as their homepage and that it was a part of their Internet-based routine. One participant acknowledged that 'I basically do everything on Google' (Hargittai et al., 2010, p. 481). These findings suggested to the researchers that their participants did not always respond to the most relevant cues in

assessing the credibility of online content; rather, it was the ease and accessibility of the Google search engine that influenced their evaluation of web content.

The culture built by *Google* has been represented as holding certain values; therefore, it facilitates certain practices conducted by certain individuals (Brabazon, 2012). Without this analysis, the study was not able to identify a cultural meaning that informed the participants' cultural context (Street, Rogers & Baber, 2006). This is a vital observation, as it could have shown additional public cultures forming from the Internet. The analysis provided by Hargittai et al. (2010) did, however, outline how Web 1.0 data can be represented and how it is consumed by users of the Internet. As with the progression of data from the ARPANET to Web 1.0's public use and information structure, the Internet can be manipulated into generating practices. This enables not only the transfer of data or mass communication, but also how it can be used as a general service (Steinkuehler, 2008). Whilst individuals during the Web 1.0 period faced several restrictions, certain individuals had the opportunity to interact with the online social space. These themes are considered in the next section to explore how more user-generated opportunities formed and impacted upon the wider society.

2.8 Web 2.0 and continual user based progression

If an individual places content online, that individual is contributing to the Internet from a Web 1.0 perspective. However, the producer can allow interaction with the content to occur. If this happens, a discourse can begin between them and the consumers of that content. This would then be a Web 2.0 practice (O'Reilly, 2008). The definition of a producer expands when one explores the differences between Web 1.0 and 2.0. Content creators were few in the Web 1.0 Internet; the vast majority of users were simply acting as consumers of content. In the Web 2.0 Internet, any participant can be a content creator as they affect and contribute to the content posted (Cormode & Krishnamorthy, 2008), with the numerous technological tools supporting this interaction maximising the potential for content creation.

Web 2.0 practices cannot be defined as just content creation. Rather, their interactive nature enables interaction, creation, sharing, participation and collaboration. These can then be used to aid in the creation of a collective intelligence for further communication and advanced networking on the Internet (Cochrane & Bateman, 2010). Additionally, with the progression

of Web 2.0 several new practices have emerged. The individual user can now begin to produce and consume data existing online. With this in mind, Peters and Slotta (2010) inspected how computer information technologies transformed a secondary school classroom into a knowledge society. The study focused on the consequences of integrating Web 2.0 practices into a lesson plan which was primarily achieved with wikis. These wikis acted as websites that let users add, modify or delete posted content. All were adapted into the students' secondary school curriculum. The study was also co-designed with the participating teachers. It was then implemented in their biology classes over a one-week period as students studied the systems of the human body. Working in small groups and using wireless laptops, students created a wiki. The pages were then shared among the 120 students. After the pages were distributed, the participant teachers were surveyed, with most believing the wiki lessons helped students develop a deeper understanding of how the systems of the body interconnected. When marking the exams, one teacher commented that they were 'pretty surprised… with this lesson they definitely covered the [curriculum] content, and they ended up learning a lot more about how the different physiological systems interact' (Peters & Slotta, 2010, p. 219). Additionally, the students who participated in the wiki lessons had higher scores on assignments than students who had lessons without the wiki pages. While these findings are positive for interactive Web 2.0 practices, the students' responses were not gauged. Furthermore, examinations are only one way of expressing what type of knowledge was learned. What Peters and Slotta did identify, however, was how students engaged in a community based on knowledge building and produced by them. While not all users modify or need Web 2.0 tools, the opportunity for them to interact in this way is available.

The digital production of tools and information distribution networks has enabled these individuals to contribute to the content provided by producers. They have the opportunity to mobilise new types of collective action, such as community production, sharing of knowledge and the formation of cultures (Rheingold, 2008). As individuals now have the opportunity to access new kinds of software via mobile phones, media players, game devices and laptop computers, they can let the Internet become a fixture in their environment (Buckingham, 2007; Livingstone, 2009). It should be remembered that the analysis provided thus far is based on the forthcoming and current generation; however, it also outlines the collective action and practices being undertaken as a part of the Web 2.0 cultures. Individuals can now access the Internet on handheld devices. This allows them to access large amounts of data and communicate whenever they desire. This is in stark contrast to the ARPANET system, where

several protocols were required and access was restricted to a handful of users (Barbaroux, 2012). As a result, it is important to explore the new practices and cultures that have emerged from this instantaneous access to knowledge. This is considered in the following section, which also focuses on the mobile technologies used to access the Internet.

2.9 Web 3.0's mobility and web semantics

As Web 2.0 was embedded within a user-orientated approach, the Internet also developed to become a place for further democratisation between users. Baumann (2009) reported that Web 2.0 allowed the Internet to be understandable to the user. As a consequence, the next phase of technological advancement was the mobile movement. Commenting on this revolution, Choa (2001) observed:

> Although the Internet affects access to information sources world-wide we do not expect to benefit from this access without being located at some familiar access point- home, office or school. However, the increasing variety of wireless devices offering IP connectivity, such as digital cellular phones, and PDAs, is beginning to change our perceptions of Internet access and use. (p. 435)

Personal and handheld devices are now equipped with access to the Internet; consequently, information and content can be accessed from outside the 'common' areas of the home, office or school. Supporting this analysis, West and Mace (2010) identified the rise of smart phones with the increase in the broad category of 'content'. Included in their definition are pre-recorded entertainment, live entertainment, news, sports and mobile applications. All these elements add functionality to the device.

Applications, commonly known as apps, also contributed to the value-creating process. Their importance lies in the individual, who is able to choose what application they desire on their mobile device. By having specific applications, the user is able to access their tailored Internet. They can then swiftly access and receive the content they desire while they are mobile (West & Mace, 2010). In view of these applications, individuals have the opportunity to alter already-established Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 cultures. Exploring these themes, Squire and Dikkers (2012) investigated smart phone use among secondary school students. To conduct the study, they purchased four iPhone 3s with unlimited phone and data plans. Each

of the ten participants used the phone for three weeks. During this time, they kept journals in which they could write about their experiences. The data logs and applications on the phones were reviewed alongside researcher observations and participant interviews. Squire and Dikkers found that the students' downloaded applications served two purposes. The first contributed to the way they learned, and was achieved through note-taking tools. The second was relaxation, for which communication via social networking and mobile were popular. One participant noted that they could receive any question and then 'pretty much get it instantly because it's on your phone and you're always going to have it' (Squire & Dikkers, 2012, p. 453). The mobile platform, in this instance, was prominent for these participants. This was reiterated by another participant (prior to receiving the iPhone 3s) who believed that 'my phone doesn't have Internet so I can't do anything with it… I can't check my Facebook. I can't check my Myspace. Or my email' (Squire & Dikkers, 2012, p. 446). The individuals using these devices are in a position to receive the messages of others, in a manner that they understand and that is unique to their context. What is also noteworthy in this study is the dependence the participants have on their phones. The social context they participate within and define has placed certain values on these devices. As a result of the applications on the mobiles, participants could shape their practices to suit their needs (Rheingold, 2005).

Similar findings appeared in a study by Garcia-Castanon, Rank and Barreto (2011). They reviewed how individuals functioned when new technological practices emerged. Their study documented the online presence of an American presidential election. In consideration of new/youth voters and ethnic minorities, Garcia-Castanon et al. noted a new type of access occurring, not with the Internet itself but in participation in the political discussion online. A primary finding from the online survey of 4063 participants was that new Internet-based political practices emerged. These appeared on third-party social networking websites, viral videos and online campaigns. As these features were not overly present in past elections, Garcia-Castanon et al. argued that political parties were able to reach new supporters. Their findings revealed that two thirds of the young participants accessed some form of online political activity, ranging from participating in online discussions to signing up with a political party to receive future content. As a result, each individual who participated went about discovering content and participating differently. This provided the opportunity for the participants to form their own unique ideas and become producers of new content and information. The analysis indicated that the online political activities were more than an information-gathering endeavour; rather, participants could explore, promote and develop

their own ideas as they had access to the content being produced. Garcia-Castanon et al.'s study identified what this progress could allow. While the analysis was detailed, the discussion could have also mentioned the effects on the political candidates. This would have shown the intersection between the producers and consumers of online content. They did, however, make note of the way wider participation increased and its effects on participants. This can be compared to the Squire and Dikkers (2012) report. The participants in Squire and Dikkers's study represented the ability for investigative research, which was conducted while having access to the Internet in a mobile setting.

An additional feature of these applications is a user's ability to display information from an individual's Internet history. The Semantic Web provides a unifying representation of richly structured data (d'Aquin & Motta, 2011). Individuals can share their data representations, and this provides applications with enough data to make 'decisions' combining the user's personalised content (Berners-Lee, Connolly, Kagal & Scharf, 2008). Gruber (2008) additionally stated that semantic applications exist as a social system. While the data may not be entirely accurate, the applications provide 'links' to content which may benefit the user. These 'links' parallel the 'links' of Web 1.0. However, the mobile 'links' are formed by the technology as the user does not need to search for anything themselves.

Analysing the applications of the Semantic Web, Dimopoulos and Asimakopoulos (2010) reviewed the online navigation patterns of ten secondary school students in a Greek context. The students, all aged 15 years, had one session to use the Internet to answer five prompts on cloning. The average time to complete this task was 53 minutes. Students who visited the fewest sites to find relevant content were found to be frequent users of the Internet. As a result, Dimopoulos and Asimakopoulos determined that they had higher domain knowledge. This empowered those participants to access websites that could link them to relevant information. In contrast, the participants who rarely used the Internet had difficulty accessing relevant information. An example of this came from one participant who visited 89 websites in 51 minutes. Dimopoulos and Asimakopoulos also found that certain pages were identified as having high holding power; this was because the content was relevant, but also because it supported semantic access to other relevant content. Students who were able to link related images online could access appropriate content in an effective manner. The study by Dimopoulos and Asimakopoulos was able to represent the ease of navigation online with semantic practices. However, notwithstanding this finding, the capability of the Semantic

Web is restricted; despite the capabilities of these digital devices, content and its application only changes if the individual makes the change (Jenkins, 2006). This further represents the values found important by participants.

2.10 Summary of Part 1

In less than fifty years the Internet transformed from DARPA's ARPANET to a network used on personal mobile devices. The analysis in this chapter represented the emergence of several practices and cultures which formed at different stages of the Internet's development. Complementary studies reveal that these practices can form and be used in different ways by different individuals. As a result of these differences, individuals can choose what they consume online. Initial Internet-based practices centred on the transmission and expansion of knowledge. Studies from Garcia-Castanon, Rank and Barreto (2011) and Peters and Slotta (2010) presented the consequences surrounding access to a new network. As the Internet became more accessible, and more widely used, the research literature noted the formation of content-gathering practices and some possible applications. These uses ranged from certain members of the military and academic groups being able to store and retrieve content on ARPANET, to use by any individual who could afford the World Wide Web during the 1990s. It gave individuals the chance to play games and research online and, as a result, this allowed them to participate and shape new cultures (Gee, 2006).

With the Internet's incorporation of new technologies and ever-wider public access, several studies have investigated mobile and interactive use (Peters & Slotta, 2010; Squire & Dikkers, 2012). Also discussed was the formation of social and networking practices (Dimopoulos & Asimakopoulos, 2010). Taken together, one conclusion from these studies was that some individuals were able to interact with advancing practices, and could then redefine what those practices mean to them. By personalising the Internet, individuals' practices can represent a meaningful depiction of their values. While these concepts are important, there are other issues that need to be addressed to gain a complete view of the implications of informal and formal practices. The second half of this chapter considers those concerns within the educational context. Reflection is given to the way secondary school students have adapted their personal practices with regard to their access to the Internet. Also considered is the Internet's integration into their education. This context is vital for investigation as technology is becoming more prevalent in this field. Understanding how different groups use that technology helps us understand the formation of society and cultures (New London Group,

1996). Additionally, secondary school students have the opportunity to learn and communicate within this context. They can then contribute to the creation of the online world. Buckingham (2007) promoted the importance of understanding this digital life, stating 'compared with my own childhood, in which the arrival of a third television channel was the limit of my technological innovation, theirs is a media world of infinite diversity and creativity' (p. 76). Understanding youth and their everyday lives helps define the contexts they operate within. This is critical in consideration of their education and Internet use.

2.11 The Internet and educational interaction

Investigation into formal and informal educational experiences of secondary school students has taken many paths. Recent literature has focused on students' opportunities to form an identity (Gee, 2006; Wright, 2016), learn socially (Lee, 2008; Mills, 2010; Davies, 2012) and understand how to interact with one another (Boyd, 2009, 2014). Besides these themes, there has also been a focus on how secondary school students explore new functions for reference, communication and networking (Honan, 2012). Further exploration is required to understand the formation of new practices and cultures (Choa, 2001; West & Mace, 2010) regarding the place of the Internet within current educational practices.

With the expanding use of the Internet in formal educational settings (Lam, 2000, 2006; Livingstone, 2009), students have a virtual educational learning environment. With correct instruction from their educators, students can consider how meaning is made. But they can also decide on what practices and cultures to participate in with regard to their social context (Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Glazewski, Newby & Ertmer, 2010). Emphasis should, therefore, be placed on the students as the Internet is used both in their educational context and to help them build and maintain their social relationships (Faux & Black-Hughes, 2000; Smart & Cappel, 2006; Steinkuehler, 2008; Girvan & Savage, 2010). However, it must be remembered that not all students have an equal learning experience. There exists a difference regarding their socio-economic position (Holsinger & Jacob, 2009), the quality of the education (Fischer, 2011) and the way they learn (Donnor, 2012).

The second part of this chapter focuses on the use of the Internet in a formal educational context and the way the Internet is used to enhance and contribute to learning (Parycek, Sachs & Schossbock, 2011). The social aspects and learning being undertaken in the online social

space are also considered to help construct a background on the environment surrounding the Internet and its use in education. This additionally provides a platform to answer the research questions of this study.

2.12 The impact of the Internet on education

The Internet has become a device for the further development of educational practices and cultures. As a result, there have been several changes in the way students experience education. Students, in their first year of compulsory education, are being introduced to apps through 'smart' devices to assist with their learning and development (Lynch & Redpath, 2012). While teachers may differ on in-class practices, digital literacy and competency appears to be a vital endeavour in current educational practice. Subsequent research into these practices has uncovered both adverse and complementary effects. This affects both students and teachers in their use of digital resources in education (Frye, Trathen & Koppenhaver, 2010). Yilmaz and Orhan (2010) assessed these themes as they observed and surveyed a research sample of 921 secondary school students. They investigated the students' Internet usage and educational needs in a Turkish context. Yilmaz and Orhan's central focus was on how students were able to learn. One conclusion was that students used the Internet for educational needs, but only when they were positively directed by their teachers. In contrast, if there was limited structure in the class, participants would socialise online. In both cases, there was a strong emphasis on learning with the use of the Internet. In one sense, that stemmed from educational practices. Participants could then engage with formal learning. In another sense, participants desired social content. This helped inform their social practices. The participants of this study were also categorised into two groups: 'surface learners', who mainly chose to memorise the course materials, and 'deep learners', who wanted to grasp the meaning of the content. Yilmaz and Orhan noted that both groups of learners had similar approaches in using the Internet for educational purposes. Each group was able to control its learning practices and use the environment as 'an appropriate tool for their search for learning' (Yilmaz & Orhan, 2010, p. 108). These findings raise an interesting perspective on the way the participants use the Internet. Learning can take place across physical and cyber spaces. It can also provide learners with an array of choices about how they learn (Baron & Ling, 2011; Wright, Rich & Leatham, 2012). As a result, the students in this study comprehended and appreciated education in their own way. They also used it to contribute to their own personal social spaces (Westera, 2012). Yilmaz and Orhan's study partly

demonstrated these ideas. However, despite the opportunities surrounding the Internet as a resource for formal education, it is important to remember that the consequences can be both positive and negative. Investigation into this consideration was limited in Yilmaz and Orhan's study. While there have been claims that inclusion of the Internet has allowed young people to be liberated, those claims should be challenged. This technology may cause harm, or become an ineffective substitute for education and learning (Buckingham, 2007; Christofides, Muise & Desmarais, 2012; Fuchs, 2013).

Reviewing those potential consequences and investigating the possible 'overuse' of the Internet, Gencer and Koc (2012) sampled teenage secondary school students. The study compared the time spent on the Internet to their grades and social behaviours. After administering a paper-based questionnaire to 1380 Turkish students, Gencer and Koc found that participants who were considered to have poor academic achievement had higher levels of Internet use. This was in contrast to those who were perceived to have an average or high grade. These findings suggested a negative link between Internet use and grades. Additional concerns on these themes were raised by Miltsakaki (2012). She commented on American and Greek middle-school students. The focus in this study was on students' inability to judge the value and quality of academic content online. This was also investigated by Näsi and Koivusilta (2013). They determined that, among young Finnish individuals, there has been a decline in concentration and focus. This occurred while students used digital devices in the classroom.

A subsequent study in Hong Kong by Leung and Lee (2011) examined 719 participants, aged nine to nineteen. They centred on students' social circumstances and their experiences of Internet-based risks. Evidence from interviews and questionnaires indicated social networking websites were considered to be 'addictive', with 80 per cent of their participants responding in the positive, suggesting they missed class because they wanted to go online. This was set alongside half of the respondents claiming that they had been in trouble while using the Internet at school—they were either off topic or using the Internet when they should not have been. After further analysis, Leung and Lee found that individuals who were competent in generating content online do so to satisfy their social and psychological needs. This was achieved via socialising, interacting with others, seeking recognition, and in entertainment. Although personal considerations are placed alongside educational ones, both sets of issues illustrate the importance of the Internet for students. It also recognises the

potential negative consequences of overuse, lack of focus and poor student grades. While this can be considered a negative for students, educators must also address the potential imbalance online between educational and social/leisure practices of their students.

Both the Leung and Lee (2011) and the Gencer and Koc (2012) studies exposed the potential hazards of using the Internet in educational settings. They also, importantly, highlighted the choices that lie at the forefront of this new environment. While it would appear that there are opportunities to enhance, or degrade, educational outcomes, the reasons driving student Internet use was not apparent in these studies. Surveys were used in both studies as the primary method of data collection. This technique only investigates a part of the entire picture (Yin, 2003). Further in-depth exploration of student practices is needed. This can clarify and understand the opportunities present in that context. Researchers could then consider why students participate online in this way.

The discussion developed from the research literature above provided a starting point to acknowledge the Internet's use within education. The effects on young individuals can now be examined. It would be difficult, however, to suggest that the Internet is exclusively useful or harmful. There are both positive and negative consequences for educational use (Finkelhor, 2014). To further investigate this position, a comparative view is provided in the forthcoming section. It reviews how different educationally based practices help define and meet technological challenges and opportunities. The analysis discusses how the Internet has become an instigator of change and development in education, with regard to its use for communication and reference. Special attention is paid to the different uses of the Internet in the context of student education. This helps describe and understand the intersection of their learning with Internet-based practices.

2.13 The Internet for educational communication and reference

The first half of this chapter noted that early Internet-based practices involved connecting researchers from across the United States. The protocols established during this time supported those involved with government clearance. With a connection to the network, these individuals could communicate and share research documents (Arms, 1990; Targowski, 2005). Individuals today still have the opportunity to access information and research content. However, with wider public access this is not limited to those in the military or academia. For students, this can be one type of reference while they utilise Internet-based practices. Access can be at any given time without being exposed to the linear movement of written text (Jewitt, 2008; Gerhands & Schafer, 2010). As a result, students with a connection to the Internet, have instant access to information and global resources that can further their education. But this is only one educational avenue. While on the Internet students can join other individuals in a space where they can communicate. There they can share their ideas surrounding their interests and do so in a variety of different mediums. It is, therefore, important to explore the implementation of the Internet and its various uses in education (Jones & DeWalt, 2012). The following sections consider the Internet and the practices formed by individuals in the educational setting. This section primarily focuses on the Internet's use for educational communication and reference.

Communication via the Internet has become a major factor in reviews of the Internet's impact on the educational context. In 2012, Chandra and Briskey investigated the use of web-based practices. This was conducted in two secondary school mathematics classes of 58 students at an inner city school in Queensland, Australia. One class used web-based practices while the other did not. These web-based practices included games, quizzes, videos as well as an educational website. All had visual and sound components. An initial finding suggested that the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and web-based applications had a positive impact on students and their learning outcomes. The class who used web-based practices performed higher in standardised testing. Those students additionally noted that the ICT-based learning activities aided their learning process. One student claimed the web-based components supported their approach to educational tasks. When answering questions on a web application, they were able to instantly find out the correct answer. If the answer was incorrect, the application showed students the answer to the solution. It should be noted that these practices did not have a significant impact on all students, and that standardised testing

is only one way to review how students learn. But Chandra and Briskey were able to conclude that the majority of the students found technology usage in the class to be an engaging experience. This was apparent as they could interact with the content by discovering the correct and incorrect solutions themselves. A prevalent theme in this study is that web-based practices seem to have enhanced teaching and learning. This was enabled by various voice and visual sensors to achieve multiple tasks. As this interaction occurred in an online setting it supported the participants' interaction with each other. It also supported their own capabilities so they were 'not limited by a one-size-fits-all programme' (Gómez, Huete, Hoyos, Perez & Grigori, 2013, p. 134).

Merging both the communication and referencing benefits, Light and Polin (2010) investigated both secondary school teachers and students in relation to the learning affordances of blogs, wikis and other Web 2.0 tools. Over the course of two years, they interviewed and observed 12 educators and their classes. Support for a digital learning environment was a central finding. Web-based applications, like *Google Earth*, aided both students and teachers. Together, the teachers and students could collaborate and gain knowledge about specific content. Light and Polin's study also contended that online communication provided several new opportunities. Teachers could now communicate more regularly with the students' parents and other educators, and this furthered the interaction and application of the educational culture outside the classroom. It also supported an extension of the teachers' philosophy. Parents of students could then clarify any gaps present in their child's learning. As a result, each student had a personalised learning experience. This allows the teachers' pedagogy to intersect with the students' practices as they navigate and explore online (Dowdell, 2013). The findings of the studies above suggest that it is important to equip students with new technology and the Internet. However, Internet-based practices are unique for each individual (Boyd, 2007). Effective education which makes use of the Internet is, therefore, reliant on the way both students and teachers choose to engage with new media and the Internet (Schuck, Aubusson & Kearney, 2010). As this consideration was not mentioned in any of these studies, it is important to note that the Internet cannot create new education; rather, it offers an opportunity for practices and cultures to form (Jenkins, 2006). It is also vital to remember that other practices can emerge from the Internet, and that these may also affect the formal educational context (Ward & Prosser, 2011).

The section above explored the uses of the Internet as a tool for reference and communication. The considerations raised in the above studies help show some of the ways content is accessed. As the research was set in the educational context, these practices also supported the way students build knowledge. These studies also emphasised that engagement with the Internet is a paramount factor in its application and use. This was apparent in the construction of new practices that formed when the Internet was implemented for formal educational use (Light & Polin, 2010; Chandra & Briskey, 2012). Building on these studies, it is important to understand other reasons behind student engagement with the Internet. The upcoming section considers the social aspects found in education and online learning. The review outlines informal applications of the Internet and helps to show the formation of an online social educational context. Informal practices that affect the formal educational setting are also considered.

2.14 Social learning

The literature above discussed how the online world enables several avenues of literacy practice for communication and reference. By moving away from print-based media to the Internet, individuals have a chance to access large amounts of content. Accompanying this benefit is the opportunity for mass-scale communication online. This is because the variety and amount of content is limited only by what the individual chooses to explore and investigate. It is, therefore, pivotal to understand some of the ways young individuals interact with online content as they have the opportunity to consume and produce new content online in their informal learning environments.

Focusing on the impact of the social networking website *Facebook*, Davies (2012) documented the significance of new literacy practices and the different ways individuals are now 'doing friendship'. The study centred on teenagers from the United Kingdom and explored the ways *Facebook* offers friendship management and personal self-representation. Davies initially examined the 25 participants' textual interactions, which involved analysing data from online observation and interviews. From this analysis, Davies recognised the way her participants formed a narrative text on *Facebook*. Each narrative was diverse; in one instance, a participant celebrated their birthday and, as this was public knowledge, others could publicly wish her happy birthday. Other participants could simply discuss television programmes or orchestrate a *Facebook*-mediated story, to which others could contribute. This

helped to illustrate their real-world social events, even if the online representation was not entirely accurate. All the participants in these cases transform their world into digital writing. As a result, the interaction becomes semi-public and other individuals are able to collaborate. They can wish each other happy birthday, banter about music or joke that they are 'married' to another individual. In doing this, the narrative overlaps the online and offline social spaces. The primary authors of the web-based content could then change their narrative and its meaning as they controlled what they want others to know and learn about them (Davies, 2012).

Participant interaction and engagement with *Facebook* also had an impact on their real-world contexts. Without access to the Internet, they could not become members of a social sub-group while on Facebook . Davies' study represented how the Internet can influence the lives of young individuals. Significantly, her findings recognised the way the participants viewed each other. Individuals who participated and helped to form narratives online had the ability to create their own story. In this way, these participants had the ability to learn about each other. Davies' participants, therefore, had the opportunity to learn about themselves and others. Those who communicated online did so in a way that allowed them to further build their real-world social relationships. Participants also formed new literacy practices as they used textual interactions to form these stories and embed them in their everyday lives (Davies, 2012). This provided the chance for creation and maintenance of close and personal relationships for support and well-being. While this idea is often overlooked in the research literature, with the progression of new technology the Internet can challenge the concept of 'social'. Individuals can now make everyday learning a process, as students engage with both formal academic content and informal social content to build friendship groups (Boyd, 2007; Hartley, 2009). The duality represented again demonstrates the multiplicity of practices in which an individual can participate while online. It is also important to remember that, in these contexts, the individuals who share content do so with a select audience. They choose to participate in certain contexts and adhere to the values in that social space.

Further reviewing social learning online, Callaghan and Bower (2012) provided a comparative case study. They examined factors affecting behaviour and learning on social networking sites. Two different Year 10 classes of 24 students per class completed identical modules of work. The tasks included an e-portfolio assessment to review the range of tools with which students regularly engaged; this helped determine if students had complex online

capabilities. Observing the classes, Callaghan and Bower found that the second class of students demonstrated proficient, self-directed learning during all lessons. They were able to log onto the Internet and complete their e-portfolio-based assessment without the intervention of their teacher. It was also discovered that the teacher of this class felt redundant, as students took control of their learning immediately (Callaghan & Bower, 2012). Although the first class did not engage with the lesson like the second class, the students made significant use of the chat feature. Through this, they collaborated with peers to ask questions about how to complete certain tasks. They also utilised a forum discussion to compare and clarify responses against others in the class. Callaghan and Bower's analysis did not fully address why there was a clear difference in the engagement of the two classes—in particular, whether the motivation of the students explained why the two groups reacted differently. Despite this missed opportunity, the comparison recognised the students' ability in engaging with online communication. This was developed as participants worked together socially to complete the tasks set; not only can this contribute to the way students form social bonds, both online and offline, but it can also allow them to contribute and identify with a broader educational discussion among their peers (Savolainen, 2011; Martončik & Lokša, 2016).

The research cases explored above discussed young individuals interacting with content available online. Callaghan and Bower (2012) noted the personal input and social interaction of students. This occurred within an educational setting. By bringing elements of the social world into the e-portfolio task, the students had the opportunity to express their personal learning practices. This, in turn, helped influence how the class was conducted. Therefore, it appears that the popularity of social networking websites has helped to strengthen the social youth environment. Further review of this idea could explore the opportunities for students to build an individual interest in remote topics and/or extend their social networks. This could initially begin online, such as on *Facebook* and *Myspace*, and it could then extend to the real world (Mills, 2010). Identification of these friendship-driven practices also acknowledges the formation of social networks and cultures. Most young individuals today are, irrespective of their background, surrounded by digital and interactive technologies. A sense of digital expertise is now a real component of their everyday lives (Livingstone, 2009; Gouseti, 2010). If this is embraced, they have the ability to help shape the way information is shared. Access could then extend beyond their local communities as they form their own cultures and practices. Davies' (2012) study correspondingly investigated students' social contexts while on *Facebook*. This had several consequences for the way they viewed and interacted with

each other as they were able to share certain content. Additionally, the participants in Davies' study could manage what others learnt about them. This was learning based in the online social world of *Facebook*, and the information there was informal social content.

This review indicated how students utilise technology in their informal education cultures and social contexts. With an understanding of Internet-based practices gained from social engagement, students explored and created their own informal learning spaces (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). What must also be remembered is that this context allows a different account of who an individual wishes to be, as well as values they want to reproduce (Gee, 1990; 2000). Davies's study touched on this topic, investigating how her participants managed their self-representations online; one can now take this a step further, to consider the agency individuals have online. To comprehend those ideas, the construction of a digital identity is considered in order to best represent the motivations and personal goals of students' use and interaction online.

2.15 Identity formation with the Internet

So far I have explored the Internet and some of the practices formed in that context; based on this exploration, questions can now be asked about the advantages of exploring this context. Similar themes may be present in other areas such as print media, film, television and video games, all of which mediums have some effect on individuals in society. However, the Internet supports something that is challenging to explore compared to the other areas. The Internet, as a social space, allows the formation of an identity. Popular in studies surrounding young individuals, identity creation allows those online a chance to represent themselves. Even if the primary use is for communication, an individual's correspondence online helps form their identity (Dalton & Crosby, 2013). This has been explored with regard to their empowerment within online relationships (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008), their ability to form a networking community (Papacharissi, 2010) and to build relevant life skills (Anuradha, 2016).

To understand identity, one must first understand how individuals act in certain situations. Gee (1990, 2000) identified that individuals embody different languages and identities. This happens when they operate in different social contexts; in each context, a different Discourse (with a capital D), is enacted. Gee (1990) argued that to have a capital 'D' Discourse, an

individual considers what they say and how they say it. This was illustrated in a study conducted by Thorne and Black (2011), who interviewed 28 North American secondary school students. The participants discussed their daily social uses and educationally based uses of the Internet, which included online messaging and blogging, especially with regards to learning Spanish with their pen-pals. Commenting on their use of a blog, one participant noted that 'you think about how you're gonna direct and drive your conversation, like you wanna make sure that, you know, your teacher understands how you feel, at the same time you wanna make sure that your peers know what you feel' (Thorne & Black, 2011, p. 265). This participant initially showed a profound self-awareness, but their primary concern was to establish and maintain a relationship with teachers and fellow classmates.

As with other contexts, different Discourses can overlap and cross into each other. In multiple studies collected in her book, Livingstone (2009) identified that the same exchange of identity can occur within online and real-life environments. Livingstone (2009) outlined an exchange with a teenage participant, who discussed the difficulties of managing face-to-face conversations:

> When you're like talking to them face to face [other individuals], you're like, you've got other people around you, and they can't tell you what they really think…I once dumped my old girlfriend by email…Well, it was cowardly really. I couldn't say it face to face. (p. 91)

In this instance, online messaging allowed the communicators to say 'what they really think'. This was something the participant believed would not be possible in a real-life conversation. The participant, in this case, had given the Internet a certain characteristic. For them, it represented a way to communicate his intent, something which would have been challenging for him in person. Thorne and Black (2011) also recognised the complexity involved when establishing an identity online. In both cases—Livingstone (2009) and Thorne and Black (2011)—the participants were able to note the differences between writing prose and online representations. These practices show a unique cultural formation around the way these participants expressed themselves and further details how they manipulate communication with others (Gee, 2006).

While online, individuals have the chance to take part in different practices and cultures. Being online may also give them an opportunity to discover and construct their own personal

meaning. Investigating these concepts, Boyd (2009) utilised and merged previously conducted studies on Internet-based cultures and observed the online practices of American teenagers. A primary consideration was that, while teens used to flock to shopping centres, because of increasing societal restrictions many now choose to gather online with friends. What is distinctive about the considerations raised by Boyd (2009) is that the shopping centre and its cultures are defined by the surroundings—what stores exist, what movies are playing and who the patrons are. There are limits placed on tangible sites such as shopping centres. But the Internet is an intangible environment; while online, individuals can access different types of information and interact with each other in new ways (Sharma, 2013). Identity formation is a feature of the online experience and can contribute to how young individuals make meaning. These ideas were not commented upon by Livingstone, or by Thorne and Black. The formation of identity is occurring in a unique fashion, and Boyd argued that teenagers can now use websites to complement their friendship groups and interest-driven practices. There, they can support those practices but also allow a definition of their contexts to form. This may help define a social space in which teenagers can form personal identities, Discourses and construct values specific to that context.

Certain individuals have helped to form some unique social practices in the online context. Those who take part have a chance to define their online persona, engage with others and contribute to shaping their own cultures. By engaging with these new environments, individuals can also expand them through selective language and interests; they establish user flexibility in online social spaces (Gee, 2000; Boyd, 2009; Livingstone, 2009). It would seem, then, that an intersection between these different worlds can occur. The following section explores the crossover of educational and personal practices and helps to unpack the social impact on the educational context.

2.16 The personal and educational contexts online

An integral part of the Internet is the way individuals use and interact with the features it provides. These include, but are not limited to, blogging and networking (Alterman & Larusson, 2013), examining current events and news (Vicary & Fraley, 2010), and participating in learning and research (Ellis, Goodyear, Bliuc & Ellis, 2011). While there are individual uses for the Internet, many of the cultures and practices intersect. This is because individuals seek to use the Internet for a variety of purposes (Israelashvili, Kim & Bukobza, 2012). The previous sections have detailed the impact of the Internet on student education. They have also discussed how these young individuals are using the Internet to form their own identity, create their own content and manage their experiences (Buckingham & Willett, 2013). The ideas raised here emphasise questions of the equality of communication; as a result, they tend to make light of the bonding and collaboration opportunities found on the Internet (Livingstone & Bober, 2004). Although these practices may be situated in a personal space, the commentary surrounding the history of the Internet suggests that these practices can evolve (Chen & Howard, 2010; Hargittai et al., 2010). Therefore, this section investigates the intersection of personal and academic practices online.

Exploring how the Internet can be used in a student's education for both social and academic outcomes, Johnson (2009) presented a study observing the range of teenage expertise in an online setting. Participants were sampled via a snowballing method. The chief investigators asked other individuals if they could suggest the names of teenage technological experts. As a consequence of this method, the participants were already defined as specialists. Their ages were between 13 and 18 years. Because the teenagers were already considered experts, Johnson concluded they could effectively research online. Additionally, they could navigate through censored content. During the interviews, one participant noted they avoided *Wikipedia* as anyone can edit the website. Another participant was able to hack *Safe Eyes* (a programme established by the Australian Government that blocks certain websites). The knowledge built from these practices can allow many opportunities to emerge. By hacking *Safe Eyes*, the participants portrayed how they are using their own informal educational knowledge to access online content. In the example provided, this informal content is viewed in the formal school setting. Similarly, the participant who noted that they avoid *Wikipedia* was providing an indication of their own research and assessment skills emerging, as well as

41

demonstrating a keen awareness of cultures and practices that have been established online (Hargittai et al., 2010).

The intersection between the formal and the informal has allowed new conditions to emerge. Johnson (2009) acknowledged that students can explore and create their own social and learning environments, exhibiting a sound understanding of Internet cultures. What needs to be remembered, however, is that this context allows a different account of how individuals interact and understand online resources (Callaghan & Bower, 2012). This may lead to a change in communication and information patterns by young individuals; it is they who are growing up connected with peers and making use of the possibilities offered by the Internet (Parycek, Sachs & Schossbock, 2011). Fewkes and McCabe (2012) identified these ideas and explored the social networking website *Facebook*, researching how the website can move beyond formal academic education. With certain student practices, the website can include informal aspects of learning and collaboration. To recruit participants, one researcher formed a group page on *Facebook*. Students could opt-in or out as they pleased (as long as they were over the age of 16 and in the Canadian secondary school system). In all, 51 students participated and completed the questionnaire on the group page. Of those who completed the survey, 73 per cent marked that they used *Facebook* for educational purposes. One participant also commented that 'in biology or chemistry when we have labs, we normally work in groups, so if we don't know the answer we make a group message and give our answers. I have also posted links or watched links sent to me that helps with biology' (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012, p. 95). Alongside this finding, 43 per cent of participants stated that they used *Facebook* in class; this was without their educator's permission for social activities. These two findings suggest a link between the social and academic spaces. Despite the limited depth of the singular survey, there were indications of distinctive cultural practices. Further inquiry into this theme could have contributed to the discussion on emerging student cultures, while other avenues could have identified students' digital competency (New London Group, 1996). This would have provided a basis to investigate their values while online.

The type of learning explored in this section occurred both within and beyond a traditional classroom setting. With the use of the Internet for education, the student participants of the various studies were able to make meaning out of the content shared. In Fewkes and McCabe's (2012) case, social networking became a public space. Their students had the

ability to manage academic coursework and seek assistance from the school community (Barbour & Plough, 2009). The dual ideas identified in that study worked alongside Johnson's (2009) commentary. This suggests that students are able to form their own paths and have an equal opportunity to speak as experts on the Internet. If the traditional boundaries present in education can be blurred in this manner, then new possibilities present themselves to the individuals involved (Schuck, Aubusson & Kearney, 2010), with regard to both offline and online contexts. As the literature above has shown, this is especially important when a students' personal and educational contexts are considered.

2.17 Summary of Part 2

The second part of this chapter suggested students have sound knowledge of Internet-based cultures. It would also appear that they are aware of the applications that could result from these cultures. Noting these claims, Yilmaz and Orhan's (2010) and Gencer and Koc's (2012) studies represented the Internet's integration into the educational context. While it had varying degrees of success, they were able to outline the consequences for the educational setting. These could be positive, as students could use the Internet for research and academic communication, or negative, as students socialised and became distracted online. Together, student participants in these studies portrayed some of the reasons behind their Internet use for informal (Boyd, 2009; Davies, 2012) and formal education (Thorne & Black, 2011).

Additional studies exposed how students were able to gain educational content from personal endeavours. These individuals had the opportunity to function on the Internet to form a unique meaning-making process. They could also contribute to the expansive cultures across other social spaces. Johnson's (2009) and Fewkes and McCabe's (2012) examples illustrated how this can be achieved. They explored how individuals are able to gain certain types of knowledge to socialise and research in an online context. These young individuals had the opportunity to work and learn in a context they helped to form; this contrasts with formal learning in a context shaped by other individuals. However, there are still avenues that need to be investigated. There has been limited inquiry into the boundary between Internet-based practices and senior secondary school students, especially with regard to what they value in both spaces. The task of this thesis is to provide a direct account of how the student participants discuss, interpret and explore these values. This occurs across several

educational, social and technological contexts. A focus on these areas supports analysis into how cultural institutions impact on each other. Lam (2006) suggested that such an analysis would support an understanding of what it means to learn and grow up in a modern context. Lam's consideration can help to identify the contiguous and overlapping cultural spaces between social formations.

Investigation into these areas acknowledges the impact that different values are having upon one another. The methodology chapters further explore these themes. To direct this understanding, a Bourdieuian interpretation of culture and practice is used. This accounts for what is occurring in the contexts reviewed in this study and further supports a definition of value within these contexts. Interpretation in this way acknowledges how individuals act as a result of the enterprises they take part in, when the online and educational settings are considered. Moreover, the chapter links Bourdieu's established concepts with contemporary examples, which centre on the use of the Internet and certain educational practices by secondary school students.

Chapter Three: Conceptual framework

3.1 Opening remarks

The previous chapter explored the history of the Internet and its use in education. Discussion of these themes considered the different practices involved within some Internet-based contexts. This chapter investigates how values and cultures are formed, in order to further explain and theorise the practical use of the Internet by secondary school students for formal and informal education. To achieve this goal, the interpretation of society by Bourdieu (1986, 1993, 1996a, 1996b) is used. This frames the cultures, practices and values that form in the participants' contexts. Bourdieu's commentaries on social sciences, media and television have all contributed to his pantheon of work. As a researcher, I build upon Bourdieu's work to explore how individuals shape their own practices, values and meaning.

An initial outline of this interpretation begins with Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) identification of a message and the way it is transmitted:

> The mere fact of transmitting a message within a relation of pedagogic communication implies and imposes a social definition of what merits transmission, the code in which the message is to be transmitted, the persons entitled to transmit it or, better, impose its reception, the persons worthy of receiving it and consequently obliged to receive it and, finally, the mode of imposition and inculcation of the message which confers on the information transmitted its legitimacy and thereby its full meaning. (p. 109)

The concept of a 'message' relates to both the setting and the individual. Bourdieu and Passeron argued that individuals who produce a 'message' do so from a position of status. Their authority and the 'message' itself hold a certain meaning. This meaning is dependent on the individuals' position in the society and the values of society. A social definition is created when a message is transmitted from an individual (or individuals) to others. However, the full meaning of the message is not within the message itself; it also includes the individuals involved, as well as the context within which it is transmitted (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 2000).

The idea of a 'message' appears to have a deeper meaning as it is embedded in the *field* where individuals operate. This can be compared to the practices and cultures that formed

45

during the advancement of the Internet (Rheingold, 1995; O'Reilly, 2008). The context and individuals who participated were able to form certain practices. This included defining distinct social spaces (Parycek, Sachs & Schossbock, 2011; Fewkes & McCabe, 2012) and constructing techniques that encourage personal or academic comprehension (Scheurell, 2010; Boyd, 2014). These practices then became valued, which allowed a unique 'message' to be communicated (Livingstone & Bober, 2004; Gee, 2006; Boyd, 2009). It is important to remember that the 'message' is dependent on the receiver's ability to make meaning from it (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993, 1996a). The various factors surrounding an individual's disposition also influence the way a message is used in other contexts. This is especially important when those spaces overlap and intersect (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990, 1991). These themes can also consider the values present within the formal (Lee, 2008; Thorne & Black, 2011) and informal (Johnson, 2009; Callaghan & Bower, 2012) educational settings.

The following sections explore these ideas. They define Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and capital. Incorporating these concepts into this study can account for the ways different individuals address different relationships and understand what practices they value. This outline of Bourdieu's concepts is followed by their application to the context of the study. Central to this is an understanding of the relationship between education and the Internet, as well as the cultures that emerge. Reflecting on these themes allows an investigation into how the Internet and the educational field influence each other. The analysis also supports an insight into the meaning-making process of the individuals involved.

3.2 The field of cultural production

Field is, in itself, an idea. Individuals hold assumptions and beliefs that are used to form an opinion of the environment in which they operate. From this, the field can be considered a structured space for individuals to hold certain positions (Bourdieu, 1995). It is with these positions that the individuals involved can then decide what the field means to them, what is valued in the field and their place in society (Bourdieu, 2000). Furthermore, these positions are influenced by an individual's social space. This is the practical space of everyday life for those in a field (Bourdieu, 1986). Intertwined in this definition are the individual's interests, stakes and point of view.

Expanding this view, Bourdieu (1996a) claimed:

> Field is based on a set of shared assumptions and beliefs, which reach beyond differences of position and opinion. These assumptions operate within a particular set of mental categories, they reside in a characteristic relationship to language, and are visible in everything implied by a formulation such as 'it's just meant for television'. (p. 47)

The example given, 'meant for television' is ingrained within the television context. It implies that the meaning can only exist if one only considers television-based practices and positions. Bourdieu (1993) noted that this is due to the demographic, economic and political events always being 'retranslated according to the specific logic of the field' (p. 164). As a result of these actions, the field is where ideas and practices are formed. The individuals involved then establish the value of these ideas and practices. Therefore, it is the individuals that help to decide the production or reproduction of new ideas and concepts. They also help to determine how the field evolves, changes or repositions itself (Bourdieu, 1986, 1995, 2000).

Bourdieu (1993) also argued that, to understand a field, one must understand its social conditions and functions. These make the field independent of other social contexts. Understanding these ideas can also help identify an individual's interactions and dispositions. Individuals can occupy sub-divisions of the field, which have their own conventions and conformities. Members of these sub-fields can take part in the cultural production and contribute to the dominant field. However, by their structure they break away from the dominant fields (Bourdieu, 1993). An individual can, therefore, interact in a social space, which defines their position(s) in the field, and take part in a sub-division of the wider field. To investigate these ideas, Bourdieu considered how artists and writers operated in the sub-fields of literature and art. Bourdieu (1986) established that these individuals have their own practices and dispositions, separate from the dominant field. But they still have a relationship with the greater social spaces of culture and society, which allows them to contribute to the wider field and maintain their position in the sub-field.

As Bourdieu (1986) wrote extensively on the field of education he was able to establish a distinctive way to view this context. However, the concept of field can also be used in contemporary studies as well. One factor which contributes to this is Bourdieu's (1986) comments on the relationships found within fields and sub-fields. In those relationships, there

is a tendency toward segregation. Individuals close to each other in a social space tend to be close together either by choice or necessity. Although each individual is intertwined within the certain fields and sub-fields, they choose certain relationships. It is these relationships that promote an individual's valued practices and are influenced by their habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). By using the idea of field in this study these relationships can be made clear. While this is also framed by the first research question, it is nevertheless a critical area of inquiry for this educational study. Using this concept will allow me, as a researcher, to understand how and why the participants' position themselves in certain ways.

Regarding the concept of field, it appears that an individual's disposition is paramount to its function. This allows them to determine position and value. To understand an individual's nature, the concept of habitus must be explored; this is introduced in the next section to illustrate how the values, cultures and practices of a field are integrated. The discussion primarily explores individuals' dispositions and scrutinises how that helps to acknowledge the fields they operate within.

3.3 Structuring the field with habitus

> Constructing the notion of habitus as a system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment or as classificatory principles as well as being the organising principles of action meant constituting the social agent in his [*sic*] true role as the practical operator of the construction of objects. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 13)

Habitus, as described by Bourdieu (1990) above, is an outline of certain principles. These help constitute an individual's system of dispositions. But it is also something that becomes incorporated within the individual (Bourdieu, 1995). As a result, the habitus allows an individual's autonomy and perception to form. This assists them in providing solutions to the problems encountered in the field. Bourdieu (2000) also argued that this occurs as an individual is caught up and bound in the social spaces in which they participate. Consequently, the field becomes a part of an individual, and this takes the form of habitus. Someone who then incorporates the structures of the field finds their place in society. They also discover the 'right way' to function as their dispositions enable them to be comfortable with the field (Bourdieu, 2000).

Furthermore, Bourdieu (1980) added that an individual's habitus functions as a guiding component. It forms and organises an individual's practices and representations, which illustrate the internalisation of the field and the formation of practice. An example of this is when an individual considers a decision. All the choices that seem possible are conditioned to the individuals as a result of their position in the field. This then alters their expectations and demands. It also allows them to act in accordance with their habitus, which helps them construct and perceive meaningful practices (Bourdieu, 2000). One's habitus, therefore, organises the perception of the social world itself and defines the conditions one participates within. This is because inscribed within the *habitus* is the whole structure and system of conditions evident in the field (Bourdieu, 1986).

An underlying theme expressed by Bourdieu (1980, 1990) is that an individual's habitus is, in part, shaped by the field in which they exist. The practices generated by the habitus then adapt to advance certain conditions of the field. However, the conditions that are sought out by an individual are those that advantage their habitus and their position in the field. This is because habitus functions as a component of an individual and is internalised as their nature. The individuals involved want to reproduce certain conditions, those similar to the conditions in which the habitus was constituted, because they are most beneficial to the individual (Bourdieu, 1986). Using habitus in educational research also holds several benefits for the researcher. Nash (1990) argued that insight can be gained into the new methods of expression formed by the research participants. This can occur when considering an individual's grammar structures, as speech is influenced by their cultural formation of habitus. However, in the context of this study, the concept of habitus will be used alongside an individual's valued practices. This will therefore allow an exploration into the actions of the research participants to review how they organise their social and educationally based cultural practices. By utilising habitus in this way, this research can address the practices being formed online and the impact of those practices in other fields can be made clear.

A final consideration that should be noted on the ideas of field and habitus concerns the way individuals value objects in the social space. Bourdieu (1998) commented that an individual's position in the field is:

> Distributed in the first dimension according to the overall volume of the different kinds of capital they possess, and in the second dimension according to the structure of their capital, that is, according to the relative weight of the different kinds of capital, economic and

49

cultural, in the total value of their capital… [the] social space corresponds to the system of differential deviations in agents' properties, that is, in their practice and in the goods they possess. (p. 7)

Bourdieu (1998) suggested individuals can operate differently within their field. This is determined by the amount of capital they possess with regard to symbolism, culture and economy. Capitals are the goods, both material and symbolic, that are present in the field. They are considered worthy of being sought after (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The following section defines this notion and explores its relationship with individuals.

3.4 Capital and values in the field

As individuals operate in their social spaces, they give certain items, actions and concepts varying levels of worth. These become known as capitals. These capitals are then considered as the desirable goods present in a field (Bourdieu, 1995). They are desired because they enable an individual to achieve a better position in the field. With them, they may be able to achieve power and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993, 1996a). However, it is important to remember that this construction is determined by the individuals of a field. Their position and habitus help produce the objects that are considered worthy.

When considering the worth and desire for capital, Bourdieu (1986) identified that an individual's disposition is adjusted to their position in the class structure. As a consequence, there is a distinctive value placed on certain desirable goods. Bourdieu (1986) detailed that the 'working class' moderates their desires. They value the 'essential' goods and virtues. Capitals, in their regard, are considered 'cosy'; they include variety show entertainment and commercial art (Bourdieu, 1993). The working class can then live in relative comfort and with practicality. However, the privileged classes can desire capitals of higher taste, such as poetry and theatre (Bourdieu, 1993), because they already have the 'cosy' capitals of the working class. Bourdieu (1986, 1993) presented a very traditional example of value and class position, but this should not be understood as a binary distinction. The upper class is, by definition, privileged. They are endowed with several capitals worthy of the field. While the different types of capitals are explored below, all individuals in each social class can recognise the importance of certain types of capitals. Furthermore, despite the classes being different, they can still hold capital. But it is the privileged class that has the power to

establish its culture as the dominant culture in society (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993, 1995, 2000). This allows the individuals within those classes the opportunity to participate in practices that improve their prospects in the field. When using the concept of capital, Grenfell (2009) found that it is not a standalone term. Rather, it allows an incorporation of several factors within an individual's experience to help them determine what is valued. In the context of this educational research, this idea could be vital. As the literature review explored the many ways secondary school students make meaning, the idea of capital could build upon how they define their identity (Thorne & Black, 2011) and the way they establish a personal social space (Boyd, 2014). This could then prove significant when considering the effects that the Internet is having on the research participant's educational field.

The idea of capital can be taken a step further and refined into several different types of capital. Bourdieu (1980) argued that 'to bring the object closer or move it further away, to enlarge it or reduce it, imposes on the object his own norms of construction, as if in a dream of power' (p. 31). When an individual takes an object they can change what it means to them. This is because they impose their own norms of construction upon the object, which then becomes something that is important to the individual or individuals in question. To further explain this concept Bourdieu (2005) argued:

> Endowed with the 'semi-liturgical power' that sets him 'apart from all other potentates, his rivals,' combining sovereignty and suzerainty, which allows him to play on feudal logic as a monarch, the king occupies a distinct and distinctive position which, as such, ensures an *initial accumulation of symbolic capital* …He is found to believe he is king because others (in part) believe that he is king, each having to reckon with the fact that the others reckon with the fact that he is king. (p. 33-34, emphasis in the original)

Different capitals exist when the individuals in a particular field believe there to be capital. But they must also impose their own distinction upon the objects valued. These considerations are explored in the following sub-sections, wherein the concepts of cultural, symbolic and economic capital are analysed and reviewed to express how the features of an object have a meaningful purpose in the construction and meaning making present in the field.

3.4.1 Economic Capital and an individual's class position

> The members of the professions, who have high incomes and high qualifications, who very often originate from the dominate class (professions or senior executives), who receive and consume a large quantity of both material and cultural goods, are opposed in almost all respects to the office workers, who have low qualifications, often originate from the working or middle classes, who receive little and consume little. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 144)

Bourdieu's (1986) conception of society and culture outlined the membership of individuals in specific fields. In this context they participate in cultural practices and form capitals based upon desired goods. Particular individuals within a field may possess sources of high revenue or hold certain assets; Bourdieu (1986) identified those individuals as holding economic capitals. Having this capital allows an individual to consume large quantities of material goods and, as a result, to have a dominant position within their field. This contrasts with those in the lower classes, who receive and consume little. Due to this economic structure, the individuals in the lower positions struggle with those in a higher position, as they are unable to influence the wider field. Furthermore, the lower classes cannot produce this type of capital to establish a higher social rank (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This, however, is only possible if the command of economic assets is valuable within the field.

A significant component found in the idea of economic capital is wealth. If material wealth is valued in the *field*, the individuals who possess it have access to unique opportunities. Bourdieu (1982) acknowledged that social practice always conforms to economic calculation; this is because those with economic capital have the ability to keep economic worries at a distance. These individuals, therefore, do not need to be concerned about the squandering or over-consumption of economic value. They are understood to have freedom from necessity (Bourdieu, 1986). Individuals with economic capital can, therefore, hold a disposition separate from those without this capital. The others must remain dominated by 'ordinary interests and urgencies' (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 56).

Significance is also placed on the influence of economic and social conditions. Together, they help direct the different ways an individual can relate back to their concepts of social reality. Economic capital, in this regard, allows individuals the possibility to outline the characteristics of the field. Those with high amounts of economic capital do not need to

devote their time to actions that do not contribute to their position. Actions such as car maintenance and home improvement can be performed for them by the working class (Bourdieu, 1986). Again, Bourdieu has presented a traditional social landscape. Yet this model does not need to conform to particular individuals. Those skilled in car maintenance and home improvement can hold a high amount of economic capital; with those talents, they can have the chance to hold a dominant position in the field. As a result, they can be assigned to the top of the social hierarchy as a 'by-product of their own cultural production' (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 23). Again it should be noted that this only occurs if money, wealth and assets are valued in a field.

Bourdieu (1986, 1993, 2000) also noted that there exist differing concepts of taste among individuals within a field. An individual's disposition, class and position help to define differences from others in the field. Individuals value certain social goods and attribute more time to acquiring different types of capital. To account for this, the next section investigates the idea of cultural capital. It also explores how this capital affects an individual's place in society. Interpreting society in this manner further defines an individual's position in the field.

3.4.2 Building cultural capital

The concept of economic capital described the value of economic resources, including wealth and assets. But an individual's status in the field can also be established by making use of other values. Cultural capital can be used to measure an individual's intellect, competence and training. Bourdieu (1996b) understood cultural capital as a:

> System of principles of vision and division implemented at a practical level… granting superiority to the qualities socially conferred upon those who are socially dominant, consecrates both their way of being and their state. (p. 37)

Cultural capital works to distinguish and form a social classification, which further hierarchises individuals within the field. The formation occurs in review of the socially conferred values that individuals hold. Cultural capital may consist of education, knowledge

or other personal advantages that an individual possesses, but this is again dependent on what the field values (Bourdieu, 1997).

Bourdieu (1997) initially perceived this type of capital to account for the unequal scholastic achievement of children, originating from their position in different social classes. As a result, Bourdieu (1986, 1993, 1997) saw a link between the way cultural capital forms and how it is represented in the *field*. *Cultural capital* can then be understood in three ways. It can take an *embodied* state. This covers self-improvement and takes a certain amount of time to acquire; it includes temperament, demeanour, character and quality of speech, all traits that can promote an individual within a field. Like the other forms of capital, acquiring this cultural good is either an investment or a waste of time. This embodied state cannot be transmitted, as it is internalised by an individual. The second state is *objectified* and is twofold. Firstly, it includes objects like writings, paintings and instruments. This part may seem close to economic capital, as an individual can simply buy these objects. However, in the second part, one must consume the cultural good by investing in the object; an individual must learn to play the instrument or understand what the painting means. Achieving this emphasises an individual's own production of their embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997). The practices of the previous two states can then contribute to the way education, self-improvement and learning is understood in society and culture. The third, *institutionalised*, state values academic qualifications as a certificate of cultural competence (Bourdieu, 1997). Two individuals can both be well versed in the commentary and discussion surrounding a famous painting; however, if one individual holds a qualification then their words have a higher value in society. This is due to the time spent to acquire that knowledge.

The differences that Bourdieu (1997) recognised are comparable to individuals with high cultural capital. Those individuals are also aware of how they can gain the most profit in the field. Bourdieu (1986) maintained that the profits gained from cultural capital enable individuals to take part in 'specific interests attached to the different positions, and, through this, the form and content of the self-positionings through which these interests are expressed' (p. 12). Individuals with this kind of capital can position themselves in certain ways. Their specific interests could then be met and also expressed in the field. This can be observed when an individual participates in practices that others do not have time to participate in. Alternatively, other individuals may not have the cultural capital required to fully understand and enjoy the practice. Thus, this allows a continual progression of cultural

capital and maintenance of their position in the field. It can then let high-achieving students from a higher position in society to reproduce their cultural capital and habitus.

Although the social space helps to define the value of a cultural capital, dominant individuals can establish a different relationship with others in the field. The definition of cultural capital provided by Bourdieu (1982) showed a contrast between the process of using that capital and status within the field. If individuals utilise their cultural capital, they can become a part of the process of cultural production and help determine how that field functions. The discussion above also showed a foundation of another concept of capital. One can consider what would happen if an individual does not have certain capitals; if individuals are unaware of how to take part within cultural practices then they will have limited symbolic capital. The next section explores this concept and investigates how it is used by individuals to portray themselves in their fields.

3.4.3 *Individuals' perception of Symbolic Capital*

> A reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability that are easily converted into political positions as a local or national *notable*. It is therefore understandable that they should identify with the established (moral) order to which the make daily contributions. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 291, emphasis in the original)

An individual, such as one in a political position, may desire to have an image of respectability and honourability. To achieve this they should identify and embody the established moral order of the field. Like economic and cultural capital, symbolic capital is defined by the context and historical frame within which the field operates (Bourdieu, 2000). Symbolic capitals may include 'fair words' or smiles, challenges or insults, honours and powers or pleasures. However, within a social formation, there are goods that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after. It is those concepts that may be valued within the field. Bourdieu (1982) recognised that symbolic capital production occurs when certain individuals help fulfil ideological functions of the established order. The individuals are able to achieve this as they contribute to the reproduction of the field. This is because those with symbolic capitals uphold the values that are symbolically worthy of the field (Bourdieu, 1986). If the system of reproduction did not exist, then the symbolic values of the

field would fail to have any worth and value and individuals would not be able to accumulate honour, prestige or recognition as functioning ideological capital. If this cannot be achieved, Bourdieu (1982) acknowledged:

> The interest at stake in the conduct of honour is one for which economism has no name, and which has to be called symbolic, although it is such as to inspire actions which are very directly material; just as there are professions, like law and medicine, in which those who practise them must be 'above suspicion', so a family has a vital interest in keeping its capital of honour, i.e. its capital of honourability, safe from suspicion. (p. 181)

In this regard, symbolic capital works in a similar way to economic capital. Both are able to produce 'material' that has worth. In the case above, Bourdieu (1982) claimed that symbolic *capital* can inspire actions, and individuals who act upon those actions are held 'above suspicion' because they hold the capital of honour, which is a value in the field. Without this system and symbolic capital's construction, certain practices would fail to enable other kinds of capital. As a result, this would inherently have a negative effect on their habitus and their position in the field. Without a sound knowledge of the nature of their field, an individual could not reproduce a familiar social order for their habitus (Bourdieu, 1993). This would limit an individual's position in the social world.

When considering the capitals, it is necessary to remember that not all have the same amount of value in different social spaces. Consequently, there is potential for individuals to hold several capitals in one field and limited capitals in another. However, as discussed in the previous section, individuals always seek to reproduce their habitus. As a result, this helps structure their dispositions (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991, 1993). The process is constituted in their practices and is always orientated toward practical functions.

3.5 Summary of Bourdieu's concepts

The current chapter has thus far reviewed Bourdieu's (1986, 1993, 1997, 2000) concepts of field, capital and habitus. Each of these concepts is vital in answering the research questions of this study. Field can help determine the social spaces participants operate within; more importantly, it can help review how they understand that space. To support such review, the participant's habitus can help to acknowledge their dispositions with regard to their experiences and actions they undertake. To appreciate which of these practices are valued, the concept of capital can be used to categorise them and recognise which practices are important for them to acquire. The above concepts offer several opportunities. However, questions have been raised around their viability and application. The following section explores the literature that critiques Bourdieu's theory of culture and society, to ensure both sides of the argument are presented.

3.6 Criticism and critique of Bourdieu's conception of culture

Despite the merits of Bourdieu's conception of culture, there have been challenges to his theoretical framework. It is vital to consider these criticisms and present them in the context of this research. An examination of counter-claims can illuminate important issues evident in this study (Silverman, 2010). This can help to provide a balanced approach to the methodology (Grbich, 2012), and can also inform the analysis and discussion of data. Considerations of these themes are organised in this section primarily through a critique of Bourdieu's central concepts of capital, habitus, and field. The relationship these concepts have to everyday practice is then reflected upon, to assess whether the framework is suitable for cultural analysis. To maintain a balance in the overall discussion, the following section also provides responses to the arguments presented, predominantly drawn from the work of Bourdieu but also from more recent interpretations of his work. These provide an assessment of how his theory functions in more contemporary contexts. Contentions from both sides of the debate are then organised to establish a conclusion that helps points to the ways data collection and analysis were completed (Onwuegbuzie, Leech & Collins, 2012).

Using the educational field as a basis, Goldthorpe (2007) presented a case that challenged the formation of field and habitus. Goldthorpe first identified the social classes present in educational practice. The initial claim, taken from Bourdieu, was that students with families

from the dominant classes are significantly more advantaged. As a result, this class of students have more socially valued benefits than students from families in the subordinate classes. While there are several underlying factors to this premise, the central idea is that students of the dominant class are better equipped to succeed in the field of education. These students and their families progressively benefit from a positive interplay between the influences of home and school (Goldthorpe, 2007). This, it is argued, is based on the formation of a student's habitus. Their habitus is then motivated by domestic influences and their family's class position in the field. As stated in a previous section, educational qualifications take time to acquire (Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore, those with the socially appropriate resources can best comprehend and obtain the socially desired profits and, thus, can then continue to be the dominant class (Fuchs, 2003). Students holding a dominant position can further utilise their habitus and position themselves to further acquire cultural capital. With that capital they can maintain position in the field. One's position is, therefore, vital in the construction of the habitus and in the reproduction of social positions.

This argument appears to be in line with the assertions made by Bourdieu (1986). The dominant class hold freedoms that allow them to assert themselves. They also do not need to worry about necessity, unlike the dominated class. As a result, it would appear that students of the dominant classes are in a better position to reproduce the social order. In addition, several hegemonic ideals emerge here. Cultural hegemony may form as the dominant class establishes necessities that they perceive as politically or socially important. While this is reflected in the broader social space, these necessities may not mirror the social necessities of the dominated classes. This then further limits the position of the subordinate classes (Gramsci, 1971).

Despite these characteristics of the field, Goldthorpe (2007) cites instances where students, from a dominated position, have achieved upward mobility in both education and social position. Support for these claims have come from the studies of Breen (2010) and Machin, Salvanes and Pelkonen (2012). They asserted that educational equalisation provides different opportunities. Those from any social context can now achieve mobility between the classes. Students with parents of low socio-economic status or working class backgrounds have been able to contest their limited position and dominated habitus. They are able to acquire cultural capital and break the cycle of privilege (Goldthorpe, 2007). This research suggests the link between education, class and habitus is not as tight as Bourdieu's model of social

reproduction proposed (Jenkins, 2002). Rather, it has been suggested that students have an opportunity to reproduce and create their own capital independent of their social position.

Goldthorpe and Gramsci have presented deterministic ideas. Additional claims have challenged the idea of habitus and Bourdieu's social reproduction, drawing parallels to a continually circular formation of society. The social world, Jenkins argued, may appear to change as a result of one's practices; however, it merely produces structures based on the former practices that support similar experiences. In turn, this supports the established class structures and helps to reproduce that society and culture. It is important to note here considerations from Gramsci, who identified the significance of a society being reproduced by the dominant classes. While this reproduction may be good for those in a position of power – as independent stakeholders – those attempting to develop and acquire cultural capital are in a limited position to achieve their goals. The prominence of cultural hegemony reasserts the concerns raised by Goldthorpe. Expanding on these assertions, Warde (2004) critiqued Bourdieu's idea of field as having several limitations, in the sense that it restricts the idea of practice in everyday life; Warde contends one cannot define field without having practices, due to elements of both being present in the one space.

Tennis, Warde reasoned, is presented as a field and has features supporting that view. It holds specific rules, is highly institutionalised and has capitals common to all those involved from novice to expert. All these are features useful to help define a field. However, there are also features that are not field-like. The game does not need to be a competition. Instead, it could be a social affair or a form of exercise. These features do not contribute to the establishment of a field. They are nonetheless present in the field of tennis. As a result, Warde claimed that practices are required to sufficiently define these features. This is because they each have a different logic and account for different phenomena. Furthermore, practices can account for the aspects of everyday life. They can also define a full range of activities that encompasses a 'wide range of motives, goals and values and can appreciate diversity of competence' (Warde, 2004, p. 21).

If one accepts Warde's claims, Bourdieu's field emerges as an overstretched concept that is missing important features from its definition. These features could be used to account for a variety of diverse and unique customs. Without the intersection of practices, Jenkins (2002) argued that Bourdieu ignores what an individual is able to achieve. While there may be

59

historic similarities between cultures, there has been change produced by all fractions of society alongside a social mobility (Jenkins, 2002; Goldthorpe, 2007). With this mobility and personal advancement, individuals are then allowed the chance to reproduce their own version of society. This idea further limits Bourdieu's social field, if one considers practice as a quality that does not come from the product of rules set in a model. Rather, as Jenkins emphasises, practices are fundamentally a process of improvisation, demands, opportunities and constraints of specific social fields and the disposition of the habitus. This allows distinct values, cultures and class structures to form and impact upon society.

The limitations above challenge Bourdieu's theory of society and culture. The central arguments focused on the restrictions Bourdieu places on one's *habitus* (Goldthorpe, 2007) and how that affects the process of social reproduction. Critiques of the deterministic approach were also identified, with claims that Bourdieu's (1986, 1995, 2000) theory limits how social reproduction could occur. It was also argued his theory weakens the available practices that surround individuals' choices (Jenkins, 1982, 2002; Warde, 2004). This additionally raised questions surrounding the formation of a cultural hegemony; the dominant class has the opportunity to always manipulate the social reproduction (Gramsci, 1971). Following this account, the next section explores possible responses to these challenges, an important task as there are various interpretations of Bourdieu's work. It is, therefore, important to consider how and why the theory is utilised in this study.

3.6.1 Response to the critiques of Bourdieu's conception of culture

The aim of this section is to provide a response to the previously presented ideas. Bourdieu's (1986, 1993, 2000) own definitions are used to respond to these criticisms, and are placed alongside some modern interpretations of his work. Upon completion of this discussion, the research techniques are reviewed and analysed.

Goldthorpe (2007) critiqued Bourdieu's conception of society and culture, particularly its focus on an individual's habitus and its formation, which led Goldthorpe to the conclusion that class mobility shows Bourdieu's theory to be misguided. In contrast to these limitations, there are a number of concerns that need to be addressed. The first premise put forth by Goldthorpe is that Bourdieu's idea of habitus is entrenched in social class. One's social class

continues to be vital, as an individual's habitus helps to reproduce a similar social position. However, this places an unnecessary restriction on one's habitus and its formation. Previous analysis of an individual's habitus argued that it functions as the component of an individual. It forms and organises an individual's practices and representations and aids in the internalisation of the field and the formation of practice (Bourdieu, 1995). The habitus is not restricted to an individual's social family context; rather, it embodies the field and the valued capitals to help form an individual's disposition. If education is valued in the field, then the individual can internalise this idea. They can then help reproduce that capital in the field (Bourdieu, 1993).

Furthermore, Goldthorpe's arguments do not need to be a trademark of the dominant classes. Those from the dominated classes can be supported in their endeavour to acquire cultural capital. They can also help to reproduce a field that allows them to progress through the established social structure (Lizardo, 2008). Bourdieu (1986) identified this in the commentary on the petite bourgeoisie. Many members of this social class have desires to advance upwards in society:

> This is because their dispositions tend to reproduce not the position of which they are the product, but the slope of their individual or collective social trajectories transformed into an inclination whereby this upward trajectory tends to be continued and completed… in which past trajectory is conserved in the form of striving towards the future which prolongs it. (p. 333)

The petite bourgeoisie do not simply reproduce the social class that has helped them form their habitus and capitals. Rather, this class also reproduces a social trajectory. Bourdieu (1986) has argued, in this case, that the petite bourgeoisie are inclined to have an upward trajectory, which they use to strive forward in the social classes. These considerations directly contradict the claims put forth by Goldthorpe. Bourdieu (1986, 1993, 1995) has set forth two concepts. Firstly, individuals can formulate and acquire a habitus from all positions of society. Second, they can also use that habitus to support their desires for social mobility. In addition, this limits Gramsci's (1971) idea of cultural hegemony, as multiple classes can contribute to what is considered as culturally valuable. Goldthorpe's arguments can, however, be utilised in this study. These concepts can help to consider the nature of an individual's habitus and their perception of cultural capital. As these themes are predominant within this

study, acknowledgement of the habitus' formation and its impact on cultural capital can assist in the observation of the participants' practices and cultures.

Despite the reflections provided on Bourdieu's work, subsequent authors continued to criticise the social theory. The central claim was that Bourdieu's (1986) proposed views are deterministic. Jenkins (1982, 2002) was able to identify that an individual's practices support a society that is unique. In this concept, the social space does not follow a deterministic model of class reproduction. These assessments were likewise recognised by Warde (2004), who contended that Bourdieu's concept of field limited an individual's experiences because it failed to consider qualities that were not field-like. In light of these deliberations, Bourdieu's theory of society and culture may be considered a deterministic paradigm.

To addresses this concern, one can consider that practice has a clear association with field. It forms via the relationship with an individual's habitus and capitals, as well as with their position in the field (Bourdieu, 2000). The interlocking nature of these elements has been detailed throughout this chapter, but was not included in Jenkins's or Warde's critiques. Without this link, one would be unable to appreciate how habitus guides discovery of an individual's dispositions. Along with capitals, this is used to manoeuvre within and around various fields. In turn, this helps the individual to form their own independent agency and reflect upon their own personal context (Beckman, Bennett & Lockyer, 2014). Practice works alongside *field* and, as a result, field is not limited in the way Warde has described. In addition, Jenkins' (1982, 2002) argument now becomes restricted, as practice has a unique formation for each individual. This enables important changes in history to be prominent for society, supported by those who operate within that context (Maton, 2008).

The previous two sections provided an examination on the use of Bourdieu's theory. Critiques emerged when considering the application of the habitus in a field. Goldthorpe (2007) claimed that a reproduction of family values could discourage social mobility. As a consequence, it places unnecessary restrictions on an individual's everyday life. Jenkins (1982, 2002) and Warde (2004) built upon these themes to promote the idea that Bourdieu's theory was deterministic. However, this was based on an inadequate representation of practice within a field. The importance of these ideas cannot be understated, as an individual's habitus relates closely to the way they function in the field. Commentary from Bourdieu (1986, 1993, 2000) and modern interpretations of his work contested these

arguments. Such responses proposed that Bourdieu's theory is not deterministic if the habitus*'* full potential is realised (Lizardo, 2008). As the habitus can internalise capitals from all areas of society, an individual can consume and reproduce a unique representation of themselves (Bourdieu, 2000; Beckman, Bennett & Lockyer, 2014). Therefore, both class mobility and an individual's ability to act upon a variety of different practices in different fields can be accommodated.

In light of the limitations and responses given above I, as a researcher, have noted them in the formation of the research as a whole. There are several aspects of the participants' contexts that need accurate and full representation to answer the research questions of the study and carefully portray the research context (Yin, 2003). Therefore, the next part of this thesis outlines the research techniques used to gather data for this study. Included in the chapter are the philosophical concerns that shaped how the data was collected. Detail of the methodological process characterises the practices and cultures of the contexts intertwined within this study (Denzin, 2010). Furthermore, these contexts can be reviewed in the data analysis to represent the participants' values, ideas and practices.

Chapter Four: Approach and methods

4.1 Opening remarks

When I consider how I use the Internet, I am able to understand what that context has meant to me. The same can be said about my time at secondary school, because these are my experiences. To appreciate the experiences of others, this chapter explores the research philosophy I utilised to gather data. I comment on the type of data required to answer the research questions and clarify the way I have conducted the analysis. This helped me to identify the participants' educational and Internet-based practices and consider which practices they valued within each context.

First I explore and explain the philosophical framework. Epistemological and ontological explanations are provided to show how the research questions were formed. These are also linked with Bourdieu's interpretation of society and culture explored in the previous chapter. The data collection methods are then outlined. I detail how participant journalling, direct observations and interviews enabled the participants to share their online and educational experiences. Final reflections review the ethical considerations. These were undertaken to ensure the safety of the participants. The next section introduces the idea of a paradigm and details its importance when used in a study. Finally, this is followed by an outline of the research paradigm used.

4.2 The research paradigm

In consideration of my role in this study, I bring a personal framework that informs the way I construct knowledge. The values and practices I hold helped shape the research topic and the way I approached my research questions. O'Toole and Beckett (2010) identified that this is a researcher's philosophical paradigm. The researcher brings forth their world view, which underlies their decision making. In a similar way, Bourdieu (1986) acknowledged the personal way an individual constructs their own capitals. What is valued as a capital is informed by an individual's disposition and the field they participate within. Their habitus then helps to motivate certain decisions and their understanding of the world.

The research paradigm is then guided by these beliefs as the researcher constructs their theoretical approach to the subject matter, research practices and the research questions (O'Toole & Beckett, 2010). Although there are several ways one can approach data collection and analysis, a researcher can make use of a paradigm to focus their research inquiry (Epstein, 2012). Positivism was initially considered for this study, as I believed it would be useful to base my paradigm on the positive data of experience (Alexander, 2014). However, after further review, I did not want to limit my data to the participants' experiences as based solely on their sensory capabilities. I also wanted to include their reflective analysis on their actions and context. With these considerations in mind, I used the interpretivist paradigm. This helped me to determine the legitimacy of contextual problems and explore their solutions. The next section explores the postmodern paradigm and maps out how the theory influenced the data collection and analysis.

4.2.1 Interpretivist paradigm

The manner in which individuals view their world can be unique and complex. Several of these themes were explored during the literature review; they included different ways students learn socially (Callaghan & Bower, 2012), Internet-based educational practices (Chandra & Briskey, 2012) and online identity formation (Thorne & Black, 2011). I then had the task of interpreting how these different assessments helped me to address my research questions. Biesta (2007) argued there is no universal way of conducting or analysing research, because each study is unique. This allowed me to select different methods of conducting research, but also review how they work together.

My first consideration came from Richardson (1997), who suggested that individuals make sense of their lives, for the most part, as specific events, such as getting a job. The effects of sociological categories (race, gender) or demographic transitions (the economy) are often downplayed. However, knowledge of the social context can lead individuals to gauge their own practices. This can then allow them to understand their relationships towards events, objects and other individuals.

While Richardson's considerations may be advantageous, Dreisbach and Böttcher (2011) noted investigation should centre on the individual. It is the participants who are important to

a study, because they take part within their own social spaces and are the ones with the experiences. Additionally, Dreisbach and Böttcher's view acknowledges what practices the participants identify as values. An interpretivist paradigm celebrates the multiplicity of these ideas. As a result, I could place my participants at the forefront of the study. Furthermore, Mack (2010) identified that this paradigm is heavily influenced by phenomenology which advocates the need to consider the human participant's subjective interpretations of their world as a researchers starting point. In the context of this research, I desired to learn how the participants of this study approached their Internet-based and educational contexts. This importantly involved an investigation into their values and the way they interpreted each field. By utilising an interpretivist paradigm I was able to strengthen the analysis of the data. Not only was I able to consider Mack's (2010) definition but I also reflected on Mackenzie and Knipe's (2006) understanding of the paradigm. They recognised that the interpretivist paradigm as a theory which develops the participants own self beliefs and patterns of meaning. As I did not want to assume a theory before I began data collection, the interpretivist paradigm suited my personal goals for this study. Additionally, approaching the research in this way allowed me to consider my research questions in a unique way. Centrally, this related to the data collection methods normally associated with interpretivism. Interviews, observations, document reviews and visual data analysis are all regarded as the predominate ways to collect data (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). By considering these data collection techniques I was able to emphasise the ability of the research participants as individuals who are able to construct their own meaning. This helped me to build rapport with the participants and allowed me to gain insight into their social contexts. Further investigation enabled analysis into my participant's sociological categories, demographic transitions and specific social events. The paradigm also gives consideration to various worthwhile experiences of the participants. This is achieved without categorising their meaning making (Richardson, 1997).

Recalling Bourdieu (1993), these are the events that occur in the field of cultural production. It should be noted that Bourdieu was not a postmodern theorist; rather, as explored in the previous chapter, he formed a theory of how society is structured. A part of that theory was the idea of one's habitus, which is influenced by the capitals of the field an individual participates within. However, these capitals could be numerous and ever changing. The

habitus would then have to change and reproduce the changing social configurations (Prior, 2005). This is if, and only if, it is beneficial for the individual's disposition. An individual's habitus could still acknowledge their established values. It could also consider new and changing desires and values. This is important to consider for both the participants and the researcher of this study. Considering the habitus and its nature, the postmodern perspective was used to highlight each individual's capitals and their place in the field, even if it changed during the study. This also kept Bourdieu's more structured approach, as each participant is still influenced by the field and its capitals. An interpretivist paradigm aided my comprehension of the participants' views and, consequently, I could place their comments at the centre of analysis. The paradigm assisted my explanation of different circumstances at different periods of time and shaped the way I interpreted the data.

Interpretivism is, however, not without some concerns. One common criticism of the interpretivist paradigm is that it abandons the scientific procedures of verification. As a result, findings from interpretivist studies cannot be generalised into other situations (Mack, 2010). For example, if a positivist paradigm was used a researcher could be the observer of all objective reality. With this rationale, a study could predict and control the forces which surround an individual (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Furthermore, if a structured research approach is taken into the educational context, it can acknowledge the issues that are relevant to educators and students. This would limit the vagueness and ambiguities that could come from a variety of research techniques that can be used alongside interpretivism.

While the above ideas can be beneficial to some research contexts, a more structured approach can also dismiss the voice of the research participants. As a result, this type of philosophy is limited to the types of knowledge that can be received by researchers. Therefore, it also limits the kinds of answers that they obtain. This is especially important with regard to the problems found in education. The literature review of this study outlined several emerging issues that could form as a result of Internet-based practices in education, including the different methods used to incorporate the Internet into the classroom (Yilmaz & Orhan, 2010; Baron & Ling, 2011) and its impact on the students' learning practices (Johnson, 2009; Davies, 2012). Lather and St. Pierre (2013) also identified that when creating new knowledge we always bring tradition with us. St. Pierre (2006) additionally attested that

knowledge is not above the level of human activity. It contains the values, desires, politics, yearnings, machinations and other factors that help define an individual's varied perspective. This not only opposes the arguments against an interpretivist paradigm but it also indicates that a sequenced comprehension can only form one type of knowledge. Human practice helps acknowledge the formation of knowledge and its situated context (Prior, 2005). Furthermore, I believe that a researcher cannot ground themselves into a preconceived theory. All research is subjective and even if a study selects a positivist approach the researchers cannot divorce themselves from their perspective as an individual who is positioned outside of the study. Mack (2010) also identified the positivist argument and responded by acknowledging that interpretivists can bracket their assumptions in a way which allows the data to inform what is going on within the environment being studied, instead of the reverse.

Some of these themes are present within Bourdieu's (1986) interpretation of society and culture, as individuals help to establish their field and construct unique values and dispositions. Despite the objections surrounding interpretivism, the paradigm can explore an individual's own personal experiences. Furthermore, it helped me recognise the valued practices of my participants. From these arguments, it was then clear that interpretivism could acknowledge the views that underlie my decision making. As these are unique to me and my experiences, I was supported by the interpretivist paradigm to utilise my views and personal perspectives. This allowed me to draw data from the wide range of participant interpretations.

The next section explores and defines my epistemology. There I consider knowledge and its definition in the context of the research. That section concludes with a discussion on the data collection methods and the ethical considerations. This is enacted in alignment with the paradigm and epistemological framework.

4.3 Epistemology

The nature of social theory can be categorised in several ways. Denzin (1970) claimed interaction is an innate part of social life. Therefore, a researcher investigating the social space must learn how to build a system that unifies several differing elements. While interaction may only be a certain part of what makes social life, it provides a beneficial starting point for an epistemological basis. When considering the systems of a social space,

Bourdieu (1991) highlighted that individuals construct knowledge. They can then reconstruct that knowledge in a way wherein it forms a part of their consciousness. Consequently, this gives attention to construction as a necessary process, because the individuals involved form their social world. Due to the nature of the habitus, individuals hold preconstructions about their everyday experiences. Bourdieu (1991) argued that their thinking applies instruments of knowledge; these instruments help construct objects relating to the nature of reality.

An individual's personal interpretation is then regarded as their reality of society. Yet Bourdieu (1991) also asserted that individuals could view the process of construction as a part of a conscious reality. This view is at the crux of a constructionist outlook, as it shows how an idea forms and builds upon actions, events or other ideas. Following this epistemology, I was able to gain insight into how participants understood their social spaces. This also gave me insight into how they generated their own ideas and personal conclusions. The following section further investigates constructionism. It represents how the epistemology helps individuals to build knowledge and reality. This is then related to the context of this study and represents its use to aid the understanding of the participants' views and experiences.

4.3.1 Constructionism

DeLamater and Hyde (1998) claimed individuals do not perceive their reality as a chaotic jumble of sights, sounds, smells and touches. Rather, they perceive the world via comprised elements. These include specific milestones, such as buying a house or getting married, how they approach their occupation and in planning social events. This is a primary view of constructionism. Those elements work together to form a particular order and perception of reality unique to each individual. A constructionist outlook enables an individual to view these elements build upon them and form an opinion (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998). Opinions are modelled on experiences in the world as an objective reality, which is not set in time. This is also independent of a grand theory of how things work or how they should make knowledge.

Additionally, McLuhan (1964) argued the merging of all things are in flux. Objects that exist do so in a unique space because of the relations they have with other objects and individuals. Floridi (2011) argued 'ideas, mental images, corresponding pictures, concepts, and so forth

are supposed to be mere copies or portraits of some otherwise mysterious reality in itself... knowledge is a modelling process, which shapes and edits reality to make it intelligible' (p. 301). McLuhan identified that objects form their own unique relationship with individuals. Floridi defined those objects, images and concepts as one set of a reality, because it is part of the modelling process that helps to form knowledge into something intelligible. Together, these ideas can identify how individuals form a relationship with ideas, concepts and objects to define their place in reality. The role of constructionism can then be understood within this concept, as it shows how different objects are unique to an individual. The objects involved also appear to mean something to the individual at different times. This helps them construct an objective reality and personal perspective of the world.

With a constructionist outlook, my investigation viewed the participants' various relationships in context. While the Internet and education was the central focus, there were other avenues for discussion. Participants were able to come to their own conclusions on these themes. They could relate their experience to what they understood was occurring in each of their contexts. The focus was on the consequences of their participation in their fields. To form comprehensive investigation of the research participants, the qualitative style was then utilised. This is explored in the next section and builds upon the epistemological understanding.

4.4 Ontology

> Humans have no direct access to reality. Reality, as it is known is mediated by symbolic representations, by narrative texts, and by televisual and cinematic structures that stand between the person and the so-called real world. (Denzin, 2010, p. 10)

Denzin (2010) has identified that an individual defines their reality. They mediate symbolic representations to help define their 'so-called real world'. Therefore, I needed to comprehend what the participants wanted to say and what they valued in their own contexts. I determined qualitative data would be useful for this study. This type of data allowed me to account for the concerns raised by Denzin (2002, 2010) when considering how individuals understand their reality. An example of qualitative data usefulness came from Boyd (2007), who considered early Internet cultures and the users' focus on social gatherings. This surrounded a

topic or activity and was used as a basis for discussion. The commentary in Boyd's work alludes to the formation of a community. Online individuals have the opportunity to construct their own social world and, through the cultures and practices found on the Internet, a researcher can then understand why individuals participate online (Burgess & Green, 2013). Furthermore, in consideration of Bourdieu's interpretation of society and culture, a qualitative approach is the most appropriate way to ask why and how this community is forming; such an approach allows the cultures of the Internet, and what informal practices are present within that context, to be investigated. This approach let me view the participant's social practices online and consider the reasons why they became involved with them. Using qualitative research samples in this way thus helped me to serve an investigative purpose, rather than just statistically represent the student population (Carter & Little, 2007).

A qualitative approach can also build on the socially constructed nature of reality because it does not emphasise quantity, amount, intensity or frequency (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). However, if a faithful relationship is built with participants then the social experiences present in their communities can be represented (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As a researcher, I accepted these definitions. It then became clear that qualitative methods were required for this study. The framework proposed thus far, the literature explored in the review and the research questions build upon an investigation of cultural foundations. Qualitative data allowed an observation of senior secondary students' interactions, for both social and academic practices within the fields of the Internet and education. I was able to analyse the impact of culture on the distinct way my participants constructed their values. It also enabled observation of their perceived position both online and in education. This was conducted with me as an external researcher; with use of the interpretivist paradigm, an outside analysis allowed me to consider the participants in context (Lamont, 2012). I could then structure my data collection methods to discover how the participants reflected on their contexts and experiences. For this study, quantitative data would not be as useful. More information about the participants' experiences was required to exhibit the values behind their online and educational practices. For this research, the insight gained helped to establish the utility of that knowledge. It also indicated how the participants constructed their own personal values (Silverman, 2011).

Considering the awareness that the qualitative approach provided, the next section details how a case study investigated the concerns raised by the research questions. Additional exploration is completed on the methods used to collect data.

4.5 Case study

With the methodology established, I now explain the methods used to attain data. I utilised a case study approach, as it facilitated an exploration of a phenomenon occurring within a particular context. An aspect unique to this study, and one not initially considered, was the participants' educational stress and anxiety. While this is detailed in the next chapter, the case study design allowed these themes to be uncovered. Furthermore, Baxter and Jack (2008) argue that using a wide range of data sources ensures that the issues are not explored through one lens; rather, a variety of lenses can highlight multiple facets of the studied phenomenon. Therefore, the aim of a case study is to provide an analysis of the context. This is alongside the research processes illuminating the theoretical issues being studied. Hartley (2004) also notes that a case study is not a method but a research strategy. This allows the participants' context to be included within the design and research approach. These concerns are further addressed in the opening chapter of the data analysis.

The previous chapters explored the different practices, capitals and fields that could be constructed. An emphasis is now placed on the individuals who operate in these fields. Placing individuals at the centre of a study provides the chance to discuss the nature of human experience (Singleton, Straits & Straits, 1993). This is important, as it is the individuals who help define the rules of the game and certain values of their context. Leading on from this idea, Flyvbjerg (2006) recognised that most individuals can be experts in their own context. However, this expertise lies in their everyday circumstances and can range from social to technical to intellectual skills. Included actions could be giving a gift, riding a bicycle or interpreting images on a television screen. Contrasting with this, only a few reach the level of true expertise; these include the more specialised skills, such as playing chess, composing a symphony or flying a fighter jet. Knowledge, however, is gained via the context the individuals are placed within. From this, they are able to become their own expert. Flyvbjerg considered that context is dependent on knowledge and experience and is at the heart of expert activity. Such knowledge and expertise also lies at the centre of the case study as a learning method (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Given the context of this study, there was an opportunity to explore the participants' expert activity, and the case study design assisted in

placing a focus on these activities. What was important to the participants was then uncovered in their values. Central to this was their desire for high grades and educational achievement. This analysis was achieved as a method of learning and personal meaning making in review of the data.

The expert activity identified by Flyvbjerg (2006) may also help account for the symbolic profits on offer within the field. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) contended that in certain fields there exist virtuosos who perfectly master the 'art of living' (p. 8). They can play off all their resources and adjust their behaviour in different situations to produce actions that help them suit themselves to every occasion. As this case study was based on the participants, the opportunity arose to explore their personal issues, values and actions. This means that exploration of participant virtuosos was also able to enter my case study in depth and in context. Even if the participants were not virtuosos in Bourdieu and Passeron's sense, their input and interpretation of the field and its values was still used. This helped to reveal their interests evident in their personal contexts. Participants' virtuoso skills did include educational ability and command of real world and online social interactions. Along with the case study approach, Bourdieu and Passeron's considerations allowed a flexible investigation of the participants' experiences; the reasons behind the participants' practices forming in the field could then become apparent. This research approach also enabled conclusions to be drawn from the data as the case study does not separate the researcher from the context (Levy, 2002).

Hartley (2004) further argued that a case study is particularly suited to research questions that require a detailed understanding of social or organisational processes. For this study, an idiographic theory-guided case study was utilised. The rich data collected contributed to an understanding of the context and the individuals' experience in their fields. This was in contrast to other case study frameworks, as the idea is to describe, explain and understand a single context as an end in itself (Salvatore & Valsiner, 2010). Furthermore, Levy (2008) asserted that the structured approach of this theory can provide better explanations and understandings of the social actions and phenomena present in the research context. As I interacted with the participants, there were several opportunities to observe the fundamental aspects of the human experience. Additionally, the research methods allowed these experiences to be viewed in context. The theory-guided approach also differentiated from hypothesis generating or testing case studies. Due to this approach, I was able to explore the participants' educational and Internet-based fields to address the research questions.

Bourdieu's (1986) interpretation of society and culture was also considered. The results gained from the case study were then drawn together to yield an overall picture of the field (Rowley, 2002). This allowed me to start with the kinds of capitals the participants possessed within each context. I was then able to build a comprehensive interpretation of how the participant's different practices relate and intersect with each other. As I based my exploratory case study on the above literature, these methods helped to describe the interventions and phenomena of the contexts I researched.

As the overarching design for the methods have been discussed, the next sections explain the techniques used to gain sound and rich data. In the conclusion, I review the steps taken to ensure the safety and protection of the participants.

4.6 Interviewing

To directly address the research questions of this study, I had to understand the individuals who participate in the selected context. One of the ways this occurred was via interviewing. Matthews and Ross (2010) assert that qualitative research methods investigate the stories of the participants, which includes their subjective understandings, feelings, opinions and beliefs. The data collected is the participants' words and it reflects their experience. Richards (2005) also identified that an interview can hold both an ordinary and extraordinary duality. A researcher can explore someone else's experience as an ordinary conversation, yet the insights offered may be rare and unique. Hughes (2002) shared this view, suggesting interviews allow a 'face to face encounter with informants, facilitates access for immediate follow-up data collection for clarification and omissions, useful for discovering complex interconnections in social relationships' (p. 209). The interview process can then empower participants to voice their own personal narrative.

Stake (2010) further suggested interviews can obtain unique information or interpretations held by the interviewees. They can uncover occurrences that researchers are unable to observe themselves (Alvesson, 2010). The interviews helped me to refine what was being asked of the participants and allowed them to provide their perspective on the topic. This expressed how my participants viewed and operated within their fields. Concluding this idea, Maxwell (2002) believed interviews are also concerned with finding out the deeper meaning within a context. This includes intention, cognition, affect, belief, evaluation and everything else that participants deem important. As a result, interviews were used in this study to let the

participants represent their narrative. Interviews also helped the participants acknowledge important aspects of their experience. I could then use these insights to help form an analysis supported by Bourdieu's (1986) interpretation of society and culture.

As an explanation of interviews has been noted, the next section details the type of questions used and considers the way interviews were structured. Upon completion of this discussion, the limitations of the qualitative approach are reflected upon.

4.6.1 Interviewing questions

Hays and Singh (2012) identified that research questions are a guide for data collection methods. They cannot simply be translated into similar interview questions. This is because methods need flexibility and particular attention to issues of trustworthiness. Interview questions should, therefore, be based upon the original questions of the research, yet formed in such a way that they can answer those questions without imposing themselves on the interviewee. Patton (1990) established that there are six types of interview questions:

- Experience/Behaviour Questions: What a person does or has done.

- Opinion/Value Questions: Used to understand the cognitive and interpretive process of people.

- Feeling Questions: To understand the emotional responses of people to their experiences and thoughts.

- Knowledge Questions: To discover factual information the respondent has on the subject.

- Sensory Questions: Questions about what is seen, heard, touched, tasted and smelled.

- Background/Demographic Questions: Use to identify characteristics of the person being interviewed. (pp. 290-291)

When reflecting upon the interviewing process, each of these question types was considered. I formulated what I was going to ask, when I was asking it and how it was asked. Central to this research were the Opinion/Value questions, Experience/Value questions and the Feeling questions. Each set of the questions was used in order to help define the real meaning that the

participants wanted to make. I also wanted to understand what they wanted to say about their experiences and personal insights.

While it would be impossible to completely understand the entire context of an individual participant, the questions identified by Patton allowed an initial investigation to occur. Set alongside these types of questions was the notion of 'grand tour' questions. Grand tour or main questions are open, easily understood, descriptive questions. They seek to understand the meaning behind the major features about participants (Miller & Crabtree, 1999). This gave me insight into my participants' influences, expectations, motivations and experiences. In order for these questions to be successful, they must be broad, but also stimulate memory. With the above commentary, I was able to express this in my questioning and avoid suggesting an answer.

While there appear to be several conditions and rules imposed upon a grand tour question, the benefits are apparent. Each of Patton's (1990) suggested questions can be shaped in a way to form a grand tour question. Subsequent questions can then clarify the response given once a grand tour question has been asked. This enabled rigorous in-depth techniques to be utilised within the interviewing process. As a result, a relationship formed between myself and the interviewee. This allowed a continuation of rapport and encouraged the participants to express their own opinions (Hays & Singh, 2012).

The next section continues the discussion on the research techniques. It analyses the structure used with regards to the participant observation. Upon completion, a review of direct observation is conducted.

4.6.2 Interviewing structure

To make full use of the interview question, the interviews were semi-structured. Birks, Chapman, and Francis (2007) acknowledge that these types of interviews allow a researcher to explore a range of unique social environments. This method of data collection encourages participants to explain what is happening and how it is happening in their contexts. As I conducted semi-structured interviews, I was also able to direct and explore the themes important to the issues of my study. This was especially focused on the online cultures, education and the values therein.

To further support the interviewing structure, the interviews were organised via an in-depth formation. Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Loris (1995) defined an in-depth interview as a conversation. This incorporates participants' detailed perceptions when answering the interview questions. Doing this allows the participants' purposes to be represented, which aided in understanding their participation in their various fields. Keats (2000) also recognised that in-depth interviewing enables the interviewer to build a relationship and interact with the participant. This formed a comfortable setting where the participants could state what their experiences meant to them. Clarity around their ideas and beliefs could also be pursued, as additional questioning resolved any ambiguities. Birks et al. (2007) argued that this process can lead to a basic understanding of the participants' relevant cultures and environments. However, this can only occur if the interviewer is able to understand the physical and emotional implications. To help incorporate these suggestions, Keats (2000) proposed that the interviewer must be aware of the structure of the interview as well as of listening, speaking and body/facial skills. I endeavoured to make sure that these considerations were met during interaction with the participants.

Interviews themselves were used to begin and conclude the data collection period. The initial interview allowed me to introduce myself to the participants. We also discussed their perspective on the Internet and their overall educational experience. An overview of their online and educational practices and values was also reported. This was the first instance of data collection. The second interview was framed by the previous interview and other forms of data obtained by the case study design. This interview allowed me to comprehend and appreciate where the participant was placed within their social spaces. It also provided insight into the use of the Internet and its value. This was the final instance of data collection, as two direct observations were conducted between the interviews. Furthermore, these interviews were tailored to each participant. Subsequent interviews sought to clarify any misunderstandings from the previous interviews or observations.

4.7 Participant observation-journaling

Over the course of the study – and during normal practice – participants may engage with the Internet for a variety of reasons. Interviews alone cannot wholly understand the wealth of experience the participants involve themselves within. Yin (2003) suggested a participant's own analysis can allow an insight. They can interpret their own behaviours and motives as they operate in their fields. Although there will be bias, as it is the participant reporting, the bias shows their values and meaning-making process. As this study explored the intersection between social spaces, observations by participants allowed a representation of their feelings and choices. Both these concepts relate back to habitus, which interprets how and why individuals function in certain ways in a given field. By letting participants explore their own *habitus* I could analyse themes surrounding their capitals embedded in their educational and Internet-based contexts.

To perform this task, the participants involved in this study were asked to keep a journal. They used it to log their interaction with the Internet for personal and educational use. Participants had the opportunity to reflect on their experiences, practices and values. In their records, they could also explain why it was meaningful to them. Journalling allowed participants to reflect on their feelings through a variety of mediums including words, pictures, diagrams or any other technique. I allowed this so they could represent and express their values associated with using the Internet. Electronic journalling, such as a blog or video/audio recording, could have also been presented if the participant felt comfortable sharing their experiences in that manner. Participants were asked to log a minimum of four journal entries consisting of at least two hundred words per entry. Hayman, Wilkes and Jackson (2012) argued the use of journalling in this manner allows a representation of participants' inner meaning making. Furthermore, Halbach (2000) made the case that journalling gives a first person account of a learning experience, if documented through regular candid entries. It then supports the researcher to investigate participants' personal experiences, practices and cultures. These are aspects that are not normally accessible through direct observation or via interviews. Journal security was paramount and journals were only viewed by me, the researcher.

When examining journal entries, Bolger, Davis and Rafaeli (2003) observed there are three central elements to consider. The first is to obtain reliable person-level information. Selection

of the participants is vital to gain the needed data to explore and discuss the research questions. The literature reviewed thus far evaluated the role of students and the Internet in education. There was also an emphasis on how young individuals used the Internet for personal use. While further commentary on the research participants appears in the forthcoming sections, a careful consideration of this element helped me to gain sound data.

The second element suggests the researcher must obtain estimates of personal change over time. This includes individual differences in such change. As participants log their entries, they may become aware of the reasons behind the practices and cultures they take part within. In assessing the data, Halbach (2000) contended the researcher should first edit the journal. In doing so, they review recurring patterns and significant events. This technique can provide a justification of the strategies, used by the participants. Application of this technique also helped with my use of content analysis, explored in the forthcoming section. Finally, as the third element, Bolger et al. (2003) argued the most challenging questions are those that address the processes of an individual's experiences. Journalling, they contended, can help determine the antecedents, correlates and consequences of daily experiences. Insight given in journals can undercover the differences participants exhibit in their cultures. The complementary analysis conducted also determined the sources of these individual differences.

For precision and clearness, the findings chapters only discuss the elements of the journals that relate to the research questions. A table is included below detailing the amount of data this includes and how useful it was to the study as a whole. The understanding of the reported data drew on key concepts from Bourdieu's interpretation of society. Participants were also asked to note how they felt and the reasons behind their use of the Internet. This enabled a review of what capitals or values were present in each of the fields the participants believed they operate within. The participants also had the opportunity to report on any relevant events, either immediately after the occurrence or through an entry at their convenience. I recognised logging an entry at a later date may limit the accuracy of the reports, but it gave the participants a chance to remove themselves from the situation. They could then reflect upon the practices they took part within. Journals were kept for a period of six weeks. This was at a time when the participants had academic responsibilities (e.g. during a school term); any longer would have been a burden, especially at this period of their education.

It should also be noted that the researcher kept a research journal separate from the participants' journal. This ensured I kept track of the data gathered from the various collection techniques. Having a journal allowed me to note any observations or reflections I may have had during field work. This was in relation to transcribing interviews or analysing the data. Viewing the researcher's reflective journal in this way supported my data collection. It also served as a critical and rigorous tool to help me analyse the participants' educational and Internet-based practices (Slotnick & Janesick, 2011). One such use of my journal was during the data analysis. I began to consider the participants remarks on stress and anxiety with their educational field. As the data collection continued, I noted the participants would often discuss these themes. Due to their detailed account of this topic, I was able to compare several ideas surrounding the participant's stress and anxiety. These are explored further in the forthcoming chapters.

4.8 Direct observation

As case studies can utilise several methods, I also included direct observations. This allowed me, as the researcher, to view the actions of participants within their usual fields. Yin (2003) noted the inferences gained from observing participants should only work as clues, findings that warrant further investigation. This opposes the idea that initial inferences are the definitive answer. Centrally, this case study is about technology; observation of the Internet in use is invaluable for understanding its actual uses, and may reveal any potential problems or issues the participants encounter. Due to this consideration, I implemented unstructured interviews for the purpose of questioning my participants. Thomas (2011a) claimed unstructured observation immerses the researcher in social situations, counter to the opinion that the world is only viewable through a prism with the researcher unable to break down social activity into quantifiable elements.

Two sixty-minute observations were conducted during the six week research period. The first observation took place after the first interview and with at least one journal entry being logged. During the observation, I was able to witness the Internet-based practices of each participant. The observations were organised in a place where the participant felt comfortable. All ethical considerations outlined below were considered. The second observation took place before the

second interview. This way, I was able to focus the final interview on the themes discussed by the participants. These themes were identified in their journals and sighted during observations.

4.9 Content analysis

The aims of utilising data are acknowledged in this section. Additionally, some of the issues that may result from these methods are discussed. The resolutions undertaken to these issues are noted and were utilised during data collection.

For this study, I used content analysis to review and discuss data. Content analysis consists of a set of methods; with these, I could analyse the symbolic content of any communication (Singleton et al., 1993). This can identify how the data can be placed in the review. It also helped me to group the data to begin addressing the research questions. Each category then enabled me to discuss each research question. It was also clear that analysis in this manner could be a method in itself (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013). I could draw information from the content produced and base it within a specific context. This is because I approached the content as the participants' stories and experiences, which provided a broad description of the phenomena occurring in context. Ahuvia (2001) added, 'content analysis is a method for interpreting the meaning of text and quantifying the frequency of those interpretations' (p. 150). The 'text' for this study was the transcribed interviews, field note observations and the journal entries (from both the participants and the researcher).

Understanding the meaning of the data was also important for the journal entries. But the techniques discussed above acknowledge a close reading of the text-based data (Boulton & Hammersley, 1996). This allowed a careful review to occur. I could then identify aspects that were significant and comment upon the research questions. Likewise, the methods used for direct observation may be limited to what the participants want the researcher to observe. However, Singleton et al. (1993) argued the use of content analysis is well formed to account for variables in a participant's social structure. My practices during data collection were included so I could be made aware of the content during the observation as the context was understood. Elo and Kyngas (2008) further maintained that content analysis used in this manner can provide valid inferences from data to context. With the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, an interpretation of facts and a practical guide to action can then be

formed with the aim of attaining a sound description of the phenomenon. I was able to categorise the data with these techniques and extend a deeper data analysis.

Although the case study approach yields several benefits, there are certain limits. The next section reviews those limits and investigates how I reduced them. Following that discussion, the participants and their selection are explored. The chapter then concludes with a review of the ethical considerations.

4.10 Limitations of a case study

This chapter has discussed the methodological structure used to collect data and answer the research questions of this study. It has also discussed the merits of the methods used to collect data. These methods are a part of the case study strategy. Although they were incorporated in this way, there remain some issues with the approach. McKeown (2004) argued that case studies are difficult to apply to large frameworks; the (usually) small sample taken for a case study restricts the findings to casual practices, which have been made apparent in other, more detailed studies. McKeown further asserted that these findings are the informal acceptance of behavioural assumptions in a research sample. Therefore, they cannot be considered an appropriate reflection of the context being studied. With the use of qualitative evidence, conclusions from casual practices are possible. However, as they cannot be adjusted, they become uncertain phenomena. This is because only one case is required to establish the findings (Easton, 2010).

Another issue found in this type of social research is that it generates data on individual attitudes and behaviour. This could change after or during the collection period to yield different results. Singleton et al. (1993) identified that, in a case study, the research participants are human; how they think, feel and interact with me is dependent on how they understood and experienced the study. This was then limited to the collection period. Adding to this concept, Grix (2002) found that a researcher's methodological approach reflects specific ontological and epistemological assumptions. Likewise, the participants' views on how they define social phenomena are based on their own assumptions and habitus. Representing a mass theory for a general audience is, therefore, limited in a case study because the design reviews the understanding of how a set amount of individuals use their own methods to make their mark on society and their fields.

With these concerns in mind, the case study approach still allowed multiple sources of evidence to be used. Interviews, observations and participant journalling promoted a discussion with my participants. The study's design acknowledged ideas and themes that were important to the participants. Furthermore, I conducted collection in such a way that those ideas could be presented. I achieved this in a comfortable environment. The participants were able to consider matters that were important to them. Although these findings may be limited when considering a wider theory, they represented the voice and experiences of the selected participants. This allowed them to make judgements on what they consider to be important (Stake, 2013).

Even with the above limitation in mind, a case study does not need to answer all the general questions established in society, culture or other fields. This is, in part, due to the nature of research and what a case study actually does. Case study research differs from other methods in its ability to expand and contract. Using basic case study research methodology, I was able to take a contracted approach and conduct a single study. An understanding of specific phenomena then occurred. By not controlling all the variables, I could observe several practices. These were the practices participants deemed valuable. With analysis, I could also acknowledge how interacting relationships formed within certain fields (Bourdieu, 1997; Eisenhart & Graebner, 2007). Achieving this goal also developed my use of content analysis; I was able to review the qualitative data to establish theories from the content. Each of these theories was then used to contribute to the wider literature and address some missing elements in research (Eisenhart, 1989). They also helped to address the research questions of this study. However, and more importantly, it also gave the participants a voice in the wider discussion because it acknowledged what was important to them in this context.

The next section outlines the target participants for this study. It explains their selection and what made them participants worthy of my study. The section also details the number of participants considered and their demographic range.

4.11 Criteria for selection

A crucial point of any study is justifying which participants will be invited to take part and how they will be recruited. This is particularly imperative when considering the research questions and the context of the research. Boyd (2007) claimed that to understand students, one must understand their practices. She noted students flock to social networking sites as they fit into their lives. It was further argued adults hold power over young individuals, and their lives are highly structured. Compulsory high schooling requires many students to be in class from morning to mid-afternoon. Many may also want to, or must, participate in after-school activities such as team sports, hobbies and work, into the evening. Boyd also noted that a young individual's home is a regulated space. They often experience rules and norms that are controlled by adults. Social media may then provide a space where their voice can be heard. These considerations reflect the ideas of identity construction (Gee, 1990, 2000; Livingstone, 2009), personal use of the Internet (Lam, 2000; Lee, 2008; Mills, 2010; Davies, 2012) and the placement of *capitals* (Bourdieu, 1986). Together, the claims have outlined that the Internet and social networking sites allow students to take back some control. It may also empower them to manage their own social lives. The movement to social networking websites provides an example of how young individuals conduct themselves in a *field*. This is a place where they find value and develop their own practices and cultures (Bourdieu, 1993).

While Boyd's (2007) analysis of the teenage social space explores several important points, with regards to teenagers' home and educational use of the Internet, it was best for me to utilise other teachings from the research and methodological literature. In order for me to then explore this context, the participants needed to convey that they had the ability to participate. Formal conventions of education (attending classes, completing set tasks) and the informal learning experiences of the Internet (social networking, e-mailing) were important. After reviewing the literature and Bourdieu's analysis of the educational context, I determined that these areas were grounded in the study. Additionally, they were important to comment upon, as the research questions address the cultural practices of the participants that those areas influence. Selecting participants who are able to express themselves on these themes allowed a full exploration of their educational and personal practices and cultures. As I sought to explore their capitals, and the way they intersect in each field, this consideration was vital (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991, 1993).

4.11.1 Recruitment of research participants

Before recruitment occurred, I had to generate an expanded list of possible participants, individuals who had the experiences I wished to investigate. Additionally, they needed to take interest in the study and be available to take part. Polkinghorne (2005) believed the list can be generated by asking a number of individuals who know about or have experience in the context. Those mentioned can be placed into a pool. From this, they can nominate acquaintances who may meet eligibility requirements (Patrick, Prochno & Rose, 1998). This is a 'snowballing strategy', as it produces a self-populating pool of possible participants. Recruitment in this way allowed a diverse sample of possible participants (Goodman, 2011). Additionally, it should also be noted that participants for this qualitative study were not selected because they fulfilled the representative requirements of statistical inference. Rather, it was because they provided certain contributions. These helped me to understand the practices and cultures experienced by them in their fields. Initial contact was made via a neutral individual. This independent third party was a professional colleague and acquaintance of the student researcher and knew of potential participants via a professional or educational connection. The third party has never been legally responsible for the participants, under a duty of care. I, the student researcher, did not have any contact with any possible participants. Rather, I asked the third party to suggest to students, undertaking their final years of secondary schooling, if they were interested in participating in the study. Upon the participants' expression of interest, the third party handed the explanatory statement and consent forms (for both the participant and their guardians). After initial contact, the potential participants had the opportunity to email me. Many seemed interested in participating. After email correspondence discussing the research topic and requirements, potential participants were invited into the investigation. The invitations went to individuals who I believed had something to say about their educational and online experiences. Individuals who replied in a prompt manner and shared their enthusiasm to discuss their experiences were considered to be interested in this study and therefore invited to participate. Those who then became participants opted into the study at this point. Others chose not to participate, citing other commitments and their inability to opt-in. Those who seemed disinterested during the email communication were not invited. It was these individuals who corresponded with delayed replies that had little visible interest. Once selected, the existing participants recruited were asked if they were aware of anyone else who might be interested in participating. This was in accordance with the snowballing technique (Goodman, 2011).

The student participants themselves were in the process of completing the final years of secondary schooling, known in Victoria, Australia, as the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). Additionally, they engaged in Internet-based practices. This reflects some of the structure proposed by Boyd (2007), but within an Australian context. I selected a small sample of eight participants to take part in this research. This number ensured that the research allowed maximum attention to all participant views, interpretations and actions. As with all approaches to research, limitations presented themselves. But support for the small sample came from the research paradigms and philosophies chosen (Fiedler & Kareev, 2006). As a result, during the research analysis I spent more time on the experiences detailed by the participants. This maximised their interpretations and helped me to understand their sense of meaning making.

The small number was also selected as users of the Internet and senior secondary school students are a part of a closed population, defined by Ritter and Sue (2007) as:

> one whose size and composition is fixed at a particular point in time. Closed populations, such as employee or membership groups, typically have a list of their constituents. The researcher's task when working with a closed population is to obtain the population list that serves as a sampling frame. (p. 24)

Enrolment in the VCE is limited to students in Victoria, Australia. They have already completed Year Ten education or have other relevant qualifications. To ensure a balanced data set, the participants were four females and four males. However, they were selected on the basis of their contribution to the study and the research area in question. Socio-economic distribution was a secondary concern. In line with the considerations of the Monash Human Research Ethics Committee, the initial point of contact was done ethically. The next section discusses these concerns and identifies any ethical tensions with regard to researcher bias.

4.12 Researcher bias

When doing research it is necessary to remember that, in all circumstances, the researchers' personal perspectives will enter into how they interpret data and embark on research. However, if the initial stages of research are undertaken correctly, the experiences of the researcher can become a part of the research (Denzin, 2002). Furthermore, if the researcher is able to think reflectively, historically, comparatively and biographically, then they may be able to find the balance between the investigation and their personal views (Grix, 2002).

What must then be noted, at this point, is my standing in the study. While there were the views and interpretations of the participants there was also my analysis as a researcher (Sagolla, 2009). However, making sense of my social experiences and sociological categories is not a negative. Rather, it is welcomed by the postmodernist paradigm and reinforces my place in the study (Richardson, 1997). It can also support the rich data gained from a case study approach (Yin, 2003). This made my position clear during data collection. The paradigm and epistemology I chose also assisted my analysis. I undertook analysis from a position where I can draw on my experiences. With this, I could voice the issues, themes and concepts evident to me within the data (Fielding, 2009). It also allowed me to ask not only what is occurring but also when, where, how and why it is happening. The view did not remove my bias but, by using the selected research framework, my bias was explicitly presented. It then became a part of a sound method to collect and analyse data and characterised how I gave the participants a voice (Biesta, 2007).

It should be re-affirmed that this study used qualitative data. Despite McKeown's (2004) concerns that a case study restricts data to casual practices, data in this form has the ability to indicate relationships that may not be salient to the researcher. It can also keep researchers from being carried away by false impressions in quantitative data (Eisenhart, 1989). Furthermore, qualitative data was useful to understand the rationale embedded in the relationships revealed by the participants. As a result, I was able to see the meaning made from those practices. A beneficial analysis also took place as sound qualitative data was collected, with this type of data becoming a bridge between me and the participants. With careful analysis, supported by Bourdieu's interpretation of society and modern literature, there was a good opportunity to accurately portray the participants' experiences.

4.13 Ethical considerations

Sapsford and Abbot (1996) argued that qualitative research, such as participant observation and journalling, is often considered ethically 'cleaner'. This because there is no direct manipulation of the participants, due to more direct contact with them (Sapsford & Abbot, 1996). Yet problems can form in the relationship with the participants (Goldblatt, Karnieli-Miller & Neumann, 2011). Miscommunication may occur as a result of the intimate nature of research (Bowen, 2009). To address this issue, Smyth (2004) suggested a partnership with the participants. This helps avoid disempowerment of their experiences and perspectives. The interviews, direct observation and journals were designed to give the participants a voice and treat them as people rather than subjects. This allowed a rapport to form with the participants, with minimal bias. The partnership model allowed a democratisation of the research process and enabled the levels of participation to be managed. Seeking to conduct research in an overly professional manner may limit the personal aspects of the participant/researcher relation; a partnership lets the participant voice their views and opinions on the research topic (Smyth, 2004). To achieve this partnership, Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach (2009) illustrated that, while the researcher controls the way data is collected, it is the participant who makes the decision to share their experience. Therefore, it is the researcher who must be honest about the collection and analysis of data. This strategy details the specifics of the study, with regard to how the data is used. It also lets the participant understand how their story will be interpreted (Bravo-Mereno, 2003; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). As I was able to implement this approach, the participants were brought up to the level of the researcher (Ceglowski, 2000; Flyvbjerg, 2006). This fostered respect and honesty between the researcher and participants.

Application for ethical approval of a research project involving humans was submitted to the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC), under the assigned number CF13/2540–2013001314. This was approved by the committee on the third of October 2013. Participants were individuals aged under eighteen years, but no younger than sixteen. Parental consent was obtained and all parties were able to give informed consent. This included full disclosure of the research aims.

Even though the relationship formed with the participants was a concern of mine, as I did not want to influence their answers, it allowed them the opportunity to speak freely with me. Not only was this essential in gaining relevant data, but the participants had the chance to contact me and voice any concerns, especially in relation to privacy, observation or any other personal issue. Before the selection of participants, it was made clear that this was an opt-in study. The selected participants were informed, in writing, of the implications of the research. All documents were written in plain language, providing a succinct explanation of the study. It also introduced the researcher, the aims of the project, the research and the demands of the participants. This included matters of privacy and non-identification as well as who had access to the data and its potential use. They had the option of opting-out during the data collection period if they desired.

Although these concerns are present in the literature, my central concern was directed towards the participants. I wanted to ensure they were not harmed in any form as a result of taking part in the study. At no time were the risks involved ignored for any potential benefits. To ensure this was the standard, observations and interviews were conducted via appointment based on the participants' availability. I enforced this to guarantee the study did not conflict with the participants' personal or educational commitments. To further promote participants' safety, all appointments were conducted in their local public library. As a result of this location, participants could feel comfortable and relaxed while they accessed the Internet and participated in interviews. The participants' safety and basic human rights were always placed before any other considerations. This included the justification of any risks, implementation of research methods, privacy, data analysis and written discussion (Neuman, 2011).

Limited pressure was placed on participants when data collection commenced. As I am familiar with the pressures of secondary school, I hoped this experience would aid the participants as they negotiated their education. I also had confidence that the journals gave participants a chance to write about the way they used the Internet. This could have been an opportunity to express any concerns they were having. Often secondary school students do not have an opportunity to say what they think about their place in education (Falchikov, 2013); journalling provided that chance if the participant desired to discuss those themes. Likewise, the interviews were conducted with full parental or guardian consent. The observations were also undertaken in this setting. During data collection, I was careful to not directly manipulate the participants in any way. However, as I am a part of the study there

was still some influence. With the approach gained from the postmodern paradigm I could make the participant aware of my place as a researcher. I let the participant know that I did not require a 'right' answer; any answer they gave would be correct if it was a part of their personal experience.

4.14 Summary

This chapter reviewed the methods and approach of this study. It acknowledged the philosophical themes that act as an initial point of review before data collection and analysis, namely the postmodern paradigm and the constructionist epistemology. Together, these interpretations allowed me to understand the uniqueness of each individual participant and helped me appreciate how they make meaning. The chapter also explored the qualitative methods used to obtain data. Participant observation, interviewing and journalling were designed in a way to give participants a chance to tell their story. The participants also had the opportunity to voice their opinions on what they value, primarily in consideration of the Internet and their formal and informal education. To further summarise these points, Table 1 provides details on the collected data. It outlines the participants involved, length of their interviews as well as journal entries logged and their total length.

Participants involved	Age	Gender	Interview 1 length	Interview 2 length	Journal Entries	Total journal length
Elaine	18	Female	65.09	59.29	6	1237 words
Beyoncé	17	Female	54.44	63.18	6	1021 words
Sailor Moon	16	Female	70.38	55.12	4	957 words
Sherlock	16	Female	63.45	61.55	7	1503 words
George	17	Male	57.55	56.43	4	809 words
Dave	17	Male	57.30	52.17	4	748 words
Steven	16	Male	54.36	51.21	4	832 words
Makaveli	16	Male	53.47	49.52	5	981 words

Table 1 – Summary of Participants

To introduce the participants, I now present a brief description of each participant, which includes information on the collected data.

As stated above, all participants took part in two interviews and two observations. Each of these meetings was conducted at a local library within the participant's area. Both of the observations utilised the computers and Internet access at the library; they also ran for sixty minutes.

During this chapter, I also acknowledged that content analysis would help me be as objective as possible. I could analyse the symbolic content of any communication and gain an understanding of its significance in the participants' fields (Bourdieu, 1986; Singleton et al., 1993; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013). This allowed me to categorise the data in context to form valid inferences from the participants' experiences. Concluding remarks were then addressed to the ethical considerations of the study. The reflections here made sure that the participants understood the study and their involvement. Detailed information about the study was presented to participants and their parents so informed consent could occur. The next chapter opens by introducing the research participants. A review and analysis is then conducted to answer the research questions of this study. It also provides insight into the participants' experiences, views and capitals.

Chapter five: The positioning of the research participants in their Internet-based and educational fields

5.1 Opening remarks

During the introduction, I presented some of my personal experiences. I outlined my initial understanding of the Internet and education. I also summarised some Internet-based practices (Yan, 2006; Brown, Campbell & Ling, 2011), which I felt were making their way into the educational context I experienced. From this, the research questions were formed to help direct the focus of this thesis. A review of the literature was then utilised to explore previous studies that surround the topic. This helped to acknowledge several themes on social and academic-based practices (Peters & Slotta, 2010; Yılmaz & Orhan, 2010) as well as the Internet's influence on formal education (Hargittai et al., 2010; Thorne & Black, 2011). All of the considerations explored in the literature review were then reflected upon in an examination of Bourdieu's cultural framework (1986, 1996a, 1997, 1998, 2000). This was conducted in the third chapter, where I presented the concepts of field, capital and habitus. Using Bourdieu's concepts provided a platform for this research that combined the previous literature and the direction of this study. Concerns regarding data collection were then discussed. This ensured that the research questions could be addressed to reach notable conclusions. Interviews, observations and participant journalling were employed to allow the participants full opportunity to express their opinions, stories and experiences (Yin, 2003; St. Pierre, 2006; Crehan, 2011).

In this section, I open the chapter by introducing the participants, identifying who they are and their social and academic contexts. Similarities and differences between the participants are also noted. This includes subject choices and the type of school they attend. Additional reflection is given to external factors relevant to the study. For example, one participant moved school during the collection of data, while another turned 18. Creswell (2012) argued that providing this information ensures an appropriate representation of the participants involved. I include it as an example of how I attempted to provide a holistic account of participants' contexts.

Categorisation of the data begins in Bourdieu's concept of field as this is the focus of the first research question and this chapter. A definition of both educational and Internet-based cultures and practices provided the initial point of inquiry. This established the participants' attitudes to their position in the educational field (Bourdieu, 1993). With this as a basis, a formation of the participant's habitus and their capitals in each field was then studied. Complementary discussion into themes of intersecting cultures and practices is also provided; these include academic and social pressures and the use of different capitals. In consideration of these themes, each of the following chapters investigates the research questions individually. The chapters are divided in this way to maintain an extensive exploration of the participants' cultures and practices.

It is vital to remember that the participants did not interact with everyone on the Internet. Rather, this is a sub-group of individuals located in the suburbs of Melbourne, Australia. While there are many factors that may come together and intersect, these individuals are limited to their own events in this temporal period. This study has investigated the participants' circumstances as a particular phenomenon from their perspectives (Chenail, 2011).

5.2 Introduction of participants

Below is an introduction to the participants of this study. Participants were asked to briefly outline some of their personal information to be included in this section. This was done so that participants would feel comfortable in how they were represented (Beaulieu, 2010). Also included is some information collected during interviews, observations and in the participant journals. A short acknowledgement of their Internet and educationally based practices and values is described. This provides context for their experiences. Any other relevant information, such as their desired Australian tertiary admission rank (ATAR) – required for post-secondary education – is stipulated in the brief biographies.

Elaine

Elaine is a first-generation Australian who turned 18 during the study period. Both her parents migrated from Greece and she is the youngest of three children. Her older brother and sister live at the family residence. Throughout the study, Elaine was completing her final year of senior secondary school. She had selected the subjects of English, further mathematics, studio arts, visual communication, psychology and the Year 12 religion subject. The final subject was required as she was attending a semi-private Christian school. Elaine desired to achieve an ATAR in the 70s; however, she said she would be happy with anything over 60. She plans to study secondary teaching and then, after a few years, join the police force.

Elaine has multiple social networking accounts which she uses frequently. However, she enjoys the online auction website *eBay* the most, which she visited during both observations. She also admitted she visited *eBay* during classroom hours using the school's Internet connection. Elaine enjoys her selected subjects as she gets the impression that the teachers care about their students. She is also attending the same school as Beyoncé. Elaine's pseudonym is a reference to the character from the 1990s television series *Seinfeld*.

Beyoncé

The eldest of five children, Beyoncé has two brothers and two sisters, all of whom live at the family home. She is 17 years old and is of Lebanese heritage. Beyoncé hopes to accomplish an ATAR score somewhere between 80 and 85. She desires to get into psychology and become a clinical psychologist; Beyoncé believes this practice is a rewarding way to help people. Her secondary school subjects are psychology, English, health and human development, further mathematics and religion. She attends the same semi-private Christian school as Elaine who recruited her to the study via the snowballing method. The two are close friends.

Beyoncé uses a variety of social networking websites but is particularly fond of *Tumblr*. She believes there she can represent her romantic side. This is something she feels she is unable to do elsewhere. She especially likes reblogging quotes about love that she draws inspiration from. Additionally, Beyoncé is critical of the content and information found online. She is also aware how easy it is to post something that is incorrect on the Internet. This is in contrast to the content learnt at school which she considers more accurate. Beyoncé's choice of pseudonym was inspired by the real-life singer/song writer.

Sailor Moon

Wanting to get a high ATAR, Sailor Moon wishes to study media communications after senior secondary school. Travelling is central to these educational decisions. She is 16 years old and is the middle child of three, having an older and younger sister. Sailor Moon is a first-generation Australian and both her parents are from Sri Lanka. Initially, the subjects she selected included English, English Literature, psychology, media communications, visual communications and religion. She was attending a Christian school but during the course of the study the participant moved for social reasons. Sailor Moon now attends a public school. As a result, the subject of religion was substituted for art. She felt this transition went well as she is in Year 11 and not Year 12.

Sailor Moon considered that there was a significant difference between her schools. She found her new school a much more welcoming place with a supportive environment. However, she also believed the academic standard was not as high. Online she engages in social media but is not a member of *Facebook*. In her journals, she noted that she was considering joining *Facebook* in order to stay in contact with friends from her previous school and to add new friends. The character from the Japanese anime *Sailor Moon* inspired her pseudonym.

Sherlock

Sherlock is 16 years old and is a first-generation Australian. Her parents have a South American heritage. She is the second born, with an older brother and is the elder of twins. Sherlock is currently in Year 11 and is studying 20th Century history, English, art, media communications, biology and psychology as a Year 12 subject. She completed the Year 11 psychology sequence the previous year. Sherlock is undecided on future plans, although she would like to go to Europe. Additionally, she is aware that she may not need a high ATAR score but sees herself as an overachiever and doesn't want to let herself down. She is, therefore, aiming for her best.

Sherlock is highly active online as she often posts videos on *YouTube* and has been doing so since 2009. Due to her engagement in other social networking websites, she has made friends overseas with whom she is still in regular contact (but has not met in person). Sherlock also enjoys school and notes that her school is very supportive of her endeavours. This is despite

the workload being her biggest source of stress. The pseudonym 'Sherlock' was selected from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's literary character.

George

Attending a public school, George, 17 years old, is completing Year 12. His favourite subject is psychology and he is also undertaking further mathematics, health and human development, physical education and English. George is aiming for an ATAR score higher than 70 so he can study sport psychology or social psychology after his final year. This interests him because it is a study into how people function. George was born in Australia; his mother has an Italian heritage and his father is half English and half Sri Lankan. He is the youngest of four children, having two brothers and a sister, aged between 19 and 25.

George has an affinity for several sports. This was reflected in his Internet search of both Australian and American sporting leagues. While being a member of social networking websites like *Facebook*, George was careful not to over represent his identity online. He often limits how much he posts on *Facebook* and rarely posts any photographs. With regard to education, he felt that the junior years of secondary school should have additional curriculum based on life skills and economics so students can learn how to fill in a tax form. George's pseudonym was the only one selected by the researcher as the participant did not want to choose their name.

Dave

Completing the subjects of health and human development, psychology, business management, chemistry, general mathematics and English, Dave is a 17 year old student who attends a public secondary school. He is an only child and a first-generation Australian. Both his parents have Indian heritage. Dave wants to get a good enough ATAR to gain entry into a double degree in sports management and accounting. He has also considered studying something in the business side of physiotherapy. Dave is in Year 11.

During the observations, Dave was interested in the statistics and management principles of the sporting teams he follows, particularly those in the Australian Football League (AFL) as well as international and domestic cricket. When questioned on these practices, it was revealed that this supported his choices for further study. He added that he was not interested

in playing the sports himself. This was also reflected on his *Facebook* and *Tumblr* feeds. Regarding his school, Dave notes that he feels that it is a very strict environment. He feels that this is because they do not participate in interschool sports or host any school community events. Both are social events he would like to see introduced. Dave selected this pseudonym for the study as it was the most generic name he could think of at the time of selection.

Steven

Currently in Year 11 and attending a semi-private Christian school, Steven has thus far enjoyed his educational experience. He had several positive things to say about his school and felt that he is properly supported there. The same feelings extended to his family where he is the third of four children with a father of Chilean heritage and a mother who is a first-generation Australian. Steven selected the subjects of psychology, English, maths methods, woodwork, accounting, business management and religion. He is 16 years old.

Steven aimed to achieve an ATAR in the mid to high 90s. The reason given for this number was so that he could surpass the ATAR score of his older brother. Additionally, a high ATAR would help him with further study. He is considering becoming a building site manager. For Steven, social networking websites are not very important. *Facebook* seemed to be used more as an address book. He further stated that it is only maintained for group messages. Additionally, despite using apps on his smart phone, he felt that people should communicate more in a real-life setting. The pseudonym Steven comes from a basketballer that he admires.

Makaveli

Makaveli is 16 years old and attends a public secondary school. He is the youngest of three children, having a brother and a sister who have moved out of the family home. Both his parents are from Afghanistan. As a Year 11 student, he is currently completing further mathematics as a Year 12 subject. He completed the Year 11 sequence the previous year. His other subjects are maths methods, media, legal studies, information technology (IT) and English. However, due to the teaching methods of his IT teacher, Makaveli dropped that subject and selected studio arts. Despite his selection of two maths subjects, Makaveli makes his dislike of the discipline evident.

He is not sure what he wants to do after secondary school but is considering something media-related. As a result, he is aiming for a high ATAR. Despite his dislike for the

mathematics classes, Makaveli believed that he is very competent. This relates to the other subjects as well. However, he added this is the case as long as he is able to maintain focus and work hard. He finds this is an issue, especially with his smart phone and the apps he has installed. Makaveli acknowledged that he will place his phone far away from where he is in order to limit his Internet access. Tupac Shakur's posthumous album was the inspiration for Makaveli's pseudonym.

Upon completion of the data analysis, several similarities between the participants became clear. All participants were using social media in some form, including *Instagram*, *Tumblr* and *Snapchat*. With the exception of Sailor Moon, they also all had an account on *Facebook*, which they regularly accessed. Furthermore, there was a common distaste for the subject of mathematics. Many of the participants noted that they only selected the subject because they felt that it was a requirement. It also appeared to be a pivotal prerequisite in their consideration of university courses. Sherlock and Sailor Moon did not feel this pressure and did not select the subject. In contrast, there was a fondness for psychology. Seven of the eight participants had selected the subject. Likewise, subjects based in the humanities seemed to be favoured by these participants. High grades were desired by all the participants. Similarities were also discovered in their Internet use and the amount of pressure the participants experienced from school expectations. These concepts are explored in more detail throughout the chapter.

Standing out from this initial analysis were the differences between participants. There were a variety of cultural backgrounds present in the study and a significant assortment of future career interests. Participants also interacted with the Internet in diverse ways. Some would never consider posting original content, while for others this was common. There were also conflicting views on the educational experience and the idea of school. However, these differences and similarities were not a limitation of this study. Sargent (2012) recognised that samples of this nature and size can enable the researcher to document the emergence of new themes. They can also identify different perspectives that may otherwise be overlooked.

5.3 Addressing the first research question

How do participants socially and academically position themselves in educational and Internet-based fields? is the first research question of this study. To address this question, a definition and outline of each field is provided in this chapter. This definition is constructed from the participants' perspective and reviews their educational and Internet-based fields. It is conducted to understand the variety of ways the participants are interacting with Internet-based practices. Importantly, the chapter also reviews what participants think about their formal educational field. These are their personal views, independent of their ideas of the Internet.. A realistic and substantiated investigation into an educational context can benefit a researcher. This separate review of educational practices does not directly relate to the first research question, but establishing this contextual field supports the overall analysis. Discussion into this area gives an understanding of the participants' background. This can uncover why the Internet is a part of their chosen practices (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012).

The theme outlined above are then built upon to help establish how the participants are able to position themselves within these contexts. As with the definition of field, position is understood from the participant's perspective. If this study did not consider the participants position then I, as a researcher, would not be able to understand why they interact with others, participate in class or the importance of the Internet. The data collected would have then been limited to the participant's interpretation of their fields and values without understanding the consequences of that interpretation.. As a result of taking this step, the analysis can provide a comprehensive investigation into the first research question.

To begin addressing the first research question, the participants' fields, practices and cultures are now explored. To help define their contexts, Bourdieu (1986) suggested the use of an individual's disposition. This is expressed though their practices in a multitude of ways. Other individuals, events and time all have a place within a field and are represented in these practices, which can range from the participants' relationship to each social space they interact within. Boyd (2014) identified that exploration of themes relating to an individual's position reduces the level of assumption that a researcher takes into a teenager's social space. It also opens opportunities to explore how they live in a technologically mediated world. To aid in this formulation of practice, Bourdieu (1980) interpreted habitus as the disposition of individuals. It helps them form their practices and actions. This is vital to remember, as

habitus can illustrate the internalisation of the field and can also characterise the position of the participants in their social spaces. The concept of internalisation can also be used to analyse the behaviour of the participants and by investigating this I hope to can capture the value of certain practices. An example of this was found in the anxiety the participants felt. Many of them wanted to discuss the social pressures associated with their educational space; these feelings stemmed from friendship groups and social practices as well as their academic content. All experienced levels of stress as they felt they were required to do well. Additionally, all were concerned with future positions within other fields. These included professional work environments and at university.

Before I can discuss the Internet-based practices, I need to define the educational field. This is a significant component of the participants' cultural and personal experiences. Therefore, the next section explores the participants' views on the educational field. With this as a basis, I can acknowledge the social and academic practices that develop from this field. I can further discuss the field of the Internet and its practices. This builds upon the established literature to provide insight into their experiences.

5.4 Defining the educational field

> The dispositions constituting the cultivated habitus are only formed, only function and are only valid in a field…the physical field, is itself a 'field of possible forces' a 'dynamic situation', in which forces are only manifested in their relationship with certain dispositions (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 94)

Bourdieu (1986) has argued that the field acts as a structured space for individuals to cultivate their own habitus. When the habitus is formed it is a product of the field and only valid within the field where an individual participates. The physical field then becomes the place where individuals can hold certain positions. In this regard, they also form unique relationships with others and influence what they consider as valued capitals. It is important to recall that the attitudes towards any field are characterised by the individuals. They are the ones within the context and it is they who form its definition. Expanding on this concept, Mills and Gale (2007) suggested that the concepts of habitus, capital and field were mechanisms for Bourdieu to explore social inequalities. Therefore, the power structure,

relationships and the individual's system of dispositions are all a part of a field's definition (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1977; Mills & Gale, 2007).

When reviewing the Internet and educational fields, my interpretation is divided into three parts. An outline of field, from the participants' perspective is provided. Then I separate the social and academic practices that outline the shared space the Internet and education have in the participants' lives. It is important to remember, while reading this analysis, how closely tied the academic and social worlds are. The definition of the educational and Internet-based fields I use in this study incorporates participants' social practices. Discussing these themes allows me to draw connections between the different fields and examine the intersecting practices. By acknowledging these ideas, the participants in this study were able to discuss the challenges they experienced with the structure of the educational field. This section outlines the educational field as detailed by the participants. It presents their attitudes and feelings. This helps to form their concept of the structure within the field. It also outlines the cultural production that occurs there.

Describing the first inclinations of the VCE context, Elaine recalled her experiences in selecting her future subjects:

> It was confusing because the school, they make you, your subject selection is for like August, so for year nine and stuff they make you choose it early in the year so you haven't even seen a chance to see an exam so the psychology exam for us last year was a normal psychology one or two point marks but the psychology for Year 12s last year they changed the whole layout of it but a lot of people would have known that and they weren't happy with it, like they weren't happy with that, there were no one, two mark questions they were all like four, five marks. So you have to go a bit more in depth, they're saying and then we never really got a chance to like to go through the subject thoroughly by like July/August and then they make you choose the subject for next year which is annoying. (Elaine, first interview, 1/3/2014)

Elaine outlined the uncertainty surrounding the idea of expectation in her educational context. While all students are required to select subjects to study, Elaine's position altered as the environment changed. Elaine studied and expected a psychology exam consisting of questions valued at one or two marks. Later she received questions that required more insight. As a result, Elaine had to adjust to these requirements. This caused her some concern.

101

Embodying these qualities of the educational field may adversely affect the participants in other areas (Bourdieu, 1993, 1995). However, these concerns on position were apparent to all participants. Moreover, they were accepted as a part of what forms the educational context. Dave remarked that he believed he felt the normal pressures that everybody faced: 'SACs [school assessed coursework, pronounced as 'sacks'] and exams and yeah submitting work on time, everyday pressures I guess' (Dave, first interview, 2/11/2014). These were accepted hallmarks of the field and factors that were always present for the participants.

Despite these 'everyday pressures', this research sample recognised the significance of their educational field. Alongside the above commentary, Sherlock expressed: 'I feel guilty for staying home… I just feel as if I can't afford spending time relaxing at the cinema right now, even though I've been locked inside my room doing homework all weekend' (Sherlock, participant journal). Later interviewing revealed that Sherlock was anticipating a difficult period at school. She added: 'then we will have a SAC on it as soon as we get back so that's just added stress for things that aren't even close to happening' (Sherlock, second interview, 15/4/2014). This awareness portrays parts of the participants' habitus. It would appear that the educational field is influencing their social practices (Bourdieu, 1990). As a result, the habitus's formation helps to provide solutions to the problems encountered in the field (Bourdieu, 2000). Dave accepted school based pressures as a component of VCE education. Sherlock also passed on the chance to go to the movies. Additionally, Elaine's earlier comments are now more substantial. She still selected subjects that directly influenced her academic and social practices. Furthermore, they all contribute towards her ATAR score awarded upon exiting this educational field.

In line with Bourdieu's (1990) considerations on habitus, other participants observed the additional practices associated with their educational field. Those practices impacted the way they approached their academic coursework:

> I: Do you feel that you are writing for a SAC or exam and not the pursuit of knowledge?
> P: I find, yeah I find that I am writing or a SAC and my problem with that is that next year I'm not going to have that background of what my teacher wants me to say because I don't know what an examiner wants for me
> I: Do you think that should change or are you okay with that?

P: I'm totally not okay with that, but I think I need to find a rhythm of, to sort of balance out what my teacher wants and what my examiner wants and what generally needs to be achieved. (Sailor Moon, first interview, 18/5/2014)

As bad as it is, I will have to put it up to the teachers on that one, some teachers feel obligated to learn to avoid punishment or failing while other teachers sort of inspired me or motivated me to learn for, not just for the sake of learning but to make you want to learn, some subjects, that I had a passion for I actually wanted to learn, I was eager, others it was more to keep my parents and teachers happy. (Steven, first interview, 14/12/2014)

Characterising the field in this manner represents some distinct outcomes. The literature review outlined that students have a social space. In that context they can consider how meaning is made and what practices to participate in. Importantly, they can also consider what values may come from those actions (Bourdieu, 1986; Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2010). Presented above, the participants have distinguished the structure of how they are expected to learn. Sailor Moon expressed three noticeable paths that need to be addressed in the educational context, the teacher, examiner and her personal endeavours. These all contributed to how she approached the educational field. Likewise, Steven was able to navigate between the teachers who wanted him to learn for the sake of learning and those who were just there to teach. Both examples detail the formation of the participants' habitus, as a result of the field. But the remarks also reproduce the structure and values present within the field. This is because the participants determine what is important in the field and for them.

In light of these considerations, the participants do not blindly follow this structure. They all provide reasons for their decisions. Dave highlighted 'I wanted to go to university even though there is other options other pathways to get into uni but, I think that this is the easiest one' (Dave, first interview, 2/11/2014). This apprehension for the future may be included in the definition of the educational *field*. By verbalising concern in this way, the participants are perhaps aware of their personal context and the wider field within society (Mills & Gale, 2007). In addition to Dave's remarks, Elaine's comments above outline concern over the immediate future. This was also articulated by Sherlock, who embodied a description of this context. All these factors exist in the same space. As a result, they have a close and powerful relationship with each other.

In review of the above data, it would appear that the educational field is considered a pathway for the participants. Once they have completed their final years of school they can move on and peruse their own interests. Yet, while they still participate within this field the participants have considered it as a space which needs a significant amount of attention to help them achieve academic success. This initial definition of the educational field could provide insight into the first part of the first research question as they participants are positioning themselves as products of an educational field where they do not have control. From this, Bourdieu (1996a) would suggest that this helps influence the participants' practices and their views on capital. Co-existence in this manner promotes the aspirations of the participants and their desire to achieve sound marks to attend university.

The section that follows investigates educationally based social practices. Covered are the participants' interaction with the other individuals in the field and their relationship with the academic content and the emergence of capitals. To introduce these ideas, the structure of the field is the first theme discussed. This focuses on participants' social experiences and their position in this field. Following this analysis, a review of the participants' academic based practices is undertaken.

5.4.1 Social practices

> Yeah there is a lot less stress on the weekend, Monday to Friday it's just a constant loop like it's just school and either work or gym or like homework, it's just a constant loop. But on the weekend there goes school and there, it's like your day. Like there is always a structure through Monday to Friday and it just has a negative vibe through it, and yeah just black and white. But weekends you can just do anything. (George, first interview, 30/1/2014)

Between Monday and Friday, George identified that his week consists of a constant loop. It rotates between school, gym and homework. Overall there were several negative connotations to the way he viewed his school week. This was given through the symbolic representation of a black/white distinction. Initial signs detailing the structure of the field can be recognised in his statements. George feels restricted to only a few options during the week; this then accounts for the freedom he feels during the weekend where he can 'just do anything'. Similar sentiments were felt by Beyoncé, who added:

I feel like way more fatigued now than I used to like I sleep all the time, I just want to sleep umm I like bail on a lot of social activities because I have to study and I'm too stressed out or I'm not feeling up to it. (Beyoncé, first interview, 21/5/2014)

George continued to add that his SACs were consuming the majority of his time: 'ahhh the SACs are winning' (George, second interview, 14/4/2014). Comparable ideas were discussed in the literature review. External factors, such as the Internet, had effects on the educational space and because of them some students became distracted in class, while others were able to enhance the way they studied (Savolainen, 2011; Finkelhor, 2014). However, the finding here suggests that educational practices are having a meaningful effect on the participants' personal social spaces. Hargittai et al. (2010) touched on these concerns, finding certain practices, such as the communication of ideas with others, can evolve and be used in different and modern contexts. Bourdieu (1993) additionally contended the 'educational system plays a decisive role in the generalised imposition of the legitimate mode of consumption' (p. 37). What George and Beyoncé expressed are the different ways the structure of the educational field can shape their lives. George portrayed this with comments on the weekly structure and Beyoncé outlined her continual desire to sleep. While this may hold certain health concerns, Beyoncé also remarked that she was avoiding other individuals due to stress or 'not feeling up to it'. As all the participants of this study were students, the educational field consumed a large portion of their lives. These are some examples of how the educational field was reproducing the participants' social practices. Additional interviews revealed these feelings were not unique to George and Beyoncé:

I could spend more [time on school work], I always think that I should spend more, but if I do I'm going to drive myself crazy and I'm not going to have, I don't care about my social life per-se, but it's kinda like in my head that it's going to be too much for me and I need a break and not just when I am sleeping. (Elaine, first interview, 1/3/2014)

I do find it hard to relax and make time for myself when I have a lot of school work because I feel guilty and relaxing, I just feel like talking to friends and mostly it's just a stress thing with school work. (Sherlock, second interview, 15/4/2014)

It's probably like, I think what they are trying to do is like put you under pressure and see how you react under that and get you prepared for the real world. (Makaveli, first interview, 22/1/2015)

In the above excerpts, these participants provided a critical observation about their time in senior secondary school. Elaine disregarded several aspects of her personal and social life in order to focus on achieving the marks she required at school. As she was in her final year, she specified that these actions directly related to the ranking system and her final grade (Elaine, participant journal). This was also felt by Sherlock, who was in the year prior to acquiring an ATAR and graduating. Despite being in a year considered by participants to have less pressure, her social conversations centred on the topics of stress and anxiety. She further added: 'I like school, I like learning, but it is probably right now and for the past few years the biggest source of stress for me… like a couple of weeks ago I had a stress related break down' (Sherlock, first interview, 10/2/2014). Correspondingly, after I asked Sailor Moon the first interview question, inquiring on how school was going, she responded with: 'I hate it, like I don't mind classes and I don't mind the context of subjects but I just, I don't like the environment of with the people, like it's the people that really suck' (Sailor Moon, first interview, 18/5/2014). It would appear that the participants' relationship with academic content has influenced some key areas, including their personal practices and their interaction with others. In turn, this also affects the structure of the field. Makaveli's comments on the nature of the field may be used to provide insight into why this could be happening. Parallels can be drawn to Bourdieu's (1993) ideas on the educational system, that is, that certain practices legitimise a certain type of consumption. But Makaveli also identified the pressures and expectations. He believed they were a characteristic of the field. This then prepares students for the 'real world'.

Already, Makaveli and the other participants were considering future social spaces. As a consequence, they understand the value in obtaining academic success. But participants also place a significant value on the social practices in education. When asked what would happen to the educational context if the social side of education was taken away, participants seemed shocked at the potential outcomes. They responded with:

> I think I would feel really isolated I think it's important to have you know class discussions and be with other people who are learning the same things as you so you can discuss and all of that yeah I don't often contribute to class discussions for example…it is important to have other people because they can contribute new ideas that you haven't thought of give another point of view and again I would feel really isolated. (Sherlock, second interview, 15/4/2014)

Technically speaking we would learn more, but I would find that talking to my friends and getting their like view on things broadens my awareness of it, so I feel that I learn more through my peers, so I don't think it would be that great, to be honest. I think it would be more regimented like, I think we learn better as, like socially. (Sailor Moon, second interview, 26/9/2014)

People would lose their communication with each other, therefore people wouldn't be able to work with each other as easily and like share information as easily its different going on, for example a blog or the Internet and posting something, you can do a study group with your friends it makes it more difficult if the social side was taken away. You would just drown. (Elaine, second interview, 8/8/2014)

There are two central themes displayed in these statements. The first theme addresses the formulation of ideas to expand and obtain knowledge. Both Sailor Moon and Sherlock identified the usefulness of conversing with others. This helped them to broaden their awareness and get different points of view. It supports these participants, as Sherlock did not often contribute in class. Sailor Moon was also apprehensive of the potential regimented style that could be used in the classroom. The literature review discussed the use of the Internet to support communication and academic reference. But in defining the social aspects of the educational field the participants have acknowledged how they were able to hold some control. This was achieved via the social practices they participated in, through which they could contribute to personal interactions and meaning making (Gómez et al., 2013; Scheurell, 2010). The second theme displayed concerns a students' inability to function in the educational field without support from their peer groups. Like the others, Elaine described how social learning in study groups helped her learn and detailed her uneasiness towards a restriction of social practices. Believing that she would 'drown' without her peers, Elaine recognised the importance of social interaction and the other individuals in the educational field. With these two themes at the forefront a clearer definition of the educational field can come across and forming contexts in this way may also provide the chance for the maintenance and creation for support and well-being. By working together, participants have the opportunity to experience the differences they have with one another. Although these practices are founded in the educational field, their value is paramount. They aid the participants' approach to their academic work and socialisation with their friends.

The data presented up until now is only a part of the complete description of the field. The following section describes the academic practices essential to this field's formation. In light of the insight provided by the participants thus far, they may not be able to appreciate the way in which the educational context legitimises certain practices. While this affects the way capitals are constructed and consumed, it also impacts on the participants' autonomy (Bourdieu, 1993). Their personal perceptions are altered as they provide solutions to the problems encountered in the field. This can account for the reasons the participants were sacrificing their social practices to engage with academic ones. Several components of the educational field, such as the ATAR score and SACs, shaped the way the participants viewed their personal contexts. This is apparent as they desired to justify the academic work and practices formed within that context. Initial values, grounded in academic qualifications, are also prominent in the participants' commentary. These considerations may then represent the meaning and internalisation of this field. A final consideration should be given to the position that the participants find themselves within:

> Yeah alright, it's pretty, there's a lot of homework, not a lot of homework it's just like every subject has, nah nah, there's a lot of homework, so like for every subject so you're never really up to date ever, I don't know anyone who is 100 per cent up to date who doesn't have any homework, which is kinda sad. (Makaveli, first interview, 7/2/2015)

Concern is raised by Makaveli about the labour required to keep up with the academic practices. These are accepted and perpetuated in the academic field. Makaveli notes that he and other individuals are always in a negative position. Yet these practices, together with the social practices, help form the structure of the field and, in turn, influence the participants' habitus (Bourdieu, 1986). To further provide a definition of this field, the academic practices are explored in the following section. Focus is placed on the participants' relationship with the academic content and what that means in a greater social context. This is then linked to the academic and social practices of the Internet to address the first research question of the study.

5.4.2 Academic practices

This section reviews the participants' academic practices in the educational field. Attention is given to their relationship with the academic content they engage with while at school. Unlike the last section, these practices are not sacrificed; rather, the participants consider these practices as most valuable. However, similar themes of pressure and the need to acquire capital are also analysed within this context. Once this goal is achieved, the educational field is compared to the field of the Internet. Together, this analysis addresses the first research question, building upon the experiences of the participants. Steven provided a noteworthy overview of the academic practices involved in senior secondary. The excerpt below was in response to the question about what makes VCE different from junior years.

> P: Well there is more pressure as we just spoke about, the thing that makes VCE different is that it's a lot more serious I would say the work load increases and the biggest thing is, and parents stress about this a lot, it can be what determines your future career.
> I: And how do you feel about that?
> P: Well there's a lot more pressure, I know a lot of universities vary their ATAR entry and that's slightly a relief so if you don't reach your mark there is a possibility that you can be accepted into other ones but it is scary the thought that after two years of consistent testing SACs and stuff that can determine where you end up that is scary. (Steven, first interview, 14/12/2014)

The participant's remarks show a primary understanding of the educational field in senior secondary education. Steven has detailed that there is more pressure during this time, which is attributed to his workload. He further considers that this social space may determine one's position in a future professional field. Already, links can be drawn to the social practices explored in the previous section. Pressure to succeed was a cause of stress and anxiety for the participants. Reflecting on academic practice, fear is also acknowledged. Steven found that it is scary that two years of 'consistent testing' can determine where one ends up. Other participants justified the considerations raised by Steven. They discussed how the practices evident in the educational field changed the way they viewed themselves and this social space.

P: I think in your later years, so Year 11 and 12, it sucks you in but before that it doesn't really before that you are just forced to do it at school, you're still forced now but in Year 11 and 12 but you have a motivation to do well and you actually look towards your future rather than back in the day, primary school you wouldn't really care or anything.

I: Is that due to the content or future pressure?

P: Future pressure, even just family pressure, whatever, yeah, because everyone wants to do well it's definitely the future pressure that sucks you in I guess. (Dave, second interview, 31/1/2015)

I: How serious are you feeling about university?

P: To be honest I never wanted to go to uni, like I could never see myself sitting in a lecture, writing notes, in those chairs with the little flip over tables, but now I've decided that if I want to get to where I want to go I need to go to uni.

I: What was the catalyst for that change?

P: There was a stage where I was like, I have no future I don't know where I'm going, I was having an existential crisis, I didn't know where I was going, then I was like hey if I want to know where I am going it's not going to just fall into my lap or like hit me in the head I have to actually figure it out and so it took a lot of sort of soul searching. (Sailor Moon, second interview, 26/9/2014)

Dave described educational practices as a ritual that 'sucks you in'. This was also something that was not present in his former years of education. During a time where Dave felt it was compulsory to attend school, years 7–10, the context and practices were portrayed as a part of a routine. He simply had to accept and participate in them. That idea changed upon commencement of senior secondary school. Here, motivation became intertwined with academic practice. Dave now feels that future pressure has influenced how he approaches school work. Meyer (2012) similarly noted a student's expectation of entering university is established during earlier school years. The academic practices of the VCE and the participants' relationship with them support a change in the way they approach work. Bourdieu (1982, 1997, 2000) argued internalisation of the practices and capitals in a field affects the way individuals view each other and the social space itself. This observation is further illustrated by Sailor Moon. She described herself as someone who did not want to go to university. However, after reviewing her experiences there was a movement away from that initial idea, towards a desire to 'figure it out' and attend university. In turn, Sailor Moon

believed that by accepting the academic practice of 'writing notes, in those chairs with the little flip over tables', she can move into a position to discover more about herself.

During the second chapter, the literature review focused on the practices forming within the educational and Internet-based contexts. Social networking, the formation of a learning space and the student participants' ability to manage their academic coursework were all considered (Thorne & Black, 2011; Fewkes & McCabe, 2012). However, while there was a vast development of academic and social practices, there was a limited discussion of the goals of their participants. Comments from the participants of this study have revealed their engagement with and internalisation of academic practices. This helps construct a basis for their futures, especially in regard to university. Again, links to the social practices can be seen here but, as the academic practices are valued to a higher degree, the analysis supports an understanding of the educational field. As explored in the previous sections, this context holds cultural capital as a significant value. As a result, it has an impact on the individuals and their other fields (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993; Dimmock, 2013). These goals are perceived to be significant. The participants took it upon themselves to learn the academic content independently of the educational field. Reflecting on the school year thus far Steven noted:

> It's heavily based on independent learning, I would say that, it's like this year a lot of teachers it's expected that you do the work but it's up to you they don't follow you, they don't check it's just expected that you do it, so it's really putting a lot of pressure on yourself to put in the hard work and get where you have to be so it's not that the teachers aren't interested if you've done it or not it's just the fact of there's so much to do they don't have time to check it. (Steven, second interview, 29/12/2014)

Dave provided another example in his participant journal. His school had scheduled a SAC two days before school had officially started, during what was meant to be holidays. He added that despite having help before school ended last year, he didn't receive any during the holidays and 'has to do it by myself' (Dave, participant journal). In both of the above cases, time appears to be an issue. Steven stated that the teachers do not have time to check the work, while Dave was completing assessments during school holidays. A lack of structure within the field appears to be present here as the participants' teachers are utilising the school holidays as time for their students to engage in formal academic coursework. This is despite the impact on social practices of the educational context discussed in the previous section.

Each participant in these examples had to alter the way they approached their own education. This was done to succeed and adjust to the context around them (Bourdieu, 1993; Oyserman, 2013). Additionally, independent learning is not just limited to school work; it also affects their application for further study. Despite the future expectations the participants felt, it would appear they have a limited support network at school:

> Yeah and there is the careers teacher guy, but he just reads what's in the books like he just gives you pamphlets and it's just kinda, I don't know, I think it's better to do it, not on my own like I will ask which ones better, but like I would rather go to someone not him, I would go to someone who is actually in uni at the moment and ask for the different unis. (Elaine, first interview, 1/3/2014)

Elaine has described the role of her careers teacher and her endeavours to access content. However, as a result of the career teacher's limited ability, the participant has to do this on her own. Although students need to investigate and learn independently, Spiro, Juliet, Henderson and Clifford (2012) determined a mismatch could form between how teachers and students perceive independent learning. Furthermore, they restated the importance of these practices and what they mean in the future. These concepts are fuelled by what Bourdieu (1986) described as the influences from culture. Based in already-established social origin, these practices are 'extra-curricular'. They become a part of the avant-garde culture that the educational institution may wish to foster. The participants expressed several concerns surrounding the educational field and their futures, which shows recognition of the wider society and also an internalisation of the avant-garde ideals. Importantly, they also acknowledge the other individuals in the educational field (Bourdieu, 1993, 2000). This is not only in line with the reproduction of the field, but also how the participants of this study alter their social and academic practices. This is used to construct a beneficial position after they leave this educational field.

In this chapter so far, I have provided the participants' interpretation of the educational field and a framework of what practices they choose to engage with. The position the participants feel they are in was also detailed and other factors, such as stress and their relationship with other individuals were documented. The practices and cultures evident here may now be set alongside the participants' engagement with Internet-based practices to provide a fuller explanation and definition of the educational field. In one sense participants have outlined

how their formal academic practices have impacted upon their personal lives inducing stress and anxiety. This is increased as their teachers schedule academic assignments during their school holidays. However, the participants were also able to use their social practices to build support networks and work together to challenge certain negative experiences in the educational field. These ideas were explored in the literature review, which identified how a more public use of the World Wide Web changed the social dynamic (Witt & Metzing, 2010; Forte et al., 2014). The next section builds upon the discussion thus far and reviews the Internet-based context. Like the exploration of the educationally based field this is achieved in relation to both the participants' social practices and academic pursuits while on the Internet. This analysis provides a comprehensive inquiry into the different types of Internet-based practices in which the participants engage.

5.5 Defining the participants' Internet context

On the Internet, individuals are provided with a platform that can enable them to explore new ideas. They can also seek out meaning and discover content that they may not have been exposed to before. Online contexts can provide a voice for those who participate, whether they need it or not. Israelashvili, Kim and Bukobza (2012) found that as the Internet allows these opportunities, it becomes a crucial component of contemporary life for many people. This is especially significant for adolescents, who can use the Internet for exploration and expanding their knowledge in the world. These sentiments were shared by the participants of this study who remarked:

> The Internet it's all, it's opened and it's endless... Internet is just avoiding the whole contact. There is so much websites, and all that, and people you can have a direct conversation, and the Internet you can be lost as there is so much different things. (George, first interview, 30/1/2014)

> The possibilities on the Internet are endless and I love that through the Internet my family can communicate with family overseas and be part of things like my grandmother passed away recently and my mum couldn't attend the funeral there but her brother was on Skype with her through the whole thing. My mum got to say goodbye in a way she couldn't have done without the Internet and that amazes me. (Sailor Moon, first interview, 18/5/2014)

With the Internet's ongoing development, these participants recognised the capability of what can be achieved online. Both Sailor Moon and George identified the 'endless' nature of the Internet. But their interpretation of this characteristic was twofold. George thought that the Internet can be used as a device to avoid certain practices. Due to the vast amount of websites, it provides a contrast when talking to other individuals, which caused George to feel lost in the different avenues the Internet provides. Conversely, Dave received a message that was left unanswered on *Facebook*, sighted during the observations. When asked why this was left, Dave replied with:

> I hardly ever reply straight away, but usually I don't even see messages, then I see the next message, like a guy asked me about one of the tests for what we have to study and I have no idea I have to go home and look it up [laughs] because I didn't want to reply yet until I get home. (Dave, second interview, 31/1/2015)

The impact of the Internet-based context on the real world is indicated in Dave's remarks. Some practices described above would not be possible with face-to-face interaction. Dave used the messaging feature on *Facebook* to change the way he interacted with others by delaying his response time. Similar practices were also observed in Sailor Moon's comments. Her mother was able to interact with family overseas in ways that were impossible before the Internet. Sailor Moon's feeling of amazement acknowledges how this practice can affect individuals from a variety of contexts and support the construction of personal values (Valkenberg & Peter, 2011).

The participants' observations about the Internet portray their ability to manage their own online practices. Although this maybe a central part of the Internet-based context, Beyoncé was able to allude to some of the negative consequences surrounding the online social space: 'I know that I can access a lot of things it can help you in some ways and it can also cause like a lot of trouble and cannot benefit you' (Beyoncé, first interview, 21/5/2014). Steven agreed by suggesting that the Internet is:

> Probably the best way to waste time and procrastinate, but it is both efficient, effective but distracting it could go either way it has its benefits but it has its drawbacks, I reckon probably, it don't know the proper statistic, I'll probably say seven out of ten people use it on a daily basis. (Steven, first interview, 14/12/2014)

If the Internet is being used on a daily basis, as suggested by Steven, this could have several consequences. Beyoncé presented the idea that certain individuals could get into trouble online. This can be translated into both legal and social contexts. Makaveli noted that his school laptops have a firewall, 'which you can bypass, that it's pretty easy' (Makaveli, first interview, 22/1/2015). In his journals, Makaveli explained he felt sorry for women online as they are constantly talked about and critiqued. Both these opinions show how the social context of the Internet can target a group of individuals, and how Internet security is viewed as a limited threat (Buckels, Trapnell & Paulhus, 2014; Isaacson, 2014). The considerations expressed by the participants so far provide a sound outline of the context of the Internet. It exists as a place for information and communication, but it also allows groups of individuals to be attacked and rules to be ignored or challenged. However, providing another interpretation, Elaine discussed some other possible consequences that may form within the Internet-based context:

I: What do you know about the Internet?

P: That once you do something it can't be erased and yeah that's about it

I: It's interesting that you went straight to that, is there a story there?

P: Not really it just they always tell you that when you do something that can always trace it or they can always, as much as they say they can't they can and all that stuff

I: And who are they?

P: The higher authority [laughs]. (Elaine, first interview, 1/3/2014)

These were Elaine's first remarks about the Internet. Her focus was on its ability to store information that could be used by others to their advantage. This occurs because content online cannot be easily deleted or erased. Paralleling these themes, Morozov (2012) contended the 'higher authority' has the ability to regulate media content and shape how the public reacts to the news. Similarly, Bourdieu (1996a) argued that the media has invisible power relations. These directly affect the individuals who consume news-based content, which then helps to distinguish the field as the media provides the content.

The participants' contributions to the Internet are explored in the next two sections. This builds on Elaine's ideas, as they set the tone for other participants' views of online practices. A clear distinction is forming as the field of the Internet is viewed as a place that is endless in regard to other individuals and content, as commented on by George, Dave and Sailor Moon.

Placed alongside these comments are the fears surrounding the Internet's use. These were outlined by Beyoncé and Steven. Even though it may be impossible to know who the 'higher authority' is, or if they hold a position of power, Elaine's interpretation questions the practices that form online and the Internet field itself (Bourdieu, 1993; 1996a). While it may be too early to suggest the Internet is becoming a series of dystopic social spaces, it is worthwhile noting that all these avenues are possible in consideration of online practices.

In the participants' interviews and journal entries, they did not mention any of the hardware associated with the Internet. Mobile phones, laptops and tablets were only mentioned as devices to access the Internet. This, in part, challenges Blum's (2012) notion that the Internet comprises both the users and the tubes that connect it. These participants only focused on their contributions online. It also displays the Internet's value and its importance in these participants' lives. However, the devices proved vital in a review of the participants' Internet-based practices. The subsequent sections explore this notion and expand upon the themes already examined in the discussion. An investigation into the social use of the Internet for academic practices is conducted. This works alongside the review on the educational field to fully explore the first research question.

5.5.1 Social practices

A significant part of Sherlock's Internet use was communicating with other individuals. This was often done with her friends living in Europe:

> I'll scroll through Tumblr but mainly, like if one of my European friends come on at like 4am in the morning for them and they can't sleep I'll get to talk to them and that's valuable time for me I guess, because we don't get to talk during the week, it's just usually just Friday night and Saturday. (Sherlock, first interview, 10/2/2014)

Current research literature often focuses on the negative aspects of social communication online, especially with regard to young individuals (Hasinoff, 2012; Campbell & Park, 2014). But Sherlock's descriptions portrays a positive encounter with others. A support network is offered via online communication. If Sherlock's European friends, or herself, are unable to sleep in the early hours of the morning, they are there for each other in the form of an online

discussion. Sherlock further identified that this time is valuable for her, as they do not often have the opportunity to interact. Like a real-world relationship, meeting her overseas friends took time and was initially conducted in a formal manner. Sherlock began a drawing competition on *YouTube*. The individuals with whom she later became friends participated in her competition. They then started talking through emails and the Microsoft Network (MSN) before becoming friends. Although not all online relationships are positive, Lee (2013) argued that social online communication can provide a meaningful way for young individuals to develop their language skills and cultural knowledge. They can also be motivated in real-world contexts, and this motivation could enter several aspects of an individual's life. For Sherlock, her European friends have helped her face anxiety at school, supported her artistic endeavours and established a desire for travel to Europe. A different form of online social practices was discussed by Steven. His comments relate to the use of *Facebook*:

> Ah well not so much, actually I deactivated recently, the only reason that I went back on was to try to sell something, because you know word of mouth is really good on there apparently the only, I had no restraints or drawbacks from deactivating, it was most just I had a group chat and I take part in that fairly often so I felt that I didn't want to miss out on that attribute or aspect of being online, but everything else not so much. (Steven, first interview, 14/12/2014)

Steven often described the practices associated with *Facebook* as a habit. He would access the *Facebook* app, review the content and then close the app. This was also viewed during direct observations. The central attraction for Steven was the interaction with his friends. Unlike Sherlock's communication practices, Steven didn't want to miss out on anything that was occurring in his social circle. If he did, it would directly affect how he interacted with the social group in a real world context. These values parallel his comments on the Internet itself as 'the best way to waste time and procrastinate' (Steven, first interview, 14/12/2014). But Steven also recognised the need for participation with social Internet practices. Similar themes to those discussed with educationally academic practices can be noted here. Participants were making social sacrifices to further engage in academic ones. This again confronts the participants' habitus. Steven decided to return to social networking due to the effect it could have had on his real-world social practices.

Approaching the Internet in this way could have several consequences for the participants. In addition to the educationally academic and social practices, the participants' use of the

Internet is also impacting on these social spaces (Bourdieu, 1993). This was observed and commented on by Beyoncé who remarked:

> Yeah I guess it can help me with my education I feel like I need the Internet but I actually don't I reckon I could live without, I have lived without the Internet it was pretty hard, socially yeah for social media but yeah for school I sort of realise that I didn't really need it but like it's sort of like a good like if you do need it it's going to be there. (Beyoncé, first interview, 21/5/2014)

Beyoncé summarised some significant practices in her statement. First, she outlined that, while it may support her academic practices, the Internet is not really a necessity. However, it appears that it is a vital component when using social media. Unlike Steven's comments, Beyoncé's comments position the Internet itself as something she cannot live without. Beyoncé's need for the Internet, to enable socially based practices, accounts for more than simple communication with others. This was argued by Chen (2011) who found that certain websites on the Internet can provide access to a support network. Furthermore, the perception is that the Internet is always going to be there. Despite Steven's reluctance, he also returned to social media to interact with others. In Sherlock's case, it allowed her access to individuals who were geographically challenging to meet and network with. Several of the other participants also noted the different ways the Internet could be used. This included its use to reduce the influence of the educational field, which is perceived as a challenging space.

An example of these social support practices was observed during George's observation. On *Facebook*, he was tagged in two pictures that related to the animated television series *The Simpsons*. One was of Bart Simpson strutting and the other was of Kirk Van Houten's 'can I borrow a feeling'. When asked about this George replied with:

> P: It's more a social thing, like there's a group of us that like Facebook, ah, like the Simpsons, and one of my friends is like he follows my other friend and everyone sees it and it's so obvious, and if my other friend says jump off a cliff he would do it, so we all relate that to Bart and Milhouse so we would relate that and just tag each other and it's amazing how much of it relates.
> I: Do you have a story yourself which stands out?
> P: Yeah I can't remember what we were doing but me and a friend were in English and we were drawing something and the teacher gave us 30 seconds to draw something privately and

118

compare and see how much alike and my friends like when Kirk draws dignity [laughs] and no one knew what it was [laughs] and then like even in class it's like no one was laughing except me and my friend and then my teacher joined in and he was like is that when [laughs] he said a quote from it and everything. (George, second interview, 14/4/2014)

George later detailed how these social practices allowed him and his friends to have some fun. This was while they were addressing academic work in his English class. Boyd (2009, 2014) argued certain practices – similar to those in which George was participating – help younger individuals complement their friendship groups. This aids their personal development and supports them in defining their context. In addition to Boyd's (2009, 2014) claims, George has gone beyond defining his own context. He and his friends brought something they valued into the educational field. This overlap of cultural, social and academic practices suggests a unique formation. These individuals can express themselves and communicate with others on their own terms, whether that is privately between themselves or publicly in class. The participants of this study placed several limits upon their own social practices. This was due to the perceived capitals of the educational field. Despite these limits, they were still able to use the field of the Internet and the practices they participated in there. Bourdieu (1986) would maintain that although these actions seem out of place, they are a sound cultural investment. This is important, as it enables an individual to function within a field. Furthermore, this may help facilitate a relationship with the society and allow them to form practices to acquire capital and help reproduce the field itself.

The social practices detailed above defined some of the ways the Internet supports the participant's personal endeavours. This also starts to form part of the definition the participants ascribe to the field of the Internet. Social practices online appear to be embedded in personal support and development. Beyoncé, Sherlock and Steven all noted that it acted as a device to connect them to others. While online, they could develop and maintain friendship circles. They could also use these avenues to express their grievances with other fields they participate in. George was then able to bring Internet-based social practices to another context, allowing him to alter how he took part within the educational field. Importantly, the participants' comments and experiences have helped acknowledge some of the valued Internet-based practices. Furthermore, when considering the above data, the social practices of the Internet-based field help to define it as a place where individuals can form a support network. This was outlined by Beyoncé, but other participants found that it was also a place

which has its own unique way of commutating with others, as summarised by Steven. It also identified why they choose to engage with the practices formed on the Internet. While these themes can be utilised to address the first research question, they also provide an opportunity to observe how the Internet has influenced other areas of the participants' lives. The next section, therefore, reviews the participants' Internet-based academic practices and provides a fuller definition of the Internet-based field the participants engage with. This allows full exploration of the context and helps to provide a full account of how they understand the educational and Internet fields and their practices.

5.5.2 Academic practices

The last section discussed the values the participants of this study held, in regard to the social practices they engaged in online. However, alongside those practices, the participants also noted several research and academic endeavours.

> I: What type of information would you look up?
> P: Oh just, anything like general knowledge just something that you want to know an answer too you can just search up on the Internet anything yeah, its involved in anything and I can just search it on the Internet, just to be sure. (Dave, first interview, 2/11/2014)

> I: Would you feel comfortable completing an assignment with just the Internet?
> P: Yep, I think it has got to the point where people are just used to that it's just like the natural thing to do some people don't even bother with books anymore. Sometimes I tend to do that, sometimes not, so in that regard I am used to it so yeah. (Steven, first interview, 14/12/2014)

> Used the Internet to procrastinate until 6:30pm – watched YouTube videos, chatted on Facebook and browsed Tumblr. It only took me around half an hour to finish my PowerPoint presentation on Anti-Semitism. I used quite a few websites that were able to help me with information, though I did derive information from my History textbook as well. Google's reverse image search has saved me once again allowing me to easily access some higher quality images from the 1930's that I stumbled upon when on the research websites. At around 7:00pm I had to go online to complete some survey to school, regarding BYOD (bring your own device) and Internet use at school. (Sherlock, participant journal)

Different practices emerged in the statements above. Both Dave and Steven noted that the Internet was a constant source of information that can be accessed at any time. It can also be used as a substitute for more traditional sources of education, such as books; movement away from print-based media is not uncommon (O'Reilly, 2008). Furthermore, the academic practices online appear to have been integrated into the participants' practices; they then become 'the natural thing'. In keeping with Bourdieu (1982), the Internet-based practices have imprinted on the participants in such a way that it has become a part of their disposition. As a result, this may be an aspect that affects their habitus. Additionally, Sherlock noted in her participant journal how her school wanted her to complete an online survey; this was to be completed in her personal social space on her own time. The sentiments above also acknowledge the school's application of Internet-based cultures and practices. Supporting these claims, Roemer (2015) determined that schools should connect students with others from around the world and within their own school. This can allow them to develop their communication and collaboration skills while learning more about themselves. As the Internet has been internalised by the research participants, it appears that these practices are also reproducing the structure of the educational field (Bourdieu, 1982, 1986). This may be the case even if students just research content online, as described by Steven and Dave.

Despite the benefits, there may also be negative consequences. Studies by Leung and Lee (2011) and Gencer and Koc (2012), analysed in the literature review, exposed the potential hazards that surround the use of Internet for educational purposes. Similarly, overuse or reliance on the Internet could lead to a neglect of real-world skills and practices (Näsi & Koivusilta, 2013). These thoughts relate to the some of the opinions expressed by the research participants, but they did not view this as a negative. When asked if she would be comfortable completing an assignment with just the Internet, Sailor Moon responded:

> Teachers do, do that yeah, umm a lot of my SACs are based solely on Internet research and what we learnt online, I just did an outcome three in media and he sent us the email and he was like you have to compete this by this date make a PowerPoint and look up these websites make sure that you summarise then I want them in your own words because plagiarism will be punished blah blah blah and yeah we had to send it back by the due date. (Sailor Moon, first interview, 18/5/2014)

Sailor Moon also noted she liked that her teachers were now able to understand the current generation. This was because they have incorporated more technology into their lesson plans (Sailor Moon, participant journal). Studies have also complemented Sailor Moon's view and have suggested that innovative teachers, who use a variety of mediums in the classroom, provide a more active, realistic and visually diverse educational experience allowing their students to engage more with the content in a way which is comfortable for them (Montrieux, Vanderlinde, Courtois, Schellens & De Marez, 2014). The transcript above also implied an independent learning experience for the participant. Sailor Moon later remarked that she was happy to complete her assignment in this way and, if there were any concerns, she could email her teacher. Even though the Internet may be an essential part of the Media subject, total use of Internet-based practices for an assignment illustrates the impact the Internet is having on the educational field (Gómez et al., 2013; Dowdell, 2013). The implications and consequences of these actions are broad. Sailor Moon's remarks outlined a positive experience, but overuse of the Internet in education could limit students' capacity to think critically. This was noted by Leung and Lee (2011) and Gencer and Koc (2012) in the literature review as they found that high school students can become addictive to the cultures they participate with on the Internet. Regardless of any possible negative practices within a context, Bourdieu (1996a) suggested that individuals should have an understanding of media production and use, continuing that those in a dominated position can influence wider opinion and help distinguish the field. Sailor Moon found teachers are adapting to their students, as she discussed completing an assignment online without any in-class interaction and this was something which she personally found benefitted her style of learning. As a result, Bourdieu's (1996a) vision of individuals understanding and using different forms of media to comprehend their fields may already be occurring.

The previous sections have discussed the Internet-based field. This section detailed the various academic practices the participants engaged with while online. There they explored how to investigate and research different content in an online setting. Furthermore, this was related to their academic experience. The ways in which some aspects of the educational field are being affected by Internet-based practices was also discussed. Although these numerous academic practices may be due to the perceived endlessness of the Internet, it also demonstrates the opportunities students have online. This may be a subsequent definition to the participant's concept of the Internet-based field. These themes are discussed in the final section of this chapter as it seeks to address the first research question.

5.6 Summary of the Internet and educationally based fields

> I: So you put a lot of research value on the Internet?
>
> P: Yeah everyone does, well everyone puts a lot of value on the Internet, it's seen as like the great equaliser everyone can use. (Makaveli, second interview, 7/2/2015)

The underlying idea expressed by Makaveli is the importance of the Internet, which he describes as the 'great equaliser' that everyone can use. Makaveli's comments may reflect the views of the other participants of this study. They all have access to the Internet and acknowledge how they manage their Internet-based field, and it is they who select who receives what content. In many ways, this places them in a position of power, even if they choose to be anonymous online. However, the field of the Internet was also portrayed as a vast place where anything was possible, a social space where, once you place your personal content online, 'they' can obtain that information and use it for their own ends. This chapter posed the question of how do participants socially and academically position themselves in educational and Internet-based fields. Through close interaction with the participants, several different themes were discovered.

Initial inquiry reviewed their educational field. As a result, the first research question of this study helped to direct an analysis of the data. The discussion which occurred in this chapter represented the ways the research participants felt constrained when being academically challenged. The educational context, at times, contained both academic and social interactions. Most prominently, the nature of the VCE context was defined as a serious endeavour and an undertaking that should not be taken lightly. Steven commented on the fear of how two years of constant testing can determine a student's future. These notions were shared by Dave and Sailor Moon, who stated that pressure to succeed for the future was a significant factor in achieving their goals and gaining capital. Independent learning was also a trademark of this field. With these concerns outlined, part of the first research question can be addressed. The participants considered their position in their educationally based field as limited. Participants commented upon how they felt they had to adjust their own social structures to participate; if they could not do this then they would fail to become effective members of the educational field. These concepts are not inherent in, or unique to, the social spaces in education, but they have been outlined as components that affect these individuals'

position, capitals and perception of the educational field (Bourdieu, 2000). Consequently, these practices led Makaveli to suggest that school was preparing students for the 'real world'.

Background for the educational field was also provided to afford a better understanding of the participants' contexts. Detailing the practices of that field was useful in contrasting them with the practices of the Internet. Furthermore, as the Internet has become a central part of students' academic experience, a discussion could then occur about online practices for educational purposes. All participants noted how useful the Internet was in assisting their academic practices. Many of them felt comfortable completing assignments with the Internet as the primary and only source of information; both Sherlock and Sailor Moon commented on how they have achieved this with the aid of their computers. Other participants found that the Internet was a resource that is 'always' there for them to use. This has reduced their use of books and traditional means of gaining content. However, these were not considered negative outcomes; rather, the participants are comfortable with research and communication in this form. Alongside the academic practices, Internet-based social practices were highly prominent. Online, Beyoncé felt she would not be able to function without social media and they were a vital part of her social world. Steven attempted to stay off *Facebook*, while Makaveli tried hiding his mobile phone to stay off social media, yet, they both continually interacted with other individuals on *Facebook* via their mobile devices. Communication in this form places Internet-based practices at the centre of these participants' social and academic experiences. Gee (2006) outlined how this, while establishing their identity, can also help them become a part of the online production. George furthered this idea as he brought an online social practice, tagging photos on *Facebook*, into the classroom. This was then shared with his friends and the teacher as they understood the *Simpson* reference. Additionally, Elaine noted her constant use of *eBay* while in class. This practice is, however, outside of any noted academic task. These practices mirror the participants' views of their position in their educationally based field. The ideas brought forth here also help to address the second part of the first research question. While using the Internet, participants appeared to form a more favourable position, opposing that of their educational context. While this may have been due to social practices being more prominent, the participants of this study represented their ability to define and act upon their socially defined capitals. This enabled them to promote a balance between their educationally based position and their Internet based position.

To summarise the above points, the educational field was defined as a formal construct. It was a source of stress, anxiety, education and a place to acquire a unique set of capitals. Yet, it was a field which provided the participants a pathway to achieve their personal goals. As a result, this field took precedence over many other fields as the participants maintained that the capitals associated with acquiring high grades would benefit them in the wider society (Bourdieu, 1995, 2010). Consequently, as participants desired cultural capital above other values it impacted their position in the field limiting their role and the potential influence they could have. However, by interacting with the Internet, participants were both encouraged and deterred by the endlessness of this field. Although the Internet was used for academic practices, the participants focused on social aspects. Participants could explore more aspects about themselves and interact with other informal learning practices (Berners Lee et. al, 1992; Kassens-Noor, 2012), especially with regard to social practices and the intersection with other social spaces (Bourdieu, 1991, 1993, 2005). The participants position in this context was notably different as their own values could be made clearer, influencing the scope of their Internet-based practices. All these interactions acknowledged the practices the participants utilised while online. Therefore, the Internet was defined as a field which was able to enhance their valued practices. The participant's comments considered both informal social practices, as they used the Internet to relax, and formal educational practices, as they interacted with their teachers and completed assignments. However, it should be remembered that this does not reflect the views of other individuals in this educational context (Hampton, 2010). Furthermore, these participants have had the Internet since beginning secondary school. As a result, they have been a part of the online production for a significant amount of time (Steinkuehler, 2008). It should also be recalled that, when conversing on the Internet, an individual is not sharing content with everyone online, but with sub-groups of individuals. However, Bourdieu (1986) would suggest the participants in this study established their own practices and dispositions. They achieved this separately, but it was also intertwined with dominant fields found in their practices. This enabled a contribution to the wider field and their sub-fields. Expanding on this initial analysis, further inquiry could answer the questions surrounding what is important to these senior secondary school students. Already the participants have commented on the reasons they interact online. While on the Internet, they have displayed several valued practices; however, it is not yet known why these practices, values and personal goals are important. What is also unclear is why such a high participation with Internet-based practices is a vital part of their habitus.

Therefore, the following chapter addresses the second research question of this study. It reviews these concepts and asks, what forms of capital do participants consider the most valuable within their educational and Internet-based fields? A deep analysis of this question can help us further understand the impact of both the Internet and the educationally based field.

Chapter Six: Participant's formation of valued capitals

6.1 Opening remarks

This chapter address the second research question: *What forms of capital do participants consider the most valuable within their educational and Internet-based fields?* To address this research question, this chapter builds upon the findings of the previous chapter to contribute to an advanced understanding of the context (Thomas, 2011b). Initial analysis centres on the pressures faced by the participants. This was a dominant finding and an issue the participants were enthusiastic about discussing. While this topic was considered in the previous chapter, the ideas surrounding it helped to define the field. The analysis in this chapter, therefore, explores how the participants responded to stress and anxiety. Additional investigation explores the use of academic and social content, detailing the participants' constant connection to the Internet. It also acknowledges their ability to not actually be present online). Developing from that inquiry, the participants' Internet-based relationships were investigated – not only the relationships with other individuals in the field but also with the field of the Internet itself. This assesses how online social spaces are becoming valued by the participants of this study. It is within these topics, found during the analysis of the data, where the second research question could truly be answered. Building upon themes of stress and anxiety as well as the relationships the participants formed, I could investigate what capitals formed in the educational and Internet-based context and consider which ones were most valuable. To then end this chapter, the findings from the second research question are then correlated with the final research question and placed in the context of this study. A widespread understanding of the participants' views, experiences, fields and capitals can then occur.

It is also important to remember that Bourdieu did not discuss an individual's relationship with the Internet. Therefore, the following chapters provide an extension of Bourdieu's theory of society and culture. This is set alongside other commentators who discuss the context of the Internet. It is vital to engage with their work and build upon their findings, as this can help distinguish what values the participants hold regarding Internet-based practices.

Furthermore, it promotes an exploration on the effects this has on their position within the educational field.

6.2 External and internal pressure of the student experience

Thus far, analysis has indicated that the participants of this study are exposed to complex notions of values, traditions and languages in various academic and social contexts. In addition, deeper elements, detailed below, are apparent. These help to define the educational and Internet-based fields that influence the way they act (Bourdieu, 1986; Peterson & Deal, 2011), which, in turn, may affect the experiences of secondary school students. It may also lead to a change in the way they view and interpret these contexts. The discussion has uncovered that many students may find it difficult to complete or keep up with assignments. This may be a product of peer pressure in competitive environments (Helfert & Warschburger, 2011), feeling like they do not belong (Klein, Cornell & Konold, 2012) or being introduced to a foreign context (Callahan & Obenchain, 2013). This section explores themes surrounding anxiety and what is important to the participants as they cope with these external and internal pressures. The research questions can then help address why the participants are engaging with the online field to provide stability in their lives.

After her Year 12 examination period Beyoncé was able to provide a review of the experience:

> I wasn't eating properly at all like I couldn't even make a meal I was like I was more reliant on like take away because it was easier to get, like I couldn't even make time for that, my family were not my friends, like literally don't talk to me do not, do not, like literally I used to sit on the kitchen, on the dinner table and study but like the only time I would, I would hurry up and eat the food that my mum made and then I was in this little box again after… I need to study there was no time for my family I was, they used to go out Sundays, like every Sunday is family day I didn't go out with them for like four weeks I was like no I have to study, I have to study, I have to study. (Beyoncé, second interview, 12/11/2014)

Similarly to the discussion in the previous chapter, Beyoncé acknowledged how important studying was, especially during the examination period. In addition to sacrificing her Sunday family events, she also secluded herself in her room to study. This made her feel

claustrophobic, in a space described as 'scattered' and compared to a 'box'. Likewise, Dave provided an account of what it was like to begin Year 12: 'there is no coming back you can't just go try again it's not like Year 11 and the years before… before I just didn't want to do Year 12 but yeah now I am kinda motivated to do well' (Dave, second interview, 31/1/2015). Dave noted his concerns surrounding the coursework and school year. He also concluded that he had to change the way he approached education; this was due to the significant value he placed on achieving high grades. Both participants felt they had to alter the way they would normally approach their educational context. Central to this were the desired capitals present in that field. Ramirez and Beilock (2011) argued that stress is a serious problem that limits the potential of students participating in wider society. They suggested students should be given an opportunity to express these concerns to limit the internal pressure they feel. Often the research literature identifies a young individual's engagement with Internet-based cultures as a form of seclusion (Sharafeh, Amani & Tabarraie, 2014). Taheri (2013) claimed individuals who involve themselves socially in the real world are more physically and mentally prosperous. In turn, those who limit themselves to virtual interaction struggle with real-world interactions. Despite these views, Ziebland and Wyke (2012) contended that, while participation online does hold certain drawbacks, it provides access to certain services and allows individuals to maintain a relationship with others who have had similar experiences. This was reflected in Beyoncé's experience, outlined in the interview excerpt below:

> I: Did you go on social networking during those heavy study periods?
> P: Yeah, as a break, give myself a hour break [laughs], I'm kidding, but there was time for that but not for the important things yeah, Facebook, social media isn't important everyone just makes it seem important, I can live without Facebook or Snapchat, but I can't live without my family, if you think of it that way or live healthy eating like eventually I will get like diabetes, nah I'm kidding [laughs] but yeah maybe I eat too much junk food. (Beyoncé, second interview, 12/11/2014)

In these comments, use and access to the Internet is observed as a negative practice. Beyoncé would much rather spend time with her family and eat more appropriately; these are valued practices and aspects of her life that are important to her. Furthermore, Beyoncé is aware that she can live without *Facebook* or *Snapchat*. But she still preferred to engage with Internet-based practices over spending time with her family. Despite these concerns, Beyoncé touched

upon the importance of this constant connection to the Internet, finding it is a 'good shoulder to lean on' (Beyoncé, first interview, 21/5/2014). The importance of this type of interaction was also observed by Elaine. During her second interview, she was asked if she still shopped in class. Elaine responded in the affirmative and also added 'they put this new thing where apparently they can watch you, but I don't really care, I have to go shopping, sometimes it just gives me something to do' (Elaine, second interview, 8/8/2014). In this case, 'they' was an online security feature placed on the school's Internet. But Elaine also noted that by shopping online in class she was able to give herself a break from the coursework. This is because she found certain periods of school overwhelming (Elaine, participant journal). Both Beyoncé and Elaine allocated time and effort to this type of interaction. As a result, online shopping became a part of their Internet-based cultures. Beyoncé's comments came while reflecting on a highly stressful time in her exam revision; Elaine's referred to class time, to contest the overwhelming requirements of the VCE. The participants, in these cases, disregarded the potential acquisition of cultural capital. This was noted as they did not pay attention in class. Furthermore, their personal capital was also limited through forgoing time with their families. Rather, importance was given to their practices on the Internet. Although the previous chapters acknowledged the participants' awareness of the capitals in education and the wider society, these Internet-based cultures provide a different set of class values. These helped the participants interact with the content and practices of the educational field (Bourdieu, 1993). The Internet appears to succeed as a medium to access these cultural practices, something which Bourdieu (1986) believed would affect an individual's position. Whether these are positive or negative practices is dependent on the participant, but the value and importance of the Internet is notable.

The examples above portray the way participants relied on the Internet during times of anxiety. These findings begin to address the second research question in revealing important Internet-based practices. In a contrasting example, Sailor Moon did not experience much anxiety and stress when she commenced at her new secondary school. When asked about the time spent on the Internet – since the last interview – Sailor Moon found she had reduced the time spent online. She also added:

> At my old school I felt I was making up a lot of reasons to not go and so I would probably attend school like three times a week like, because I would wake up in the morning and be like nah I don't want to go and I would fight with my mum and make up so many excuses

130

with myself. I would convince myself that I was sick but I was fine and now when I wake up in the morning at my new school like I want to go like yeah I get excited by school now. (Sailor Moon, second interview, 26/9/2014)

The change of context may be a reason why Internet use was reduced. Sailor Moon also noted in her journals that she was spending less time using online communication in class at her new school. Rather, she became more focused on the academic context and, as stated above, got 'excited by school'. Sailor Moon's use of the Internet at her previous school may have been to reduce her anxiety and relieve social pressure. As she used the Internet less in her new school, the symbolic capitals online may not be as valued as they once were (Bourdieu, 1997). This may be because her social needs did not need to be gratified while online (Chen, 2011). Discussion by Boettcher, Berger and Renneberg (2012) suggested that interaction online can benefit individuals with social anxiety disorders; such individuals can participate in an online space to express negative experiences, reducing the pressures associated with face-to-face interaction and informal social expectations. Furthermore, they can choose to be anonymous. In this way, the individual does not need to feel exposed (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). Although Sailor Moon, and the other participants of this study, did not express any social anxiety disorders, they all shared and consumed content online. This was also used in their real world contexts for support or entertainment.

During the literature review there was limited discussion of how technology could be used in coping with educational and social pressures. However, these concerns appear embedded throughout the participants' experience. As a result, a particular finding from this investigation developed from the recurring themes present in the data. The intersection between the formal and the informal social spaces provided a chance to explore new possibilities in regard to students' educational and Internet-based practices. Johnson (2009) acknowledged that students, via Internet cultures, can explore and create their own social and learning environments. Steinkuehler (2008) also noted that the concept of a virtual community allows individuals involved to bond. They can also create associations with the cultural practices to make meaning. Participation with online practices demonstrates how this type of networking can create a medium, which may enable students to identify ways to cope with their educational anxiety. This was not the case for all participants of this study, but all were aware of how the Internet could be both beneficial and detrimental to their educational and social experiences. Following on from this analysis, the next section reviews the

consumption of content. It focuses on the academic and social content consumed by the participants whilst online; investigation of these concepts can specify the content participants are voluntarily engaging within and how that affects their interactions with others.

6.3 Consumption of social and academic content online

The present chapter has, thus far, investigated the participants' interaction with certain online practices. A central finding was that the cultures the participants formed were significant when they considered their real-world social spaces. Similar themes were discussed in the literature review, including discussion of an individual's decision to consume specific content (Bourdieu, 1993; Scheurell, 2010; Gómez et al., 2013). This was in select fields and helped to acknowledge what practices were valued in that context. Focus is now placed on social and academic content and what influence it has on the participants' educational and Internet-based contexts. Inquiry into these areas also notes the intersection of social and educational practices on the Internet, and further documents the fundamental practices that support the formation of valued online practices.

Many online practices are embedded in a Web 1.0 philosophy; they explore how content is represented online and then consumed by users of the Internet (Hargittai et al., 2010). Furthermore, such practices appear to assist in the participants' learning of educational content. This collaboration was also observed with Web 2.0 practices, which advanced the networking and communication on the Internet of some participants (Cochrane & Bateman, 2010). Elaine identified artistic undertakings, a part of her coursework, while on a social networking website:

> I: So you also mentioned Tumblr.
> P: Yeah, it's not so much for my own personal use but when I need something especially for school, folio subjects, Google's usually not enough for me I need to get more specific and more, I need to see what people similar to me find and I have to see if I find that the same, like if I find it as good as they do. (Elaine, first interview, 1/3/2014)

The social networking space *Tumblr* is a website where individuals can re-blog different forms of content. Elaine, in this example, used something that is a part of her socially driven online practices, but she used it as a source of information guided by her academic practices.

Additionally, she mentioned that *Google* did not have enough content to meet her specific needs. Although *Google* was specified by the participants as the central source of information while online, Elaine used another avenue. On *Tumblr*, she could explore her academic interests and then extend these practices into the social networking contexts (Castells, 2011). A similar phenomenon occurred when George was asked about a Facebook page he was following, viewed in the observation. He remarked:

> It's just an array of images about the environment and nature and it's just a good thing to have on the Facebook page. All the time on Facebook people are just posting the same thing over and over again. It's good to see something happy and with Year 12 it's good to break the structure. (George, second interview, 14/4/2014)

In this example, George is using content found online and altering it to meet his needs. Although these responses to the educational field were explored in the previous section, the consumption of content in this manner provides a distinctive opportunity for analysis. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) defined different ways to understand content. They initially argued that individuals who produce content do so from a position of status and authority. That content holds a certain meaning dependent on the individual's position in the society, and a social definition is then created and imposed – when the content is transmitted – from an individual (or individuals) onto others. The full meaning of the content is then found in three places: the content itself, the individuals involved and the surrounding context (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). What can be identified from these practices is the production and consumption of unique online content. Elaine discussed the consumption of academic content in a social setting. George, in contrast, manipulated the content on social media. This altered characteristics unique to *Facebook* as it 'breaks the structure' of educational content. Both examples showed signs of Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) interpretation of how content and its meaning is used. Additionally, both participants were able to comprehend and appreciate field-specific content and reproduce it in ways that supported them and their acquisition of capital.

By reproducing academic and social content in this way, participants could challenge their relationship to wider institutions established within society and culture. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) noted that the field, its capitals and the individuals all adjust to the interpretation of ideas, values and content. Participants have also alluded to the idea that they

can use this content in different ways and in different fields. Importantly, it would appear that participants' relationships are being challenged. When prompted on these themes, Makaveli presented his analysis:

> I: How do you rate the content you see on the Internet?
>
> P: It's alright, it's gotten better then it's less, nah sometimes it's crap because things catch on and it's over used or like it's mundane and it doesn't matter but I don't know they seem to be trying to make it mean something so I'll see something that actually has some meaning to it, I don't know it's still kinda trashy at times.
>
> I: Who are 'they'?
>
> P: I don't know like the main sources of information [quote unquote] I don't know like I don't want to say news, because it's not news, but news isn't news I don't know, like the main providers of articles or memes or whatever on the Internet, people like try to relate to the viewer or audience or whatever.
>
> I: News isn't news?
>
> P: Nah, because it's filtered, it's controlled by someone, it's not straight from the source, so of course it's going to be changed it's like, I don't know how they want you to see the situation like they will have continuous news reports on a certain issue, like gang violence just so you have a certain view on gang violence something like that. (Makaveli, second interview, 7/2/2015)

There are several points to reflect upon in the above passage. The links to academic and social content are the central ideas being portrayed. Makaveli stated that most of the news content is shared online, often through social media. At times, this content is 'mundane and it doesn't matter'. But Makaveli understood that those in control of the content portray it in such a way that it suggests a certain meaning. The interpretation has consequences for the perception of education and social content. Makaveli understands this as those who govern these social spaces being called into question; by challenging 'the main sources of information' the participant questions the control of authority figures within his fields. These actions were present in Makaveli's educational context. He chose to drop a subject due to the way one of his teachers conduced the IT class. In a similar vein, Sailor Moon changed schools due essentially to the impact of Internet-based social media and her position in that field. The ideas of filtering were also noted by Anderson (2012). He argued that individuals who consume this content cannot be identified as the audience anymore; they are now able to interact with, alter and exchange the information found online. By doing so, they can

reproduce content in a variety of contexts on different digital devices. As a result, this does not limit the content that is available online; rather, it expands content alongside the field and its capitals (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1986).

This section investigated some vital issues surrounding the content available online. In addition to the Internet's use as a source of educational and socially based content, participants also appeared critical of what type of content they were consuming online. Importantly, they were also aware of the wider social field and the way that content could be altered or used. Participants' application of this content also represented how they, as consumers, internalised different forms of content (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). Participants also showed how they used the knowledge gained there to produce unique online practices (Ziebland & Wyke, 2012). This was especially evident in George and Elaine's examples; they contested the structure of educational content with online social practices utilised 'in class'. This discussion continues in the following sections, which explore the relationship the participants have with the field of the Internet. Considerations are divided into two sections, accounting for the participants' relationships with others online and with the Internet itself. A review of these themes leads to a detailed breakdown of the cultures participants interact with online; this is then used to understand the capitals evident there and how they affect the participants' educational context.

6.4 Importance of online and offline relationships with other individuals

> Teenagers attempt to simultaneously participate in the net-worked publics that are foundational to their peer groups while maintaining a degree of privacy. Simply put, they are trying to be *in* public without always *being* public'. (Marwick & Boyd, 2014, p. 1052, emphasis in the original)

The above quote suggests that teenage individuals have a complex relationship with the Internet. This allows them to promote and shape their personal social spaces. While Marwick and Boyd (2014) are not clear in this distinction, their commentary could apply to both online and offline relationships. Concerns surrounding relationships – both online and offline – are a familiar topic of inquiry. Akin (2012) detailed how social interactions, psychological wellbeing and the behavioural lifestyle of secondary school students affect their developing

and developed relationships. The purpose of this section is to build upon these studies. By doing so, a deeper understanding can be obtained of the values and capitals the participants desire when they reflect on their relationships online. Consideration is given to relationships affecting their online and offline fields. The intersection between the two is noted and explored as a vital component of their value-making practices (Bourdieu, 2000).

Returning to Marwick and Boyd's (2014) statement, they presented the idea that those online are trying to be *in* public without being *public*. Individuals may then have connections to others in the online field without actually being in that context themselves. The participants in this study had multiple ideas about their relationship with others. This was noted by George and Steven, who commented:

> P: Yeah you could say that, it's just different priorities different patterns. It's hard to say, I know the young generation is more Internet because the older generation is like real emotions real confidence, real interaction.
> I: So you don't think there is a real connection online?
> P: There is Wi-Fi, [laughs] but there is something, but it doesn't compare it's not in the same category as real life. (George, second interview, 14/4/2014)

> As a whole it's not bad but a lot of it's just gossip and what's going on in everyone's life a lot of it's like irrelevant to the average person but for some reason a lot of people are still interested in it that's got me stumped I don't know why that is, why everyone's going on with that celebrity's life when it doesn't affect you or something. (Steven, second interview, 29/12/2014)

Both participants acknowledged a drawback of the Internet, in that there is limited potential for forming real relationships with others online. George's answer resulted from a distinction he was making about the current generation. He compared his personal views on relationships with the 'real' emotions, which also include confidence and interactions that occur in an offline setting. George also stated that interactions occurring online are not in the same category as those in real life. Continuing this point, Steven identified the irrelevance of the relationships that exist on social networking. With the constant streaming of gossip, he is unable to understand why other individuals would be interested in such affairs, especially in regard to the pseudo-relationships formed with a celebrity. Both participants recognised some of the different types of relationships evident online. They each argued that the Internet offers

a limited way to connect with others. Yet, they also find that there is still a large community of users who take part in these practices (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012). While this 'stumps' Steven, George acknowledges that there is something online – but it is a clone of what truly occurs in real life.

Reviewing social networking websites, Carpenter, Green and LaFlam (2011) argued that social interaction online falls into two distinct categories. The first is a real-life supplement and the second is as an interactive tool. This supports prospective curiosity and facilitates new experiences. A central factor of these themes is the influence of those individuals online; it is they who invest energy in the online social networks while still being able to affect social content. From these ideas, it would appear there is more exposure to different types of relationships when an individual is online. Additionally, in that context they have the ability to manipulate the interaction. Using their mastery of Internet-based practices (Johnson, 2009), the participants of this study recognised the way they and others can formulate distinct relationships online. This helps to reaffirm the identities and the values present in their interaction with others and allows them the choice of what those relationships mean to them and what value they have (Bourdieu, 1998; Mills & Gale, 2007; Pascoe, 2011). George and Steven ascribed limited merit to online relationships; however, this was not the case for all participants. Several other consequences emerged while interacting online. Sherlock expressed disgust as a result of events that occurred on *Facebook*:

> I always get such filthy looks because I tell people that I'm an atheist and I always have to justify myself and say that I don't think there is definitely no God I'm not going to start criticising other people for their belief in God or Gods or anything, it's just what I personally believe but I do get bible bashed quite a bit and its stressful and there was this one girl from school we got into this big debate on Facebook for everyone to see, everyone at my school, and it was fine, I wasn't trying, it wasn't like a big cussing match or anything it wasn't undignified I was just trying to say over and over again, but she kept putting words in my mouth saying that I called her God stupid and unreal and I didn't say any of that I didn't say anything I respect your beliefs, then she said that I was going to spend an eternity in hell burning in a pit of sulphur, and that's a bit much spread the loving word of God. I'm very live and let live, do whatever makes you happy as long as it's not hurting the people around you…I will be up front about it and I will put that online so I will have people to see. Because if I want to be the same in real life I want to be the same on the Internet I don't want to be two different people. (Sherlock, first interview, 10/2/2014)

137

Due to these circumstances, Sherlock created a secondary *Facebook* account and commented that her 'mainstream' *Facebook* account was for the individuals at her school, who would take offence if they did not have a connection to her on *Facebook*. The other account was a place where she has her close friends and important family members. On the latter account, she was also able to share her thoughts, her real opinions on current events and social issues. Sherlock only did this so she would not be attacked or critiqued for what she believed by others.

The distinction between individuals in certain social spaces is again noted in this interaction (Bourdieu, 1993). These comments provide a vast contrast to those explored previously. While online, Sherlock experienced a serious altercation, which caused her to create a separate *Facebook* account. Although these may not be relationships she is willing to maintain, they exist as a result of the individuals on social media. The ability to facilitate and contribute to the offline relationships in a different social space is acknowledged in their practices (Koutamanis, Vossen, Peter & Valkenburg, 2013). This informal online context also affects the social cultures of Sherlock's educationally based fields, and reveals the importance of how these established cultures affect the capitals of those involved (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993).

By navigating the field of the Internet, the participants detailed their ability to interact with others online. The intersection of the educational and Internet-based fields is again evident. The participants detailed that they, and others in the field, have the opportunity to moderate the way relationships form, both on and off the Internet. George and Steven noted that they did not feel connected to the relationships online in the same way as those in a real-world context. Conversely, Sherlock provided an example of how online interactions affected how she maintained her online and offline relationships. Previously, the participants remarked how vital social interaction is with others; it assisted them in maintaining composure during stressful periods and helped to define the educational field. Likewise, when the cultures and practices surrounding the Internet were considered, these interactions were valued. However, Bourdieu (1993) also discussed the importance of an individual's relationship to the field itself.

The space of available positions does indeed help to determine the properties expected and even demanded of possible candidates, and therefore the categories of agents they can attract and above all *retain*; but the perception of the space of possible positions and trajectories and the appreciation of the value each of them derives from its location in the space depend on these dispositions. (p. 65, emphasis in the original)

According to Bourdieu (1986), an individual's dispositions are embedded within certain aspects of a field. These include the movement of individuals and their position in the field. Also considered are the capitals they help attribute to the field. It is the individual who chooses these characteristics, which then determine the value of certain positions and the field itself. Bourdieu's (1993) interpretation of the field also details the importance of understanding the way individuals interact with their social space, especially how they consume, and facilitate the reproduction of, their fields. It gives insight to the doxic outcomes an individual believes are available to them. Therefore, the next section reviews the participants' relationship with the Internet itself. This builds upon the definition of the Internet-based field explored in the previous chapter and considers what online cultural practices are important to the research participants.

6.4.1 Participants' relationship with the Internet itself

Returning to the opening remarks of the previous section, Marwick and Boyd's (2014) considerations discussed the relationships an individual maintains with others online. They also noted the privacy involved within these interactions. This is a central topic when discussing the Internet as a field. Hargittai and Litt (2013) argued that these themes encompass several aspects of an individual's life, including identity and personal reputation. These could then affect other areas important to the participants, but this can only happen if they give that space and position certain values (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993; Howard & Parks, 2012). Previously in this chapter, Beyoncé acknowledged 'social media isn't important everyone just makes it seem important I can live without Facebook or Snapchat, but I can't live without my family' (Beyoncé, second interview, 12/11/2014). Building upon the research literature, analysis of this data suggests that individuals hold a unique relationship with the Internet itself (Bourdieu, 1986; Ziebland & Wyke, 2012). Review of Beyoncé's statement supports this idea; her connection to social media is important to her and, as a result, it

becomes a capital. The forthcoming discussion explores these themes through an investigation of the participants' relationship with the Internet itself. These themes include the participants' use of social networking websites, which they used to build upon the relationships they have established in the real world. Further considerations are given to their connections online with regards to the way they acquire information.

During a reading of the participant journals, it was noted that the social media website *Instagram* was popular. When asked about this relationship with the website, Dave provided a commentary that covered several concepts:

> I am on Instagram because I like posting pictures, but I don't like posting it on Facebook and stuff because people post photos on Facebook every day and clog up my wall, so everyone would get annoyed because it would clog up their news feed… like you could be following anyone and anyone can be following you and you also get a different view to other stuff like sports and celebrities they have their own personal accounts so you can follow them, see what they post and find information that way yeah that's why I use Instagram. (Dave, second interview, 31/1/2015)

In addition to posting pictures, Dave was able to interact with anyone. He was also exposed to their views on different topics while on *Instagram*. Dave elected to follow select celebrities and sporting figures. Although this was a social practice, his *Instagram* account is relevant to his professional interests. While the desire to communicate appears in several mediums, Dave is intertwined with the online audience. He is also open to several news and information sources, and this content became assessable as the Internet enables new interactions. Users outside one's articulated friendship network provide that access (Ellison, Vitak, Gray & Lampe, 2014). Although this forms unique relationships with others, Dave is able to manipulate what he views on the Internet. To a certain extent, Dave selects what he views and gains insight into new content and new individuals.

The Internet, in this instance, is acting as a resource; it cultivates an understanding of other contexts outside Dave's social space (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993, 1997, 1998). Dave's relationship with the Internet here can be viewed as one of self-discovery. Entertainment-based news and social practices are valued as he chooses to use the Internet to communicate with others and explore the worlds of his favourite celebrities. However, it can also be used for social

enhancement and social presence. This can shape individuals' intentions to take part in Internet-based practices (Cheung, Chiu & Lee, 2011). Makaveli noted similar practices in his participant journal. He identified a lot of the online practices aimed at impressing future romantic and sexual partners. This included, but was not limited to, status updates, photographs, messaging and producing online videos. As a result, this may limit the formality of the real-world interactions and individuals could challenge the meaning of a relationship. These actions could then increase the time individuals have to spend with others online or in real life, as an individual's personal content is public assess and readily available (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012). Although there was not a real-world link present, Makaveli noted that the Internet helped form a traditional offline relationship.

Intersections between the Internet and offline contexts are prevalent in the participants' experiences. Dave was able to keep a distinction between how he observed others' *Instagram* accounts and how he was connected to them. This allowed him insight into the lives of individuals he would not normally have met. Conversely, Makaveli was able to describe how select interactions online form distinctive practices. Individuals, in this regard, use the Internet to research real-world relationships. Pascoe (2011) argued that, by conducting these online practices, individuals are affirming themselves on the Internet. While his commentary focused on gender identity in secondary school, Pascoe's inquiry can be linked to the necessity of connection (Livingstone, 2009; Boyd, 2014). All the participants in this study had access to the Internet during their interviews. They all had the ability to navigate between multiple webpages or apps at once. When asked about this, they gave several responses, some of which included a reflective analysis of the online relationship:

> I was looking up the Contiki tour and I have a booklet at home so I thought I would do some research on the Internet too and then I went, like I jumped to eBay and that was not related but I am always looking up different makeup brushes that I convince myself I need…right now my main focus when I am on the Internet is looking up, is trying to create different pathways for myself where my future is concerned. (Sailor Moon, second interview, 26/9/2014)

> People forget how to have a conversation and when you see people at restaurants or somewhere and they are just on their phones, I don't know, I think it's like a domino effect

141

people start doing it so much now that it's just going to continue and there is no real way to stop it. (Elaine, second interview, 8/8/2014)

Sailor Moon's comments were consistent with the Internet practices of many participants. Interestingly, as the participants maintain several open Internet tabs, they also displayed their ability to focus on different types of websites. The *Contiki* and *eBay* websites could both be considered as informal social websites. However, in the same period of time, she was also on official VCE and university websites so she could research future pathways. Elaine's restaurant analysis also reflected these practices. She was able to observe a similar practice both in the real world and online. When in a real world context, such as a restaurant, Elaine argued individuals are often 'on' their smartphones, viewing messages and/or social media. As a result, she argued, they sacrifice real world social interactions and participate in online ones.

In these remarks, Elaine and Sailor Moon touched on the concept that one can be online without being actually connected. Sailor Moon appeared unfocused on a single website. Furthermore, Elaine noted that restaurant diners were in need of constant connection to the Internet. How these practices are viewed can only be distinguished by the members of the field (Bourdieu, 1993). However, it is these types of practices that enable a constant connection with the Internet. Burgess and Green (2013) argued that it invites conversational and inter-creative participation. Sherlock acknowledged these ideas, as she felt she had to create a secondary *Facebook* page to avoid confrontations both online and in her formal educational context. Conversely, George identified the misrepresentation of an online relationship. He argued a limited connection and found that, at times, a profile 'doesn't represent their [an individual's] personality. Like they could be like shy, but on Facebook, they could be the most popular person' (George, first interview, 30/2014). Additionally, the participants have established a relationship with the Internet itself, one portrayed as both a positive and negative connection. Elaine recognised the limited social interaction in real life. Makaveli understood the prominence of certain Internet cultures. More positively, Dave found he was able to access new content and be exposed to new ideas and concepts. While this may not occur in a real world context, as noted by Elaine, it affords those online the opportunity to engage with the Internet itself. They can then form a relationship based on these practices and capitals (Bourdieu, 1986). This not only helps distinguish their relationship with the field but also the field itself (Bourdieu, 1989, 1993).

The participants' interactions online expressed the value and importance of access to the Internet. While online, the participants of this study can obtain cultural capital through relationship building (Bourdieu, 1993). This occurs within different social contexts and affected each participant in different ways. The information sharing and social norms all worked together in this context and helped to construct the wider field. They also informed the participants' selection and consumption of capitals to develop their own habitus (Bourdieu, 1986; Marwick & Boyd, 2014). The previous chapter provided detail into what those capitals were. But further discussion can substantiate their importance and represent how they are formed. Building on this analysis, the next section explores how the participants determine their personal and educational values. Further commentary is given on the effects this has on participants' socialisation and academic endeavours.

6.5 Participants' perception of educational and personal value

The investigation from the previous sections explored participants' relationship with other individuals. It further reviewed how they helped establish their Internet-based fields. The aim of this section is to place emphasis on the capitals present in both their social and academic spaces. Particular attention is given to their capitals whilst they are online. A description of the participants' position in their fields can then occur. This covers how they are able to navigate with their habitus and what affects it has on their capitals.

When asked why they were still at school when they could have dropped out participants responded with:

> I have always looked at people who dropped out of school as like, um this is so mean but like bums I don't know what they do, I reckon school is a really good like guide to getting you into like well if you do well like into a really good job and like it helps a lot with school, also I reckon I wouldn't do anything with my life because I got a part time job I would probably move into that, and that's at [fast food chain] but I don't want to work at [fast food chain] for the rest of my life that's not really like, like you I reckon my parents would never let me drop out of school any way. (Beyoncé, first interview, 21/5/2014)

Why am I at school because I wanted to go to university even though there is other options other pathways to get into uni but, I think that this is the easiest one. (Dave, first interview, 2/11/2014)

These statements resemble the observations made by the participants in the previous chapter. Already there is a clear distinction over value in the field. Bourdieu (1986), however, would have suggested this is not unique. The institution of education promotes cultural capital. Concerns can then be directed towards the social hierarchy. In particular, this relates to the consumers, their relationships and the distinction of their taste. This further determines value in the field. The participants have collectively agreed that university is a motivator for success at school. In the review of the collected data, all participants acknowledged they wanted to go to university. The exception was Sherlock but, while undecided on her future endeavours, even she still wants to achieve the best possible marks. A prime example relating to the value of achievement was in Dave's response. When asked if he would like to attain all knowledge from VCE, but gain a moderate ATAR, or gain a 99 ATAR and forget most of the knowledge rom his VCE education, he stated: 'I think I would take the 99 ATAR just because with that 99 you can do pretty much anything you want yeah I would take that because I reckon it open up more options than a lower ATAR, yeah definitely take the 99' (Dave, second interview, 31/1/2015). This modifies the interpretation of cultural capital. The participants desire a representational view of knowledge. They acknowledge this through a high ATAR, as opposed to learning for the sake of knowledge or betterment.

Particular attention should also be given to Beyoncé's comments. She does not want to be a 'bum'. Beyoncé categorises a sub-group of individuals present in the field. By failing to achieve an academic qualification, certain individuals become 'bums' and are then viewed in a negative light. Bourdieu (1986) understood that specific academic classifications produce (or reinforce) differences in the field. This is evident in Beyoncé's remarks. It reinforces Bourdieu's (1986) findings that particular schools offer more profitable investments in order to acquire cultural capital. This phenomenon is evident in this study. Qualifications acquired through senior secondary allow students to continue their learning and attend university. Dave's statement of 'you can pretty much do anything' addresses several ideas linked to society and culture. In addition to cultural capitals, symbolic capitals can be considered. If the desired credentials are acquired, class mobility could occur and could lead to an enhanced position for the individual (Bourdieu, 1997). As a result, the need for cultural capital as a

profitable investment and qualification is paramount to the participant. During the study, the participants were even willing to accept the anxiety evident in the structure of the field. They chose this as there was potential for desirable marks. The need and application for education could then be considered a vital endeavour. Participants also understand this extends to the greater field – or else they become a 'bum'. Therefore, the structure of the field and its capitals imposes on these individuals (Bourdieu, 1993, 2000; Lee, 2008; Callaghan & Bower, 2012). This interpretation of the educational field was also accepted by other participants who noted:

> Getting grades is just like how the teachers sees like results, it's all to the teacher's standards so like you are basically pleasing them in a way, because I could get like get terrible grades in a subject but ace the test you know, like just because the teacher's like oh he hasn't handed in his work he hasn't done this I still learn it's just like it's different but linked in a way… you can have the same amount of knowledge that you learnt throughout the year, whatever, and not hand in the work, but you know what you know and still have learnt with the teacher, subject, textbook, whatever. (Makaveli, first interview, 22/1/2015)
>
> I: In which context do you feel more comfortable, online or in the classroom?
>
> P: I feel like the correct answer for everyone should be in the classroom, whether that be the case I don't know the thing is with online, the sense is pressure, if you feel it or not, some people feel pressure to keep their social standing, stay cool, stay up to date with all that, in another sense there is no pressure you do what you want and generally speaking no one cares, no one makes assumptions, judges, anything like that. In terms of in the classroom it's not there is a lack of respect it's just like the occasional laugh or like fear of being wrong can sort of restrain you and hold you back personally I would say I am more comfortable in the classroom but that's by a very slight manner like, online it's a lot easier in that regard. (Steven, first interview, 14/12/2014)

Makaveli provides a criticism of the educational field. In this analysis, he is able to distinguish between the need for good grades and the acquisition of knowledge. What is interesting to note in his interpretation is how symbolic capital is affecting the position of an individual, despite their holding of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997). Makaveli argued that he could hold sound knowledge of the content but, if an individual's relationship with their teacher is poor it could jeopardise the completion of certain qualifications. The comments provided by Steven also relate to position and capital in a unique way. A link to Bourdieu's (1993) understanding of success and failure can be recognised. Bourdieu (1993) suggested 'success is intrinsically a guarantee of value… Failure, of course, is an irrevocable

condemnation' (p. 101). It is also vital to note that when considering the Internet, Steven stated, 'there is no pressure you do what you want and generally speaking no one cares, no one makes assumptions, judges, anything like that' (Steven, first interview, 14/12/2014).

The opening sections of this chapter reviewed the pressures and anxieties present in the participants' fields. It was also discussed how the participants disregarded acquiring potential capital. This was because they were unfocused in class and limited the time they spent with their families. Importantly, their practices on the Internet were given precedence. Steven's remarks may have uncovered the deeper reasons why Internet-based practices are valued as capitals. Within that context, there is no pressure. Individuals have the freedom of choice, without assumption or judgement. Conversely, in the educational context Steven identified restraints that could 'hold you back', acknowledging that the fear of being wrong contributed to the overall pressure felt at school. George agreed with Steven's comments and stated that when online 'can just do whatever you want' (George, second interview, 14/4/2014). Furthermore, Sailor Moon found when she needed to investigate something she could go online and understand the concept; this was the only way for her to be satisfied (Sailor Moon, participant journal). For Sailor Moon, the Internet acts as a source of knowledge. In turn, that then helps to satisfy her need to fill certain educational disparities. It also helped add to her knowledge of the world and provide her the freedom to explore it on her terms (Veletsianos & Navarrete, 2012).

It should be recalled that the capitals discussed in this section are, in part, formed as a result of an individual's habitus and field (Bourdieu, 1986). The practices formed with the Internet provide the participants with the opportunity to build different capitals. This influences the educational context. Through these actions, participants have revealed what is important to them while online. Considerations of the educational field continued to acknowledge cultural capital as a primary motivator. Adding to these points, the participants' experiences further distinguished the structure of their various social spaces (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993, 1997). Further analysis of the participants' remarks also revealed how the capitals gained in the educational context affected their position in wider society. Beyoncé noted she did not want to be a 'bum'; Dave recognised the opportunities available with high grades. However, the Internet provided participants with a sense of freedom, an aspect deemed limited in their educational field. The Internet had been recognised as endless, both in the previous section and the literature review. But the participants identified their own abilities. While online they could

contribute to a wider discussion (Mills, 2010; Savolainen, 2011). These practices again position the participants away from the practices found in the educational context, yet still provide them with the opportunity to intersect the two fields when necessary (Bourdieu, 1982). This idea is further explored in the next chapter. The following section reviews this chapter and its contribution to addressing the second research question.

6.6 Summary of valued online cultural practices

The previous two chapters discussed the structure of the educational and Internet-based fields. During the analysis, the participants' cultures and practices were reviewed to investigate what they perceived as important for them. In consideration of the second research question, educational achievement is most desired by participants. This links to Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital and was especially evident in their detailed account of their experiences in VCE. During interviews and within their journals, the participants detailed several internal and external issues. Many related to the pressures and anxieties faced while at school. Beyoncé, Elaine and Sailor Moon all utilised Internet-based practices and cultures that both complemented and helped them to avoid educationally based practices and cultures, and this was especially evident during exam periods, when there was a substantial amount of pressure. A discussion of these themes identified how online interaction can be beneficial to individuals. While online the participants are presented with a space where they are allowed to detail negative experiences in a context they can control (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011; Boettcher, Berger & Renneberg, 2012).The participants also valued and placed a significant emphasis on their relationships on or with the Internet. Many mentioned their ability to strategically control online social contacts (Baron, 2008). However, while this supported their ability to limit anxiety, it also contributed to other negative social practices. Participants noted the limited formal interaction while online. Steven argued the online practices are for show and George did not acknowledge any true connections occurring online. Returning to the second research question, these Internet-based cultural practices revealed the importance of real-world relationships (Carpenter, Green & LaFlam, 2011), but they also demonstrated how much some individuals are affected by online relationships. Sherlock had to take measures to avoid any confrontations, while Dave was able to understand new interpretations of the world, both as a result of the relationships formed online (Akin, 2012).

The final section of this chapter then contrasted these findings with the real-world environment and explored how participants viewed educational achievement. Participants were continually focused on their grades; as a result, they felt they needed to act in a certain way while at school. This was detailed during the description of the educational field in the previous chapter, but in this chapter the participants outlined how they are expected to determine and act upon practices that could have a significant impact on their future. Beyoncé outlined this clearly, stating she did not want to become a 'bum'; Dave argued that there was 'no coming back' as he believed there is no other another opportunity to complete Year 12. Each of these concerns affected the way the participants used the Internet. Central to this was the influence of the capitals they defined (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Being a vital component of the educational space, cultural capital has challenged much of the participants' personal social structures, and this affected other areas, including participants' social practices, cultures, pressures and anxieties present in the academic field. While these were the capitals the participants determined were the most valuable in their educational field, the second research question was framed to also consider the participant's Internet-based fields. An interesting viewpoint suggested by Boyd (2009) described how these young individuals were challenging tangible locations – in this case, the school. For this study, the context of the Internet was discovered to be a space the participants could use as an intangible environment to promote their values. This allowed the participants to create new opportunities and define their own meaning making as they found that social interaction and entertainment were highly valued in that context. Thus far, the analysis has identified the overlap between the educational and Internet-based fields. The next chapter explores the intersection between these two contexts as it includes an analysis of how both social and educationally formed capitals are affecting the participant's educational field.

Chapter Seven: The effects of Internet-based captials on the participant's educational field

7.1 Opening remarks

This chapter builds upon the practices outlined and discussed by the participants in the previous chapters and further reviews the participants' comments on social and academic pressure, which is linked to their desire to increase cultural capital. The impact of these themes on the educational field is also discussed. These endeavours begin to address the final research question of this thesis. It considers: *What effect does the participant's relationship with capital have on their educational field?* This research question was designed to include the ways different capitals have affected the formal educational field. Central to this investigation is the integration of the Internet into each of the participant's habitus'. The place of the Internet was discussed at length by participants, and consideration of the final research question addresses why they feel there is a constant need to be connected (Bourdieu, 1986; Gee, 2006; Boyd, 2014; Crehan, 2011). This chapter begins with an overview of the intersection between the educational and Internet-based fields. Although this has been partly achieved earlier in the thesis, the consumption of content in those social spaces is revisited to help determine its effects on real-world contexts. Focus is also placed on participants' production of capitals to review how that process impacts upon their personal contexts and the educational field in which they are positioned as explored by the first research question.

Continuing this investigation, many of the participants noted their Internet-based practices have become valued habits in their lives; their participation online has been instrumental in self-directed learning and communication. As a result, I explore the changes that occur to a participant's habitus, categorising the manners in which participants consume different content and its impact on their formal educational field (Bourdieu, 1993; Knox, 2014). The analysis in this chapter also focuses on the question of why the participants' educational context has not been internalised in the same manner as their online context. Research into this area provides an opportunity to understand the differences between achieving a high ATAR score and gaining knowledge for enjoyment.

> 'Current events' are reduced to an impassioned recital of entertaining events, which tend to lie about halfway between the human interest story and the variety show. (Bourdieu, 1996a, p. 6)

The above quote is from Bourdieu's description of the news and current events media. Bourdieu (1996a) noted the stylised way news programs present information to individuals. Thus far, the participants of this study have shown their ability to project their own personal messages while online; from this, they can create certain types of information in a similar vein to Bourdieu's (1996a) definition of news. However, the participants outlined a stylised way to consume both educational and socially based content. The intersection of different social practices within the educational field is not uncommon for secondary school students. These may occur as a result of emotional discomfort, increased academic anxiety or diminished performance at school (Drysdale & McBeath, 2014). Participants in this research maintain they are attempting to keep a balance between their social and academic contexts; in doing so, they succeeded in bringing personal capitals and practices into the educational field. As a result, they created their own 'variety show' of content. Dave commented:

> I: Have you ever accessed the Internet at school for social reasons?
> P: Ah yeah definitely, when someone messages me and I have free time or whatever I'll just reply, I think once some concert tickets came out and I had to use Facebook to get them, during school, yeah I had to get them, so I went on Facebook during school, and there is other stuff just like asking friends why they are away and stuff like that. (Dave, first interview, 2/11/2014)

Dave remarked when he had free time or 'whatever', he would access the Internet at school for social practices. It appears the importance of the Internet is again being established in this example, with the participants incorporating its use alongside educational practices. Dave's central focus was on concert tickets; therefore, in this instance, the participant was able to assign value to the tickets. As he 'had to get them', he also placed value on the ability to acquire the tickets online. Furthermore, Dave's access appears to be more than just logging onto the Internet, as he can communicate with others and ask his friends why they are away. While continuing to be digitally competent, this participant is mobilising his social resources and networking. This intersected with the structure of the formal educational context. These trends may, then, have deeper consequences for the formal educational field. Bourdieu

(1996a) argued that the events seen in the televised news are destined to have no conclusion, because the media is able to alter what someone views on any given day and exclude alternative viewpoints on a news story. A parallel can be drawn to the experiences of the participants. Each participant specifically believed there was 'no end' to the Internet and, after the final interviews, participants stated they would continue to shop online and use *Facebook* in the classroom. This consideration, established by the participants, was constant. The Internet was always thought of as something limitless, unlike the participants' characterisation of the educational field, which was not considered endless. All participants had a goal to work towards in achieving their ATAR. Their view of Year 12 defined it as their final year, 'like obviously there is going to be some nerves with regards to Year 12 and that being the last year of school' (Sailor Moon, second interview, 26/9/2014).

In addition to the above considerations, the participants of this study seemed to have control of what they view online. When they accessed content it would also appear that certain online values intersected with those of the classroom. Spellmeyer (2012) maintained that these are new traditions of learning and that those involved are producing a voice through academic discourse. Sherlock demonstrated this concept when asked if she would be comfortable completing an assignment without the Internet:

> It depends what it is, if there is an essay for something that I need to get information for, I'll get books and stuff I'll probably feel a bit wary because I can't, you know it's not as easily accessible like if I have to go the library and get the information, you know everyone wants things fast now and they'll want them quickly, also I will feel a bit disconnected even if I am not actively using Facebook, or social media, I will feel like I will be missing out if somebody needs my help or they want to talk. And sometimes even if they are busy I know they're there and I am there to help them, I don't know how I would feel if I don't have it, I know I would prefer it there. (Sherlock, first interview, 10/2/2014)

The commentary first addresses the access to information. At a library, Sherlock believes that you can get the information required via analogue resources, but it will not be as quick as access via the Internet. Individuals have developed certain valued practices that surround the Internet; these include speed and vast amounts of content. These experiences are then expected by those who participate (Bennett, 2014). This further helps to establish the capitals and meaning-making practices within online contexts (Bourdieu, 1986; Adami & Kress, 2014). The impact on formal education can again be acknowledged in this example. Sherlock,

in addition to raising the above ideals, has made herself available to her social community. She expressed concern that she would be missing out if somebody needed her help. Within that context, Sherlock and her friends can organise a discussion and be connected to each other regardless of their location or what they want to explore (Akyol & Garrison, 2014).

Given the perceived time restrictions noted by Sherlock, all these practices appear to be important. In her remarks, she referred back to social context online. Returning to Bourdieu's (1996a) concept of televised media, he suggested an individual would be unable to make events really understandable because they appear as a disjointed network of irrelevant relationships. However, the participants in this study characterised their ability to acquire capitals. These capitals are evident within one context, their informal online social space, but they are then reproduced within their formal educational field.

The data presented in this section points to the value-making process of the research participants. During their formal education, they have shown their ability to utilise Internet-based practices for social ends. For the participants these practices have become valued capitals in their educational field. Using the Internet for both academic and social practices opened new opportunities that may not have been available to the participants before. In the cases above, both Dave and Sherlock reproduced the structure of formal education by incorporating the values surrounding online social practices. Despite these practices, participants' approach to both the academic and Internet-based fields was different. Again this was dependent on what Internet-based practices the participants chose to participate in (Bourdieu, 2000). Although it seems that these two areas may have merged into a new style of interaction, it is their interpretation of content that becomes unique. Analysis of the participants' practices could not be specifically classified as news or entertainment. Rather, while these participants were online they had the opportunity to promote a new form of expression that was consistent with their valued practices formed as a result of the fields they participated in. Bourdieu (1996a) noted that current events were being produced by the news producers and considered this something halfway between a human interest story and a variety show. Those with access to the Internet can themselves create their own ideas. They can then form their own construct and definition of news and entertainment content. The next section continues the review of how the educational and Internet-based fields intersect for the participants. It also focuses on their academic practices and the capitals they reproduced in that context.

7.2.1 Academic practices

Participants outlined that cultural capital is highly valued in both the social and the educational fields. They also detailed how they would sometimes disregard their family and friends in order to study. Furthermore, despite the informal use of the Internet in a formal educational setting, the value of cultural capital was constant; this finding was present throughout all forms of collected data. When asked about their academic research practices while online, the participants responded warmly about the search engine *Google* stating:

> It's endless like there are very rare occasions where you Google something and answers don't come up like there have been instances where I have found out things about my family that I didn't even know, I found my entire family history on Google and that was so cool to me. (Sailor Moon, first interview, 18/5/2014)

> I: What type of information would you look up?
> P: Oh just, anything like general knowledge just something that you want to know an answer too you can just search up on the Internet anything yeah, its involved in anything and I can just search it on the Internet, just to be sure
> I: And where would you go for that information?
> P: Oh Google
> I: Straight to Google?
> P: Yeah pretty much. (Dave, first interview, 2/11/2014)

The structure of the participants' learning and the intersection of the two fields can be noted in these examples. Alongside the potential for educational research, Sailor Moon was also able to engage in personal research practices by investigating her family's history. In this instance, access to the Internet allowed an examination into areas that the participant became newly educated within. The Internet and online practices provided a starting point for education and research inquiry. This was also apparent in her formal education context; Sailor Moon noted the Internet helped to establish the initial research for an assignment, and online research was then used in tandem with published literature from her class textbook. On these themes, Hewson (2014) found that individuals have anonymity and greater levels of control online; this gives them the flexibility to control their location and set their own timeframe. This may lead to advanced motivation and interaction with formal educational content as the participants of this study control their online interactions.

Other participants, such as Dave, found that the Internet was a whole and complete source of information in itself. His remarks above indicated that he goes straight to *Google* to research content for both academic and social purposes. Other academic resources were an afterthought, as he felt the Internet provided an endless avenue of information. Despite access to educational content, there have been criticisms regarding this form of learning. Brabazon (2012) argued that students were becoming less scholastically inclined; they now put academic questions to educators in the form of personalised communications on informal social websites, such as *Facebook*, to discuss academic topics. Consequently, these actions have altered the meaning of the correspondence and the content because it was accessed via an online context. In many ways, Brabazon is correct; websites like *Facebook* are social networking spaces. Additionally, *Google* provides individuals with an endless amount of content, but it should be remembered that the participants in this study decided to communicate within this medium. Adding to these remarks, Sherlock noted:

> I think it helps again to see other people's points of view and it helps you, yeah it helps you yeah see what other people's mindsets are and what they think about things… I like to talk about political issues and social justice issues and all that stuff and you don't necessarily always get to have those conversations with people either they're not interested in those sort of things or they don't want to get into a conflict because those things are controversial… I think it's helpful, it helps me understand people better and keep an open point of view I like to think I'm very open minded I think I wouldn't be if I was exposed to what I am in real life. (Sherlock, second interview, 15/4/2014)

Consumption of both social and academic content can be recognised within Sherlock's statement. The participant identified her own personal ability to understand others' points of view online, enabling her to discuss political and social justice issues. Furthermore, this happened in a space that allowed her access to this type of discourse. It was also a space she felt comfortable within. Importantly, the communication was conducted on the social networking website *Facebook*. Learning about other individuals' views helped Sherlock understand them in a more profound manner and, as a result, supported her in developing an open point of view. These themes recall those of Berners-Lee et al. (1992) and Garcia-Castanon, Rank and Barreto (2011), who all acknowledged the sharing of content and the

building of relationships on the Internet. Sherlock identified how this can occur in a social framework.

The findings above suggest that the Internet allows an academic conversation when the opportunity for such a conversation may not initially be open to the participants. Brabazon (2012) argued that the context of information should be the same as the content. However, the participants have intersected educational practices with the field of the Internet. For both Dave and Sailor Moon, it would appear that content is accessed in a manner that is more relatable to them. Representation of academic content in an educational context may recognise different aspects of a formalised culture and, thus, a standard could be created for those students whose cultures do not resonate with the school practices (Jorgensen & Lowrie, 2015). With the intersection of various capitals and practices, it would appear the participants are able to have important and thought-provoking exchanges on social media platforms despite those platforms being originally designed for informal social practices and communication.

The participants in this study have demonstrated the ways an intersection between two fields can affect them, and that content can portray different forms of meaning for different individuals. All participants were able to reproduce and consume both academic and social content in a variety of ways. While in the classroom, they had access to informal social practices, while in their own personal context they could engage with personal academic content and curriculum-based content. The expansion of these virtual and information-based environments appears to be centred in the social context. As a result, participants normalised these social and academic interactions (Nagy & Koles, 2014). As these practices have become so prominent in the participants' lives, the following discussion explores how the Internet has developed into an internalised value. It focuses on the Internet's use in the course of the participants' everyday lives to understand how it has become habitual for them. Additionally, the commentary reviews how this then affects their formal educational contexts.

7.3 Internalised Internet habitus

A primary focus of this thesis is Bourdieu's concept of capital. As a result, different valued practices were explored in the literature review, to support an analysis of the different forms of capital that were categorised in the methodology. The analysis chapters also discussed the participants' valued practices. They detailed personal meaning making within educational

and Internet-based fields. Participants discussed the value placed on content, communication and personal endeavours on the Internet for both social and academic purposes, such as those explored in the literature review (Hargittai et al., 2010; Alterman & Larusson, 2013). Furthermore, participants often spoke or wrote about how the Internet has altered the way they approach certain aspects of their social spaces. Throughout this analysis, the Internet was defined as a field. While online, the participants could interact with and contribute to the wide world of content. As a result, various capitals formed and were consumed. These were then reproduced to define the field (Bourdieu, 1986). The discussion in this chapter has explored the intersection of the educational and Internet-based contexts in more depth. Within the analysis, and the participants' remarks, the idea of the Internet appears to be more complex and vast. The following section explores the concept that the Internet is a cultural good internalised by the participants.

Participants often remarked upon the Internet's facilitation and extension of their own knowledge and capitals. It can be a social space that helps them explore different ideas, as Sherlock noted:

> I was just thinking about how much I rely on the Internet. Of course I rely on it (and appreciate it) as a source of information, but I rely on it mostly for entertainment and communication. Without the Internet, I feel pretty disconnected. (Sherlock, participant journal)

Sherlock relies heavily on the Internet and its functions. Her practices define the way she used the Internet and also represent how she feels about the Internet as a field, finding herself disconnected when there is no access. Bourdieu (1986) argued the social structure changes when accompanied by changes in the system. It can then be determined that the individual changes as well (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967; Carr, 2010), because they have adapted and began to reproduce the social spaces that benefit them. Without the Internet, Sherlock would be cut off from her friends, especially those living internationally. Additionally, she would have to change the way she approaches entertainment. Any such changes could have an impact on her personal satisfaction and, more importantly, may affect the way she addresses the anxiety and pressures of the educational field (Shen, Liu & Wang, 2013). It can be considered that use and interaction in this way has extended itself to the participants, who may then be

presented with the opportunity to change the way individuals think, act and perceive the world. Examples have been detailed in the data as participants suggested:

> I: How many hours a week do you spend online?
> P: I don't think there is an exact number, it's a lot of time like my laptop is constantly on so if I wake up at 11 o'clock it probably won't go off until six, seven so that's like a very long time, I may not be constantly on it, oh but yesterday I was on all day (laughs) also my phone is always on so that's like being online like on Facebook and Instagram so that's always with me 24 hours yeah. (Beyoncé, first interview, 21/5/2014)

> I would just look stuff up like say heaps of things I am constantly learning because of the Internet so yeah, I don't know say like if I see something on TV that interests me I would look that up , say if I watch a movie like look that up and be like oh he directed that and I will look into that or like music constantly like for music look around I don't know like events in history that I look up stuff like that like whether it's sporting or political or a world war or something, something like that. (Makaveli, first interview, 7/2/2015)

Makaveli remarked that he is constantly learning as a result of the Internet. If he needs to research anything, he makes that content available while online. This could range from movies or television to politics or a world war. The participant has already stated that he, at times, needs to move his phone away from his immediate reach in order to get some sleep. But because Makaveli has this access to the Internet, he has the opportunity to extend his knowledge. After being introduced to a topic via television he was able to research it online. These actions were continually performed by Makaveli and became commonplace. In an investigation by Celik and Celik (2015), they considered the practices associated with social media and messaging. Those practices were perceived by their participants as a natural part of their daily lives. These ideas recall the concept of habitus, which forms when an individual establishes a relationship with the social conditions of a field. A system of distinctive signs is then created, assisting the individual's definition of the field (Bourdieu, 1986). Participants of this study had continual use of digital devices to access the Internet. This quick access to content gave them the chance to construct a personal and habitual description of their digital characteristics and overall habitus (Bourdieu, 1996a; Oulasvirta, Rattenbury, Ma & Raita, 2012).

Although Bourdieu (2010) did not discuss the Internet, he did challenge the nature of televised media:

> Open access to television is offset by a powerful censorship, a loss of independence linked to the conditions imposed on those who speak on television. Above all, time limits make it highly unlikely that anything can be said. (p. 15)

Bourdieu (2010) stressed that when an individual has open access to televised media they are exposed to powerful censorship. This is due to the nature and structure of television and its media. Therefore, those consuming the content on television will internalise a loss of independence, which limits what they actually hear and how they can contribute back to the wider social space. However, there are vast differences in the reproduction of the Internet and television. Analysis in the literature review also discussed the idea of identity formation. In these cases, the Internet exists as a public space for social and educational development (Barbour & Plough, 2009; Fewkes & McCabe, 2012) and was a meaningful environment. The participants in these studies could manage their academic coursework, seek assistance from the school community and expand emerging student cultures (New London Group, 1996; Johnson, 2009). However, because of these actions the Internet intersected with the social and academic practices of the educational field. In turn, it becomes a part of their habitus (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993, 1996a, 2000). The idea of the Internet as a resource, both social and academic, has changed the relation between the participants, other individuals and their academic capitals. Returning to Beyoncé's statement above, she felt that she could not identify an exact amount of time she was online; her laptop was constantly on so she could wake up and use the Internet if she needed access. Additionally, Beyoncé had her phone with her and she stated it was similar to being online 24 hours a day; *Facebook* and *Instagram* could always be there when she needed social media. The constant connection and use of the Internet in this case highlights its importance in the participants' lives. With this access, the participants of this study are coming of age in an era defined by easy access to online information and communication (Boyd, 2014). The effects on the wider society and an individual's habitus could be paramount. Different cultural practices may emerge, making possible unique interactions and complicating social dynamics.

Access to the Internet has given the participants in this study the power to consume online content. What has also been uncovered is the social relationship online; while using the Internet, individuals can exchange content with one another and identify with certain

practices, events and other individuals. Participants noted this type of relationship is not simply access to content; rather, it may also be to the cultures and valued practices they help reproduce and define (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993, 1996a). On the Internet, especially with social media, participants have the ability to shape content and their social spaces in the real world. The participants also noted how challenging it was to remove themselves from social media. They detailed how the Internet has become an innate part of their personal practices. This was portrayed as a habit. Participants in this study described a distinctive link to the Internet and its various uses. With access, they relied on the research content discovered online. The involvement with that content and Internet-based practices was strong enough for them to feel separated from their social spaces if disconnected. This section observed the manner in which the participants internalised the Internet. When there are changes to an individual's habitus, Bourdieu (1986) noted it also affects an individual's social space and capitals. Due to this phenomenon, the next section explores the repositioning of participants in their social spaces. Attention is paid to how they now approach their formal education as a consequence of their internalised use of the Internet.

7.4 Repositioning of participants based on their capitals and the structure of the field

Bourdieu (1986) distinguished that inscribed within the habitus is the entire structure of an individual's social space. All these conditions occupy a particular position within the individual. These are then used to obtain their capitals. Together these actions help define their position in the field. The previous section outlined how the participants in this study internalised the Internet; this in turn helps define their habitus and capitals. This section explores the consequences of these choices and relates them to the formal educational and Internet-based fields. What is important to understand now is how the participants create and use the capitals they help form. Beyoncé echoed some of the ideas of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) in reviewing her examination period:

> I: How did the exams go?
> P: Umm well I had five in a row and I was like oh umm I'm not going to get through this I had English and psychology and I was like I was literally like when I finished English, I was really positive for English because I had a lot of time to prepare for that and English is I know English is one of my strong subjects and then I had psychology next hour and I was literally

crying because I don't have time to study and I was like I don't know what to do I don't know how to get through this and like I made all my notes but they weren't sticking in my head I was like stressing out, like I was distracted.

[Participant paused to check her phone]. (On the subject health and human development) I, all year, was helping people with notes like always when they needed it I was like you can have my notes okay, I was like I was confident enough like I was with the SAC like I was like alright if you want the notes I am fine with that but when they came to the exam people saw that I was stressing and no one was like, to one of my friends [name removed] I feel like I'm bitching right now, so yeah I was like I'm not ready I don't know what to do, see had all the notes ready, she was positive she was confident and she was like I'm ready to go I remember everything I know all the acronyms and she has all these things, didn't offer to help at all. All year I helped her umm I did basically all her work for her, like we had classes together and I was like oh yeah I'll do it don't worry it's okay I was like really, I was a pushover.

I feel there was a lot of people, easy enough for people to do so much better than me like if I was like if I study that little bit extra but I will always say that to myself but if I studied that little bit extra maybe I could of but in the extended responses as well, it was easy as well so a lot of people, I'm just making up excuses… I was like tears of joy… The hard work paid off that's what I said to myself. (Beyoncé, second interview, 12/11/2014)

Beyoncé's full response was more than double the text included above. However, her remarks effectively summarise her final year at school. 'Crying' and 'stressing out' were a major part of her response. This came about as a result of the end of year examinations; when discussing these themes, Beyoncé was visibly anxious. Additionally, she continually checked her mobile phone as she talked. After she readjusted, she began discussing how she felt betrayed by her friend. Although it was evident she was venting, Beyoncé felt bad. She later remarked that she felt as if she was 'bitching'. The impact of capital is again affecting the participant in this example. Beyoncé's friend felt confident about the exam due to her mastery of the valued content in the subject of Health and Human Development. This was similar to how Beyoncé felt about the English exam. Without that mastery, Beyoncé not only felt betrayed by her friend but was also at a loss as to how she would conduct herself during the exam. This interaction also touches upon a theme that was not fully acknowledged by the participants during data collection. Beyoncé's remarks on her friend recognised two important points about all the students in the VCE in regard to their social position and the competition found within the formal educational field. Acquiring an ATAR score ranks an individual among other students completing the same subject in the same year; therefore,

each participant was ranked against their friends and other students in some form. University rankings, student achievement and personal satisfaction all contributed to this competition. This set a symbolic standard that the students observe and recognise (Bourdieu, 1997; Horstschräer, 2012).

This underlying notion places symbolic capital as a prime and often overlooked value within this social space. Recalling Bourdieu's (1986) notion of symbolic capital, it allows an individual to form a reputation for competence and an image of respectability. These can then be utilised within the field and converted to desirable positions. Working together with cultural capital, the authority given by the ATAR score only exists within this field. However, it symbolically underlies the relationship with education. This influences the 'hard work' and rigorous testing of the field (Bourdieu, 1993; Krashen, 2013). These actions assist in determining a position against other individuals. This was expressed by Beyoncé in two ways. Firstly, she had 'tears of joy' when she received her ATAR and felt the hard work had paid off. Second, and as a result of that score, Beyoncé was able to position herself above certain individuals. The score also promoted her chances of gaining entry into university and an undergraduate degree of her choice. These actions again explore and define the nature of the educational field. Furthermore, they expose the reasons behind some of the participants' actions and valued practices (Livingstone, 2009).

Beyoncé's sentiments also provide a subtle reminder of how Internet-based practices assist within this field. The participant's mood altered when she viewed her phone while discussing the exams. Although what she viewed was not noted, there have been several examples throughout the analysis revealing the assistance and reliance on online social practices. Deeper analysis of this idea relates back to the concept of gaining cultural capital in the educational field, and recalls the analysis of how the Internet is used to relieve stress and anxiety associated with that context. The work that is put into gaining cultural capital is for an effort that presupposes a personal cost for self-improvement (Bourdieu, 1997). It is acquired in the field and is dependent on the society and the social class an individual is positioned within. While this may be evident, participants have not only internalised Internet practices, they have utilised them and formed a structured system of social differences. This becomes a space for them to express negative experiences and distinguish ways to combat their educational anxiety (Boettcher, Berger & Renneberg, 2012). Additional commentary

from Steven provided an insight to how he felt about his position with regards to online practices:

> Is an extension of yourself, most people aren't pretending to be someone else online, they are simply communicating themselves to others through pictures and words. I know that when a friend deleted me off Facebook I got personally offended, though the second time he deleted me I didn't care because we continued talking by messages and stuff. So I went through a stage where my social life was intrinsically linked to Facebook and then had a bit of recoil where I realised that it's really only an artificial substitute for interaction. (Steven, participant journal)

Steven noted both the positive and negative aspects of position when using online practices. The term he used, 'an extension of yourself', was something that resonated with participants throughout this study. Often the Internet and its practices had a meaningful impact for the participants. The educational field was unable to achieve a similar meaning. Siemens (2005) theorised that interaction in the digital age means individuals are connecting with diverse online options. Within this context, one can manage and create personal knowledge. Connecting in this way opposes traditional practices of interaction because the individual can decide on the worthiness of those practices. These practices became significant for Steven as he felt personally affected when a friend 'unfriended' him on *Facebook*. While his friend may have been challenging his social position in the field, Steven was able to reflect upon these actions and understand how a real-world context can be affected by certain online practices. Although Steven ended his connection with *Facebook*, it was intrinsically linked to a major part of his life (Forte et al., 2014).

Steven and Beyoncé both expressed familiarity with the educational field. Their use of Internet-based practices can be appreciated as an additional form of cultural capital, providing them with an advantage within their other social spaces (Emmison & Frow, 1998). Participants in these cases have extended Bourdieu's formation of society and culture to include the Internet. With their command and use of online practices, participants can shape the capitals and the meaning of each field (Bourdieu, 1993). The impact Internet capitals have had on formal education can again be understood. The participants extended their social contexts to include the Internet and the practices unique to that field. As their social context is attached to the educational field, participants can include Internet-based practices.

Furthermore, due to the intersection of the fields, different capitals emerge and become available to them (Bourdieu, 1997; Grix, 2002; Boyd, 2014).

The previous section explored the participants' internalisation of the Internet to form a part of their habitus. Investigations conducted within this section support that discussion, with the participant's position in both fields being explored to convey the true importance of capitals. The effect on the educational field is further explored in the following section, which discusses the manner in which the participants want to learn, and why they want to learn in that way.

7.5 Impact of Internet-based practices and values on formal education

Analysis thus far has established how Bourdieuian capitals can form online. This appeared to be based on the intersection of *capitals* found in both the educational and Internet-based fields (Bourdieu, 1986). The aim of this section is to continue to address the second part of the research question and review the impact these capitals are having on formal education. To achieve these goals, the structure of both the educational and Internet-based fields are investigated. Knowledge of these areas ensures the fields, capitals and habitus of the participants are all considered. This can provide a full account of the intersection between valued social spaces.

During the literature review, Fewkes and McCabe's (2012) study was discussed. They identified that 43 per cent of their participants used the social networking website *Facebook* in class. This was without permission for social activities during school hours. All the participants of this study used the Internet in class for social practices. In addition to accessing *Facebook*, the online auction website *eBay* was popular. Many of the participants also utilised apps on their mobile phone or tablets while in class. The news-based content found in these apps provided the participants with a useful link to events. Those events could be from their own social contexts, but equally they could research content from around the world. This was used alongside the participants' entertainment-based practices, which served as another attraction of engaging with online networking (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967; Bourdieu, 1996a). With the exception of watching films or television shows online, these practices were

not utilised in the same structure as educational context. Participants stated their Internet use was fragmented:

> Because so many things I do involves the Internet, even if it's like simple things like checking cricket scores. (Dave, first interview, 2/11/2014)

> I spend a lot of time on like Tumblr on my phone or Instagram on my phone umm and then at the same time I'll be doing work for school like on the laptop. (Sailor Moon, first interview, 18/5/2014)

> I'm on it during school for, like 8 hours at school 3 or 4 of those hours I'm on the Internet on the schools iPads and then after that its usually homework if I'm on, and I'm specifically on the Internet after my shower when I'm drying my hair and when I'm in bed, that's when I'm usually most on the Internet, otherwise it's just flicking though texts. (Elaine, first interview, 1/3/2014)

The Internet appears to challenge the concepts surrounding personal learning and formation of educational contexts (Boyd, 2007; Hartley, 2009; Flanagin, Flanagin & Flanagin, 2010). In this study, the Internet was accessed for short periods throughout the course of the participants' day. Dave stated that many of his practices involved Internet use; checking cricket scores was one basic action he performed throughout the day. Likewise, for many of the participants these habits were not considered something they had to think about. Rather, they were just completed. Dave checked his phone both outside and during school class hours. Sailor Moon also spoke of her online practices while doing school work. During standard school hours, the participants' VCE classes were timetabled into set periods. However, with the expansion and use of digital devices, the time spent at school was changed. In consideration of time spent online, Boyd (2012) commented that, while individuals may not be online at a given moment, they are not really offline either. For much of first-world society, the meaning of being online or offline has changed; individuals can now 'always be connected to the network' (Boyd, 2012, p. 72). This was clearly observed in Elaine's remarks, as she found herself on the Internet for about half the time she was at school. The time she spent online continued in the time she used to dry her hair and while she was in bed. Participants appear to now be approaching the formal educational field and their personal social spaces as they would the Internet. Whilst in class they are able to break up their lesson with their use of the Internet to develop a different structure. This can express the changes between labour time and leisure time (Fuchs, 2014).

Elaine and Makaveli had additional comments on these themes as they discussed other individuals' use of the Internet in the educational context:

> The information overload can be addictive, you can look at someone's profile for a couple of minutes and know pretty much everything about them without even speaking a word to them. (Elaine, second interview, 8/8/2014)

> They are expecting that it is going to give them something else that they don't already have and it's most likely not going to happen since, I don't know the usual people like and comment so I don't know it's like they are looking for acceptance from someone I don't know, attitude sometimes, admiration, a game or something, just to look cool something like that, but it's not real like, there is no point and your just putting time and effort into something that's pretty much doesn't exist because a like is not necessarily a like you know so a, it's a superficial like type of thing I don't know I'm not for that, but if they do it for like entertainment if they are bored I'm like yeah, fine that's fair enough pretty much or to get like a girl or a boy, like I see where you come from. (Makaveli, second interview, 7/2/2015)

In the cases above, Elaine presented the effects and ease of gaining information. She remarked how addictive it can be to engage with online practices and how, within a couple of minutes, you can know 'everything' about a person. Learning in this way has consequences in a real-world setting. Topics, ideas and concepts in an educational class take time to acquire, in a similar manner to cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997). However, Elaine pointed out that those practices do not need to occur online. The Internet modifies the way individuals gain knowledge and content, speeding time in their social space (Fuchs, 2014). In a similar instance, Makaveli argued those reliant on the Internet in class, for informal or social learning, were wasting their time. Those individuals need an instantaneous link to content and continued interaction with others. Makaveli believed this was to get something they do not already possess, and argued that the effort they put there is taken away from their coursework. Those other individuals then place value in superficial practices. As their values form in this way, those who participate in the field no longer need to be patient with the acquisition of content. Furthermore, the individuals Makaveli is commenting upon appear to be under the assumption that time is a commodity and something valued (Bourdieu, 1993). However, this is dependent on the conditions in which they acquire cultural capital. This can

be compared to the way the participants were able to break up the structure to redefine their position in the formal educational field (Bourdieu, 1986, 1996a, 1997, 2000).

7.6 Summary of discussion and analysis

The aim of this chapter was to address the final research question and build upon the analysis from the previous two chapters. To achieve this, a synopsis of the previous data analysis chapters was provided. This outlined how I addressed the research questions. The collective experiences of the participants were noted to recall their use of desired capital in the educational and Internet-based fields. These included, but were not limited to, networking and communication on social media websites (Buckingham, 2007), research and personal development (Mattei, 2012) and the formation of distinctive cultural practices (Bourdieu, 2000). Inquiry into these areas enabled an observation of the intersection between the Internet and educational practices. Focus was placed on the academic and social practices of the participants. The analysis provided a significant amount of detail on their social interactions and their school-based coursework. In addition, these two contexts were explored to understand how Bourdieuian capitals formed within these contexts. A primary finding was the way participants were able to take capitals and practices from one field and utilise them in another. In consideration of the final research question these themes were prominent in the educational context; participants would set aside the possible acquisition of cultural capital, in the academic sense, and instead would engage with Internet-based practices. Elaine, Beyoncé, Sailor Moon and Steven all spoke of online shopping while in class; Dave detailed his successful effort to obtain concert tickets that only became available during school hours. While similar themes were identified in previous chapters, the considerations here outlined some new opportunities for the participants.

This was also observed in the educational context. Participants outlined how the search engine *Google* was an initial point of reference. Sailor Moon found undiscovered family history via an online database. Sherlock detailed how she was able to discuss social and political issues with individuals online and added that she would not normally be able to have these conversations in real life. Together, these actions were able to expand the participants' various valued practices. They could utilise these practices in new contexts and further the intersection of the educational and Internet fields (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Nagy &

Koles, 2014). Following on from these conclusions, further discussion uncovered the internalisation of Internet-based practices within the participants' habitus. Central to these findings was the participants' inability to break away from the Internet-based practices, particularly those associated with social networking websites. However, those practices assisted with the participants' identity construction and in relieving their stress and anxiety (Bourdieu, 1996a; Celik & Celik, 2015). Evidence from Beyoncé and Makaveli outlined how their digital devices were always on and connected to the Internet, indicating the inclusive nature of Internet within the participants' contexts (Boyd, 2014). Due to these actions, the participants were able to reposition themselves within their social spaces. While the intersection of the education and Internet-based fields contributed, it was the capitals that defined their movement between and within the two fields. Symbolic capital was also observed to influence the manner in which some participants conducted their studies, because it closely related to their final ATAR score and their ability to obtain a place at university. However, the participants would also often note how they would set aside time in class so they could interact with practices only found online. Steven reflected upon this and detailed how *Facebook* was an 'extension' of who he was at the time.

Participants' command of Internet-based practices and capitals allowed this to occur and, as a result, impacted upon their formal educational field. The prominent use of the Internet in the classroom was also significant in breaking up the way participants viewed the structured educational lesson. Bourdieu's (1996a) outline of media paralleled the participants' experience; this was compared to the stylised way they approached the educational field. Use of the Internet was fragmented; participants' often 'checked' their social media websites or looked up different content. These actions were brought into the classroom and modified the way they viewed and reproduced the educational field (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993, 1997). While these findings directly addressed the final research question they also uncovered the meaning behind these practices proved that the participants of this study were always able to be connected to the network and communicate with others. By always being connected, the participants' practices helped speed up their research (Boyd, 2014; Fuchs, 2014). Participants did not have to be patient and wait for content or other individuals. Makaveli identified how

167

this process can not only consume an individual's time but also affect their attitude towards the wider social space.

The use of Bourdieu's (1986, 1993, 1996a, 2000) conception of society and the findings of this study outlined how individuals can establish their own valued practices and capitals. With the final analysis chapter concluded, the closing chapter of this thesis reviews and outlines the dissertation as a whole. It also summarises each research question and outlines how the data, the participants and the analysis addressed the themes brought forth. An overview of the practices, cultures and capitals is also provided, recapitulating the findings and their contribution to the discipline of education. Directions for future research are then noted, identifying opportunities to build upon the findings to open an investigation into other areas. The closing remarks finalise the summary as a timeline of progress that explores the evolution of the findings and interpretations of the researcher.

Chapter Eight: Concluding remarks

8.1 Summary of the thesis

To open the thesis, I introduced my personal experiences, describing my junior years of education. I started with my time in primary school and the various journeys to the library, essential to gaining the information I needed to become competent at school. I then discussed my entry into secondary school in 2001 including my first use of the Internet. Conducting research became easier as I had access to a new space that contained a significant amount of information. Adoption of Internet-based cultures and practices further expanded my personal opportunities. These experiences shaped the research questions of this study, and guided my initial understandings of the educational context and the Internet. This allowed me to centre the research questions on the way participants interacted with the Internet. Those questions were, therefore, designed to explore the many cultural practices and conventions the participants engaged with online. Furthermore, the impact of this on their social lives was also reviewed, in order to understand the kinds of capitals the participants of this study gained from the Internet. This facilitated an observation of how those capitals affected their educational context. The following sections of this chapter summarise each research question individually and detail their contribution to the overall analysis.

To build upon the above themes and address the research questions, the opening chapters of this thesis discussed the development of the Internet. In those sections I could appreciate the formation of values, practices and cultures that developed. It also provided a background to the value placed on content and the way it was used to interact with others online (Rheingold, 1995; Anstadt, Burnette & Bradley, 2011). With the Internet's continued development, Squire and Dikkers (2012) identified that individuals can control both entertainment- and information-seeking practices online to personalise data. This allowed those individuals to choose, and help produce, their own context and shape online cultures (Gee, 2006). The study conducted in the first half of the literature review was then applied to the context of secondary-school students. Similar themes of using the Internet for communication and reference were analysed (e.g., Jones & DeWalt, 2012; Dowdell, 2013), but ideas on social learning and personal online educational contexts were also explored. An examination of current student-based practices enabled a review of the types of exchange that can occur online.

These considerations were then placed alongside the key concepts and interpretations of society set forth by Bourdieu. This began the methodological outlook. Bourdieu's key terms of field, habitus and capital were introduced to provide a richer understanding of the relationship between education and the Internet. Using this conception of society and culture enabled a focus on the values present in different contexts so that analysis of the cultures that form in those contexts could be undertaken. These concepts were also used to show how the participants internalised certain valued practices and reproduced them. This reproduction applied to both their personal values and those within their wider social spaces. The usefulness of Bourdieu's conceptual framework was evident when I first reviewed his work. I found that he argued that cultural capital consists of familiarity with the dominant culture in a field. For this research, I was then able to uncover that my participants valued this type of capital over many other possible ideas, avenues and practices. This was especially evident when my participants choose to study over spending time with their families or sleeping. By utilising Bourdieu, I was able to explore my participant's relationship with cultural capital and the reasons why it was valued in a significant way. For that understanding to occur I needed to investigate the participant's social context. Using Bourdieu's concept of field allowed this to occur as I could focus on the attitudes of the participants surrounding the expectations of the VCE and the associated stress and anxiety. In addition, the concepts of capital and field was especially useful to my analysis of Internet-based practices as it enabled me to investigate how the participants positioned themselves to the capitals of the VCE. Participants clearly expressed how they interacted with Internet-based practices, both outside of and during school, to respond to their structured educational practices. Consequently, Bourdieu's conceptualisation of society and culture complemented my research techniques. It was in the analysis of the journals where I was able to pay attention to how the participants felt when they were online and how they reflected on their day at school. This promoted my understanding of both these fields and it showed me how the participants viewed them. The observations then allowed a chance for me to examine their Internet-based practices in action and determine what they find important while online. All of these data collection techniques and Bourdieu's framework helped to inform the interviews as I could ask the participants about their experiences and form a logical understanding of the way cultural capital influenced them. As a result of these techniques, I was able to come to certain conclusions on these experiences which are described below.

Continuing the methodological outline, the research approach and practices were described. Philosophical implications were also thoroughly reflected upon to provide a research framework for the study. These all complemented the literature review and Bourdieu's distinction of society and culture which, as argued by Denzin (2010), is a useful endeavour to link the research methodology to the analysis techniques. Together with the research questions, the case study approach enabled the participant's experiences to be collected; this approach helped me reflect upon the educational and Internet-based practices of the participants.

Completing the conclusion and summary of the thesis, the next sections reflect upon the three research questions of the study, exploring each question individually. There, I fully deliberate on their relationship to the wider study and continue to acknowledge the participants' experiences. Following this review, directions for further research are also suggested so that meaning can continue to be constructed from this study. Final remarks and reflections are then provided, completing this thesis.

8.2 Research question one

The fifth chapter introduced the research participants and addressed the first research question, which asked how do participants socially and academically position themselves in educational and Internet-based fields. Primary observations were based upon how participants defined the educational and Internet-based fields. This proved to be a vital step, as it enabled the participants to provide a holistic account of their VCE experience. In this commentary, participants spent a large proportion of time discussing their personal anxiety. This was evident as both Makaveli and George outlined how they always gave preference to their educational needs, meaning their personal needs were often overlooked.

Further analysis explored how the participants' habitus was affected by their approach to the coursework (Bourdieu, 1990). Sherlock and Dave expressed a personal conflict; they limited the time they gave themselves to relax, focussing instead on schoolwork. These self-imposed restrictions then escalated as the participants were challenged in satisfying different needs, including their personal needs, their teachers' needs and their examiners' needs. All noted

some component of these issues and outlined the lack of balance, an attribute of the educational field. Participants also all noted the significance of the academic context. Cultural capital appeared to have a significant impact on how the participants approached other fields. They continually identified how vital success in the educational field was to establish their future endeavours. This was the most profound trademark of this field, and many of the research participants had to redefine their values and practices. This helped account for and acquire the established capitals in the field (Bourdieu, 1997; Brabazon, 2012; Boyd, 2014). In addition, a lack of balance between personal and school-related coursework was remarked upon. All participants revealed meaningful sacrifices made to acquire cultural capital. Elaine commented on how confusing the educational process had been since early secondary school, as educational administrators made her select a potential career path. Considering this, Elaine was concerned that she might not be happy with those choices in the future.

The educational practices and concerns stated above also had an impact on the participants' educationally based social practices. Time was highly valued when participants considered what needed to be achieved. A unique element of George's commentary was his distinction between the weekdays and weekend. This symbolic representation was shared by many of the participants and in many cases affected their sleep patterns and stress levels. Beyoncé noticed that she felt more fatigued when she considered going to school but, like the others, felt guilty taking breaks. Remarks of this nature represent a critical observation of the educational field. Although participants felt consumed by the formal educational culture, there were positive remarks. Participants detailed how online and offline social learning can form different social bonds, which assisted in establishing and maintaining a beneficial support network (Hillier, Mitchell & Ybarra, 2012). In addition to the high value that participants placed on acquiring cultural capital, participants also valued social support; this helped to relieve anxiety and build academic knowledge. Overall, these findings had noteworthy implication for understanding why the participants engaged with Internet-based practices.

The literature explored in the review identified some ways in which the Internet is a crucial component of student life (Israelashvili, Kim & Bukobza, 2012). However, participants viewed the Internet as an everyday fact of life. Commentary from Beyoncé, Steven and Sherlock outlined the benefits and drawbacks of having constant access to the Internet. They recognised positive and negative consequences of continuous online communication. All participants identified the 'endlessness' of the Internet and the possibilities available to them

both socially and academically. Social networking was used to communicate and connect with individuals from all around the world. With the exception of Sailor Moon, participants used websites like *Facebook* daily; Steven even remarked the use of *Facebook* was a 'habit'. Paramount to the participants' social use of the Internet was the support they received, which allowed them to balance their academic pressures. George provided *The Simpsons* example as he and his friends shared the joke online; this overlapped with his academic space, as his teacher was aware of the popular culture reference. The intersection of education and Internet-based practices in this example also allowed additional capitals to develop. Due to the different opportunities now available to participants certain capitals, such as the formation of a relationship can emerge. *The Simpsons* example represented how this participant could build a relationship using informal social practices. Importantly, this was achieved in the formal educational field with his teacher. This finding also, importantly, began to address the first research question. The example outlined how the educational field influenced the participants' use of Internet-based practices. This was vital as the participants continually endeavoured to relieve their academic anxiety. Access to this vast amount of information illustrated how an individual can research and develop their own ideas and concepts as something which helps to develop their habitus (Bourdieu, 1996). The participants then discussed how they applied these practices to their educational experiences. Sailor Moon was particularly pleased as her teachers were able to use online practices within their lessons. As a result, she had a positive experience, finding that her teachers adapted to how she and her classmates were learning. While this demonstrates the significance of Internet-based practices in the educational field, the use of these practices in the classroom suggests how a teacher might build rapport with students if they are aware of what capitals they value and their importance in the educational field (Callaghan & Bower, 2012).

In consideration of the first research question, the central idea the study revealed was that there is a substantial amount of value ascribed to increasing the amount of cultural capital associated with achieving high grades. This was a concept central to the educational field. This in turn affected how the Internet-based practices were utilised. During the interviews, and in their journals, participants spoke frequently about different academic and social practices and commented on the Internet's use as a place where those avenues could be explored. From this, participants used Internet-based practices as a foundation for knowledge and social networking. As a consequence, they continually reproduced the content found online (Bourdieu, 1986, 1997). These findings also provided a sound starting point to address

173

the second research question. The sixth chapter reviewed these practices and asked what forms of capital do participants consider the most valuable within their educational and Internet-based fields.

8.3 Research question two

Value was discussed at length in the previous section, for two reasons. The first related to the experiences of the participants. During the data collection, the participants acknowledged the importance of cultural capital which could benefit them in the educational field and argued the benefits of having Internet-based practices in their lives. Secondly, the theme of value further explored what was important to the participants. This helped address the second research question; what forms of capital do participants consider the most valuable within their educational and Internet-based fields?. The sixth chapter investigated this question and began with a deeper analysis of the pressures surrounding the student experience. Participants could adapt to their educational field due to the integration of Internet-based practices. Beyoncé noted that she preferred to be constantly connected to the Internet; for her, it provided a shoulder to lean on when dealing with school pressures. Likewise, many other participants engaged in online social practices while in the classroom. This was especially apparent in regard to online shopping. In reviewing these findings, it appears the participants, at times, overlooked the highly valued cultural capital, instead choosing Internet-based social practices over educational ones. It should be noted this was not the case for all participants; George believed those who did this in class were wasting their time. However, all recognised the value of the Internet in limiting negative experiences (Boettcher, Berger & Renneberg, 2012).

The findings above appeared to be based on how the participants felt about the educational field as a whole. In spite of this, participants also proved they were able to use Internet-based practices in other areas. Content was found to be vital in how the participants interacted within the educational and Internet-based fields. A central use of content was in research for school-based coursework. This was conducted in a variety of ways. Elaine used the social media website *Tumblr*, as the content assisted her in finding folio subjects for inspiration for her artwork. The search engine *Google* was also commonly used for research, with participants noting the convenience of being able to explore a massive amount of content.

They also explained how beneficial it was to understand other perspectives. Online they could talk about different issues with different individuals. Accessing academic content in this way illustrated how important the participants felt Internet-based practices were in their personal contexts (Anderson, 2012). Reviewing this process, it would appear that the participants re-evaluated certain fields. Capitals present on the Internet were included and valued in the education field. The examples above recognise how the participants were able to intersect these two fields. They also emphasise the importance of their established academic context to how the participants conducted themselves whilst online (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1986).

The relationship built with others and with the Internet was paramount for the participants. Both online and real-world relationships had positive and negative traits. Embedded in both contexts were the day-to-day interactions and support networks. However, there was also a substantial amount of mundane gossip. Some participants believed that the Internet served as a beneficial place for communication, but it could also act as another place to interact and talk to others. Steven explained that using social media was a habit; he would just check those websites for something new and then move on. While on *Facebook* he did not pay too much attention to what was occurring. However, this was vastly different for others; Sherlock had two separate *Facebook* accounts, while Sailor Moon had deleted hers. Both participants experienced negative real-world issues as a result of their interaction on social media. The importance of *Facebook* then changed as Sailor Moon found other ways to communicate. Sherlock also reworked how she portrayed her identity online and who was able to view those profiles. Correspondingly, participants acknowledged the importance of the relationship with the Internet itself. During the interviews, participants noted how they approached each website differently. In doing so, they viewed the sites critically and accessed new content. Each website had its own accepted practices, which were familiar to participants. As a result, it allowed them to gain insight on new topics, information and other individuals (Ellison et al., 2014). Furthermore, the consumption of content and the participants' representations of themselves proved they understood how to manipulate online information (Bourdieu, 1986; Gee, 2000; Boyd, 2014). As participants spent a substantial amount of time on social media, this appeared to be another aspect that was highly valued.

Investigation of the second research question concluded with a review of how participants perceived capital. This was conducted to gain insight into how they recognised the

importance of their own personal practices. It was noted that they desired success in the educational field. This proved to be the basis for a majority of their personal practices, both online and in the real world. George, Dave and Beyoncé all suggested that achieving positive grades would make life easier, so they do not end up as 'bums'. However, the Internet was viewed as a field where participants had certain freedoms. These included exploration of their own identity, communication, and formation of their own capitals. All this occurred even if they were influenced by the established educational field. The final research question addressed this idea in more detail. This is outlined in the next section, which further explores how the participant's relationship with Bourdieuian capitals impacted on their educational field. The thesis as a whole concludes after this review with directions for future research and closing remarks.

8.4 Research question three

The final research question, investigated in the seventh chapter, asked what effect does the participant's relationship with capital have on their educational field? In addressing this question, the intersection of the Internet and educationally based fields was analysed, establishing the integration of each field into one another. Participants continually noted the Internet's use in school for social practices. The inquiry illustrated how participants gave value to those classroom practices and the capitals that surrounded them. For example, Dave needed concert tickets, and positioned himself in such a way that he could avoid formal education to engage in online social practices. In turn, participants were also able to utilise educational practices in informal online environments. *Google* was a popular starting point for research and inquiry. Sailor Moon discovered family history while searching online, while Sherlock discussed social and political issues with other individuals via the messenger application on the social networking website *Facebook*. All these examples demonstrate how participants were able to reproduce their educational and Internet-based fields. This was as a result of the capitals they defined and determined as valuable (Bourdieu, 1993, 1996a, 2000). Their actions not only supported the intersection of the two fields but also the formation of different practices. This allowed the participants to alter the way they approached certain fields and capitals.

Following this discussion, the manner in which the participants internalised the Internet was reviewed. Discussion of this issue addressed why Internet-based practices were symbolically

important to the participants. While the participants recognised how much they relied on the Internet, different real-world habits were also identified. Beyoncé left her computer on overnight so she could always have immediate access to the Internet. Sherlock commented on how much she relied on the Internet in her everyday life. While the Internet was used as a resource, the discussion uncovered how participants altered the way they reproduced their definition of capitals. The participants internalised online practices and redefined their personal habits in ways that accommodated certain online practices and cultures. The participants' position within each field was then considered, with the analysis exploring the consequences of their defined capitals and personal habits. Symbolic capital became pre-eminent for the participants as they considered their ATAR score and how that impacted upon their Internet and educational fields. Beyoncé had 'tears of joy' when she received her final marks, as this assisted her in deciding on a university and course. As a result, Beyoncé used both symbolic and cultural capital to reproduce her position in the field (Bourdieu, 1993). Additional commentary from Steven provided an insight into his views on society and position. Speaking about online cultures, he argued the Internet was an extension of who individuals were. It was determined that individuals connecting in this way could interact with diverse online options (Siemens, 2005) but that, in doing so, would expose their real-world contexts to the practices, personal position and capitals they held on the Internet.

These findings were then built upon to understand the impact on formal education. This was done to ensure full acknowledgement of each research question. To accomplish this, the analysis explored how the participants repositioned themselves as a result of their educational and Internet-based capitals. Several participants again noted the swift access and ease of using the Internet, especially in a formal educational setting. Because of these valued practices, a review of the structure and approach of the educational field was conducted. Evaluation suggested that participants were altering the timetabled periods of the VCE, using informal online social practices to break up the lessons. While participants could always connect to the online network, it appeared they could also express the changes between labour time and leisure time. Elaine and Makaveli reflected upon these ideas and the manner in which the online content affects real life contexts. Some individuals needed that constant connection to online social spaces but, as a result, the effort they put there is taken away from their formal educational field.

It would appear that those individuals who participate in online social practices while at school interpret the academic context in a different way. Their actions in that context demonstrated the different use of valued practices. With their constant use of and reliance on Internet-based cultures and practices, participants could interpret what they truly valued within a field (Bourdieu, 1986). As a result, their own analysis represented how Internet-based values impacted upon the reproduction of their educational field.

8.5 Directions for further research

Exploration of the diverse context of the Internet in educationally based fields is an ongoing process. Each individual user takes it upon themselves to search, play, talk, read or share. That process can take multiple forms and can be done in multiple ways. Thus, the opportunities for further research are expansive and broad. This study focused on the values that emerged due to the intersection of these two contexts.

The findings of this study were able to represent how the capitals, formed online by the researcher participants, play an important role in the development of senior secondary school students and their wider social spaces. The greater demand for students to access the Internet may become more prevalent in the future as technology continues to advance the educational and social experiences. Thus, future researchers who consider the findings of this study will be guided on what they could investigate. This includes the manner these participants were able to internalise certain values as becoming an intrinsic part of a student and their experiences both academically and socially. A deeper understanding of these concepts may also allow an even wider acknowledgement of stress and anxiety in a student's life. With the contributions made by this study, a future researcher can add to these findings as critical areas in the educational process. Therefore, new theories on identity formation, social learning and Internet-based communicative education maybe arrived at. Not only do researchers benefit from these findings, but teachers and educators can also come to understand the more contemporary ways students are drawing upon their developed personal knowledge and forming valued capitals on the Internet. In many cases educators and teachers can come to understand how the participants of this study were able to represent those values and form a distinctive position in their educationally based field.

However, this was conducted from the participants' perspective, and a review involving educators could provide alternative commentary. This could be especially important as contemporary literature often investigates the challenges involved in bringing technology into the classroom (Stauffer, Heath & Ferrin, 2012) or reviews how different teaching techniques might benefit education (Watson, Mong & Harris, 2011). Light could also be shed on teachers' social and academic contexts. Themes such as gender participation in technology (Rowan & Lynch, 2011) should be explored to inform teachers' endeavours to build rapport with their students. Investigating these contexts provides the opportunity to observe how teachers view student values, practices, cultures and their overall educational experience. Exploration of these topics could be utilised to understand other avenues, such as the construction of social cultures, school rituals, sexuality, gender and the meaning making of students, teachers and administrators. In consideration of these ideas, Pascoe (2011) argued that this period of education acts as a transitionary phase, establishing a student's movement into adulthood as they navigate life markers and tropes of adolescence. It is, therefore, vital that more research is conducted to ensure the best educational opportunities are provided for all students.

In addition to the above directions, those involved within the Internet cultures and practices provided several research opportunities. When individuals access the Internet they are presented with a connection. At face value, they are connected via a series of wires and cables with machinery to help support the medium (Blum, 2012). But, as one navigates their way through the websites, chat-rooms and online games, it is not difficult to see how those individuals connect to others. The participants in this study described how they related to content online. These experiences could further be investigated as a personal endeavour. As the Internet allows content to be shared by individuals, they now have the opportunity to understand different social cues and personal situations. Investigation could be conducted on how individual's personalities are changing as they interact with others online and contribute to the media of the Internet (Mark & Ganzach, 2014). This could be especially unique if Bourdieu's distinction of society and culture is utilised. Bourdieu did not write on the field of the Internet, yet his analysis of society and culture may provide opportunities to explore the Internet's sub-fields. The analysis and discussion presented within this thesis demonstrated the potential of Bourdieu's framework. In expanding upon the experiences of the participants, I was guided by the principles of habitus, capital and field. Findings from the use of these concepts for research into the Internet could then be applied to the wider society to help

179

define how individuals are continually reproducing these contexts and forming their own habitus (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993, 2000).

Despite the worldwide connectedness the Internet allows, the participants of this study were able to recognise their own personal values. This was achieved as they reviewed the wider contexts of their educational and Internet-based fields. However, the Internet and the educational contexts are not the only places this could occur. There may be other avenues where students explore their personal values and social pressures. Attention could be given to substance abuse, romantic relationships and their impact on the student experience. These topics could then be placed alongside Internet use and the educational context. This could provide further perspectives on the student experience. Jorgensen and Lowrie (2015) noted the benefits of a multi-layered investigation, arguing that a deeper understanding of a student's familial circumstances can produce an understanding of their social world. This could outline the influential experiences that form to create the basis of the student's structured and unified practices.

8.6 Who makes the meaning?

> Compulsory physical exercise does not harm the body, but compulsory learning never sticks in the mind… let your children's lessons take the form of play. You will learn more about their natural abilities that way. (Plato, 2003, p. 269-270)

In Australia, young individuals begin their formal education when they turn five years old. They may stop once they have turned seventeen. The VCE is, therefore, a choice. However, in the educational culture identified by the participants of this study a great significance is placed on these years. Consideration of these themes show that the VCE years are pivotal for future success. Central to this is the idea of gaining cultural capital and then attending university; this appears to be an idea that is sold to the students. Academic pressure was also described in detail by the participants. This is especially significant as they believe that the choices made in VCE help to govern future endeavours, including the immediate transition into the workplace and/or further education. The results and final mark of the VCE do not determine the future of an individual, but the students who participated in this research found that it acts as a burden on their success. These practices and remarks by the participants have

helped established the culture and capitals of this type of educational system (Bourdieu, 1993).

In many ways the Internet can be considered a distraction. It has both positive and negative consequences. Internet webpages that can be blocked can also be unblocked. Individuals can be targeted and harmed, or they can find hope and courage in others. Ideas can be shared and understood. As a result of this connection, individuals can also accept those ideas as their own. The culture is more than just customs and ceremonies. For the individuals who are logged onto the Internet, it becomes a part of their disposition (Bourdieu, 1986, 2000). Many have argued that it takes them away from their lives (Brabazon, 2012; Ravizza, Hambrick & Fenn, 2014). However, others would disagree, and say that this is a new world to explore (Ebner & Ehri, 2013; Finkelhor, 2014). The participants in this study expressed a variety of these ideas. More importantly, they get to experience those ideas.

It is important to remember that education is a union between the teacher and the students. The participants of this study have made it clear that final two years of senior secondary school is a difficult time for them. Like everybody else, they have their own personal apprehensions and they are required to fulfill their schooling duties. In addition, many are competing for a place at a university. It becomes imperative that their grades are up to the standard required for higher education. Therefore, these students, and the ones who come next, need teachers who understand where they are at this moment in their lives. They need to provide an education that will prepare students for their futures and include them in a discussion of what makes good education (Ioannides, 2012).

During my lead-up to this investigation, I was not aware that my experiences online helped form the popularity of certain webpages, ideas and social situations. In the case of these research participants, they have shown me many incredible things, in regard to what can be done online and in education. They also showed me what effects they may be having on others and themselves. The journey, therefore, does not conclude at this point. As the Internet expands further, to the mobile web and beyond, different and challenging opportunities will arise. All these factors require the attention of educators, and the educated, to assure that people understand others, their experiences, their needs and, perhaps, themselves.

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