The Multiplicities of Internet Addiction
The Misrecognition of Leisure and Learning

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ASHGATE e-BOOK
The Multiplicities of Interne T Addiction
This book is dedicated to my only sibling Scott Warwick Johnson
(7 September 1978 – 28 December 2007)
who lived his life to the fullest and was not addicted to anything.
The Multiplicities of internet Addiction
The Misrecognition of leisure and learning

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introduction

Addiction: it Got Your Attention

popular cultural pundits, theorists and journalists posit the overuse of the internet as problematic, addictive or disruptive. In our daily lives, we hear stories claiming that online use interferes with relationships and that it is not healthy to spend ‘excessive’ time in front of computer screens. People joke about suffering from withdrawal if they cannot check their emails. Some parents worry especially about their children’s use of computers and wonder whether it is to the detriment of other life experiences normally associated with childhood. is it possible that people, some young and some not so young, are addicted to computers and internet use?

On 19 September 2007, I watched an Australian current affairs breakfast show called Today. They discussed virtual worlds and focused on a particular virtual online world popular with children below the age of 12. In featuring Disney’s™ ‘Club Penguin’, one of the first questions about the game was ‘Is it safe?’. The answer was yes, but the question seemed to be based on a premise supposing that a virtual world of play would justify caution. The discussion then focused on the amount of usage deemed to be OK for playing ‘club penguin’. What happened next seemed to be a typical link associating high usage with consequent addiction. In asking ‘what about addiction?’, the question was positioned to be ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ to ask of a person who had limited authority to comment on the issue. However, the digital media ‘expert’ (brought in as a regular guest on the show) stated that limiting children to three hours a week was suitable or preferable. What a simplistic answer to a complex issue! It is unlikely that any child will be disadvantaged and have ‘bad things’ happen to them because they play ‘club Penguin’ for more than three hours a week. Having a blanket answer for parents to act on suggests not only that parents lack intelligence and require specific directives, but that all players of ‘club penguin’ should have the same limit on their leisure. Should we say that children should only play in the playground for three hours a week? Longer than that, they are bound to be addicted! Should we say that children should not watch television for more than an hour a day because they are likely to become addicted? Labelling someone as ‘addicted to the Internet’ negates their ability to comprehend and critique their own practice. Children and youth are capable of monitoring this. These ridiculous, surface solutions to preferred types of leisure are not aberrant in their ‘safe’ form.

The media sells things by drawing our attention to addiction because any type of addiction is a concern. popular discourse found in the media tends to
revert to essentialising everyone and everything. Bob Pease (2000, 26) explained essentialism as:

A belief in fixed properties that allegedly define the nature of things, leading to the idea that women and men can be identified on the basis of eternal, transhistorical, immutable essences … for example women being more peace loving and closer to nature than men.

e xamples of essentialism are common within the media. Those who are selling their books to save or rescue people from internet addiction are capitalizing on the popular discourse that suggests internet addiction is rampant and becoming an extremely widespread disorder. The sensationalized and essentialized headlines claiming that poor little Johnny or sally may be addicted because he or she plays ‘Club Penguin’ for more than three hours a week are causing people to worry about things that may not be worth worrying about.

This chapter introduces the topics to be covered in this book and focuses on the idea that ‘addiction’ is a contestable, misconstrued term. The term ‘dependence’ will be challenged and contested, as will the idea of what constitutes ‘too much time’ on the computer.

The Notion of Dependence

Are we dependent on technology? is dependence a form of addiction? if addiction is determined by degrees of dependency, we can argue that we are addicted to our bathroom, we are addicted to television and we are addicted to using a kettle to boil our water. it is not that we cannot live without these things; it is that these new technologies have been impressed upon our lives and that most of us choose to use these technologies to make our everyday lives easier. People refer to certain web browsing or surfing the World Wide Web as wasting time, but could we not argue that working through a book of Sudoku puzzles or crosswords is also wasting time? Advocates of these puzzles would probably deny this allegation and claim that by getting one’s brain to think through puzzles or crosswords, one is developing cerebral activity whilst engaging in a leisurely activity that helps one to relax and fill in time. To counteract this, I claim that engaging in website activity helps one to relax and fill in time. If that is ‘time-wasting’, then that is OK. However, when one reads and views websites – whether it be BBC news, or Facebook or finding out the latest results of a sports tournament – one is learning at the same time one is engaging in leisure. I will continue to argue this throughout this book.

if one is always online, there is a common misunderstanding that they may be addicted. The amount of time spent by young people using media and multitasking with various forms of media does raise the question of the healthiness of such
praxis. Tapscott (1998, 116) raised the issue of addiction and stated, ‘If you ask children online if they are addicted, they will invariably say yes. On the other hand, they don’t seem too concerned about it because they don’t believe that it’s harmful to them’. He also added that it is hard to argue that this activity is harmful, unlike dependency on drugs or nicotine. If one plays a lot of tennis and is *always* at the tennis club, if one is *always* watching television or if one is *always* reading a book, why are those people not also considered to be addicted? The reason for this is the common occurrence that happens when a new technology is introduced and becomes ‘mainstreamed’. People are not sure about the acceptability of the practice and about its possible side effects. This is a natural and commendable suspicion. What I would like to point out is that the possible side effects of people’s involvement in online activity and even in having a home personal computer have not occurred. The side effects predicted with the advent of the radio did not occur. The side effects associated with the advent of the television did not occur (see Chapter 2). Of course, one should admit that there will always be those people who are loath to do anything other than sit on their couch and watch television. But are they addicted? No, probably not, it is just that their preferred leisure is readily available right there on the couch. But what about their need for a healthy lifestyle? This is an important question, but there are many people who are neither couch potatoes nor have a healthy lifestyle. The need to eat healthily and in a balanced way, coupled with the need for everyday exercise is a challenge that many of us struggle with.¹ One of the problems I seriously address in this book is that the notion of *addiction* is readily and too easily thrown about in popular discourse. The media is full of it, and to assert that addiction is present is a simplistic and incorrect answer in regard to prolonged engagement with many technologies and activities.

Consider the example of gamers who regularly and constantly engage in playing video or computer games. Those of us who do not play these sorts of games find it difficult to understand the appeal for these people who constantly play electronic games. Many of us would look down on these gamers who seem not only preoccupied or obsessed but perhaps also *addicted* to playing these games. However, as a counter-argument, in the gaming world, gamers must not only dedicate mountains of time to learning how to play the game effectively, but they relish the challenge of each narrative and the prospect of further mastery (Johnson, N.F. 2007a). For other gamers, they view their fellow successful, top-ranking peers with respect as they value their enterprise, focus, determination and skill that has constituted their success (for example, an international top ranking, high power within a category). I will return to this argument in Chapter 9 where I focus on how the values of one *eld may not apply to another.

¹ Another issue we need to consider are the people who are addicted to exercise, which is explored in Chapter 2.
The following excerpt from an online article gives insight to my argument:

Surfing the net has become an obsession for many Americans with the majority of US adults feeling they cannot go for a week without going online and one in three giving up friends and sex for the Web. A survey asked 1,011 American adults how long they would feel ok without going on the Web, to which 15 per cent said just a day or less, 21 per cent said a couple of days and another 19 per cent said a few days. Only a fifth of those who took part in an online survey conducted by advertising agency JWT between sept 7 and 11 said they could go for a week.

‘people told us how anxious, isolated and bored they felt when they are forced off line,’ said Ann Mack, director of trend spotting at JWT, which conducted the survey to see how technology was changing people’s behaviour.

‘They felt disconnected from the world, from their friends and family,’ she told Reuters.

The poll found the use of cell phones and the internet were becoming more and more an essential part of life with 48 per cent of respondents agreeing they felt something important was missing without Internet access. More than a quarter of respondents – or 28 per cent – admitted spending less time socializing face-to-face with peers because of the amount of time they spend online. It also found that 20 per cent said they spend less time having sex because they are online. (Reuters 2007)

For those of us that identify with the idea that they are missing out if they do not go online once a week, this does not mean that we are addicted. However, it does suggest that we, as twenty-first century participants, are dependent on technologies because they make our lives easier and we prefer to use them rather than not.

**The Notion of Addiction**

On 28 October 2007, a Sun-Herald (Sydney) article referred to Facebook as ‘Stalkbook’ and ‘Crackbook’ (Dasey 2007). Not only did the article state the claim that Facebook ‘enables people to monitor and track what you are doing without you being aware of it’, but also claimed that people ‘find it addictive and spend endless hours trawling the site’. Does this reporter really know what addiction is? Does he have the knowledge to state what addiction is? As will be shown in chapter 7, some young people use the word ‘addict’ or ‘addiction’ as a glib and acceptable response to their everyday practice. Some examples from my own friends on Facebook who are not teenagers include comments such as:
• ‘Facebook can be pretty addictive!’
• Sam is ‘wondering whether the addictive nature of Facebook makes it a banned substance??’ (status update)
• Jenny is ‘spending waaayyyy too much time on Facebook’ (status update).

The phrase ‘i’m addicted’ merely conveys that one is enthusiastic about it and perhaps just really likes having this ‘thing’ or ‘environment’ in their life. In fact, the phrase ‘i’m addicted’ is a misnomer; they are not addicted as addiction causes serious detriments to happen if one does not ‘kick’ the addiction. We need to encourage people to carefully use these phrases and think about what it actually means to be addicted, and whether high usage and high dependence constitutes addiction or not.

Chapter 1 discusses the nature of addiction, whether one can consider a lot of Internet use to be addiction, and critiques the notion of Internet addiction itself. There is much discussion as to whether Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) (Young 1998) is actually a legitimate disorder, or whether it is an indication of other problems (Yellowlees and Marks 2007). Competing discourses include those who argue for specific behavioural therapy techniques to be used to treat Internet addiction as a pathological disorder (Young 2007), alongside those that claim further research needs to be conducted before the establishment of a disorder (huisman, van den Eijnden and Garretsen 2001). Some say the Internet is an environment; therefore it cannot invoke addiction, and that addiction can only be attributed to substances. Chapter 1 will discuss the established criteria for diagnosing disorders such as impulse control disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders and substance abuse, and contrast this with popular discourse that inadequately falls back on the phrase ‘internet addiction’ to identify practice. Demonstration of the serious disorders surrounding gambling and pornography will highlight the inconclusive reasoning of IAD. Glasser’s (1976) notion of ‘positive addiction’ will be elucidated, as well as the view that for some addicts, the internet is the place where they conduct their previously chosen addictive behaviour (Griffiths 1999; Widyanto and Griffiths 2006). The phrase ‘Pathological Internet Use’ will be introduced as a preferable alternative to the phrase ‘internet addiction’. The notion of temporary obsession will be discussed and offered as an alternative to the knee-jerk label of addiction. As one influencer on the claims about Internet addiction is ‘too much time on the computer’, it is important to address this presumption. After viewing this chapter, readers are likely to concede that this area is indeed complex, and that addiction is a serious matter.

In chapter 2, i identify and discuss some criticisms of high usage, and the possible side effects. Many of the criticisms were made in the late 1990s and it is fair to say that these possibilities are not actualities. This chapter probes potential problems as a result of ‘too much’ computer use. it discusses the issues surrounding
setting limits on young children and youth in regards to their computer usage. It puts forth the sceptics’ views of the dangers of technology, those that prefer ‘virtual lives’ to biological lives and just what does constitute ‘overuse’.

Chapter 3 discusses concerns about the state of childhood as it once was, and whether children are missing out on the ‘good old days’ through the dominance of technology in western society. In featuring the development of technology throughout history, I show how the digital age is a societal development occurring in similar ways to the move from the agricultural age to the industrial age and to the print age. Through demonstrating that throughout history society has been suspicious of new developments and the effects of technology on everyday life, the chapter claims it is inevitable that society is now suspicious of people who spend many hours of their leisure time using the internet.

As this book builds on and develops Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice including the concepts of habitus, field, capital, doxa, misrecognition and hysterisis, Chapter 4 gives the reader a brief, yet important overview of the French social theorist’s writings focusing on the fundamental concepts of habitus, field and capital.

Chapters 5–9 focus on understanding the practice of leisure and its blur with learning, evident in this digital age. It argues that the phrase ‘internet addiction’ actually constitutes Bourdieu’s (2000) notion of misrecognition for those who are not avid users of digital technologies.

Chapter 5 presents the recent qualitative study I completed involving eight teenagers in New Zealand. These teenagers demonstrated their expertise in their use of a personal home computer and the internet. The study focused on how the teenagers became technological experts and explored the types of practice and leisure common in the lives of contemporary youth. This chapter discusses the perceived and actual differences in perspective and approach between those who have always had computers and digital technologies in their lives (digital insiders), those who have not (digital newcomers), and those who are indifferent to digital technologies (digital outsiders).

In my study, I found that for some young people, online engagement may help to develop technological expertise. Home computer use is a site of learning, leisure and an important social networking tool. The everyday practice that digital insiders engage in will be described, including how they learn while engaged in the leisurely use of digital technologies. Chapter 6 delineates the field of home computer use for leisure.

Highlighting the popular discourse found in the lives of some teenaged technological experts, Chapter 7 argues for recognizing that the notion of
Addiction is readily and too easily thrown about in the public consumption of media. This chapter gives real-life examples of this discourse based on recent research. It also identifies the *habitus* in the *field*, the *doxic* practices in the *field*, and discusses whether addiction is really the case according to Bourdieu and his notion of *hysterisis*. Through introducing the idea that addiction is misrecognized, the book’s argument suggests that some forms of leisure are also misrecognized. To (mis)recognize something is to (not) ‘acknowledge the existence, validity, or legality of’ someone or something (Macintosh Dictionary Widget 2008).

There are significant influences on cultural, social and economic *capital* in the lives of young people today. One of the many privileges that *digital insiders* have is internet access, along with personal computer ownership. Chapter 8 draws attention to the views surrounding privilege in this digital age, and highlights how these new forms of privilege may not only boost both formal and informal learning opportunities, but perhaps induce important self-efficacy in this digital age.

Many young people seem to have a limited connection with their schooling and associated experiences. The students know they should succeed in school, yet school seems to be situated in former fields associated with a print culture, or print-based literacy, which is at direct odds with the digital culture in which they are positioned and the digital literacy that they are developing. Chapter 9 claims that their daily engagement with digital technologies constitutes a practice of leisure, closely aligned with learning and the possible development of expertise. I highlight some of the moral panics and digital myths surrounding the *misrecognition* of the practice of leisure.

To enforce the critical stance of this book, the conclusion gathers the arguments surrounding Internet addiction evident in the conflicting discourses found in health, psychology, popular culture and media studies. The sociocultural critique of this book is enforced through challenging the prominent discourses surrounding internet addiction that are simplistic and thoughtless. Through highlighting the complexities in the competing discourses surrounding internet addiction, and elucidating the notion of temporary obsession, I claim that, through the media, the public are receiving a simplistic and unsatisfactory version of what internet addiction really is, or whether it exists at all. I will conclude that certain activities that may temporarily include an obsession with the internet can actually be a positive practice (Amichai-Hamburger and Furnham 2007).
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There is an extensive amount of literature on addiction to sex, gambling, pornography, drugs and alcohol. Needless to say, some cases are acute and serious. However, there is a growing amount of questionable literature that suggests Internet addiction is an actual treatable disorder (Block 2008; Ferraro et al. 2007; Gavin et al. 2007; Hardie and Tee 2007; Li and Chung 2006; Pinnelli 2002; Wu and Cheng 2007; Young 2007).

Before I continue, it should be acknowledged that within the Internet environment, sex, gambling and pornography are readily available and of course, can exacerbate one’s emerging or existent addiction. It seems the internet provides a lucrative opportunity for some to make money out of selling and providing still and moving images that objectify and belittle women, as well as demean sexual intercourse. One of the provisions of the internet is anonymity and being able to access chat rooms (or the 3-D chat room ‘Second Life’) to engage in cybersex allows people to do something considered taboo, within a space they feel is safe. Some of these people would never consider being sexually involved with others in a ‘swingers’ type modality, however the anonymity associated with the internet means that, for some people involved in cybersex and/or viewing pornography and participating in online gambling with a false or virtual identity, the availability and likelihood of this participation is enhanced. If people are already interested in gambling, pornography and paedophilia, there is no doubt that the internet advantages them in their further use and exploration of these avenues.

There are many competing discourses or approaches to internet addiction, including preferred descriptors. Multiple views of internet addiction claim it to be:

- Real and is as addictive as drug addiction.
- A play on words, an interference with meaning that is questionable.
- Non-existent, as it is an environment and not a substance, but it enables people to act out their previous addictions or addictive tendencies.
- Not the issue as high frequency use is a lifestyle choice and vocational expectation.
- At one end of a continuum of addiction.
- Better suited to being titled ‘pathological internet use’.
I now focus on addressing and critiquing each of these discourses in respective order.

**Internet Addiction Does Exist**

Many people are convinced that ‘internet addiction’ does exist, but it is possible that some of these advocates might be making money from promoting Internet addiction as an actual disorder. The aim of this book is to criticize the facile generalizations about internet addiction that seem to be so common throughout the media. These generalizations can, unfortunately, be found in numerous pseudo-scholarly works.

Dr Kimberly Young is the leading proponent of the existence of internet Addiction. Her books *Caught in the Net: How to Recognize the Signs of Internet Addiction – and a Winning Strategy for Recovery* (1998), and *Tangled in the Web: Understanding Cybersex from Fantasy to Addiction* (2001) are based on the premise that internet Addiction does exist, and that she is able to help those who are addicted through advice and through attendance at her center for internet Addiction Recovery (see CIAR 2006). As this chapter elucidates, Dr Young’s means of determining Internet addiction are questionable. While Dr Young’s Internet Addiction Test (IAT) may have been relevant in 1998 when the book was published, it is possibly not as relevant now because of the permeation of the internet as essential to one’s job and as a means for one’s improved personal communication with friends and family. The actual internet Addiction Test seems to be out-of-date in 2008–2009. Questions on the iAT include: ‘how often do you check your email before something else that you need to do?’ (1998, 31) or ‘How often do you find yourself anticipating when you will go on-line again?’ (1998, 32), or ‘How often do you lose sleep due to late-night log-ins?’ (1998, 32). If I applied these questions to myself it is likely that I would be categorized as addicted to the internet because the personal expectation of friends and family and the expectation of my vocation is that I need to be up to date with my email communication. Ten years ago this was neither a choice nor an expectation. If we applied these IAT questions to watching television, an art or craft, reading, playing board games, an invigorating hobby or exercising, the answers might simplistically suggest we are addicted to anything and everything. Yellowlees and Marks (2007, 1452) captured it well when they concluded:

The internet is an extremely important social and communications tool, and is changing our daily lives at home and at work. It is entirely predictable that any major new technology, or way of doing business, should be associated with a variety of human responses, some good, and some not so good.
Young does emphasize how anyone can be an addict and that it is not limited to a particular demographic, and she does rightfully highlight that there is a dark side to cyberspace, where people neglect their personal health and their own families preferring to engage with the internet. Young raises many relevant points to consider including the pertinent focus question of whether one is neglecting other responsibilities or roles in favour of engaging with the internet. However, it seems that the internet may be being blamed unfairly for the neglect of one’s responsibilities or roles. There are many things that can entertain us or provide leisure like reading a book, playing a game, watching our pets, viewing a television program or talking on the phone. These types of practices have their place in our modern day society and it is rather easy for some to become engrossed with these activities to the detriment of relationships with others or the neglect of household or work responsibilities. However, what we must keep in mind, as Young rightly points out, is that many forms of entertainment exist in increments or units of time, whereas using the internet is not calibrated by a half-hour or hour-length television program, or a thirty-page chapter, or a two-and-a-half hour movie.

What is problematic with Young’s (1998) book is, as others have discussed (Charlton and Danforth 2007; Huismann, van den Eijnden and Garretsen 2001; Widyanto and Griffiths 2006; Yellowlees and Marks 2007), transferring the diagnostic criteria of other addictions to an intangible environment such as the Internet is unsatisfactory. Young (1998, 9) suggested that, ‘Internet users become psychologically dependent on the feelings and experiences they get while using that machine, and that’s what makes it difficult to control or stop’. She aligns this type of psychological dependence with gambling and overeating. While this may be a possible occurrence there are two notions that contest this attachment to the internet. First, if the internet is an environment, then it is disputable as to whether anyone could be addicted to an environment (and of course we go back to examining whether dependence constitutes addiction). Second, if the Internet represents a place where people with already existing addictions can go, or if they have tendencies to be addicted, then of course the internet can become a scapegoat for our discretions.

In a study of 442 online game players who utilized a web-based questionnaire, Charlton and Danforth (2007, 1531) concluded ‘it is inappropriate to use some of the previously used criteria for addiction when researching or diagnosing computer-related addictions’. Charlton and Danforth explained, in depth, the fact that the DSM-IV-TR criteria (adapted from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association, or APA) for the impulse control disorder of pathological gambling has been unsuitably adjusted and applied to the suggested clinical disorder of ‘internet addiction’. The DSM-IV-TR helps psychiatrists to determine what disorders a person may have, and the publication includes things such as mood disorders, anxiety disorders, eating disorders and substance disorders. For example, the diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling includes
‘Persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior as indicated by five (or more) of the following’:\(^1\):

- is preoccupied with gambling (e.g. preoccupied with reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping or planning the next venture, or thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble);
- needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement;
- has repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling;
- is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling;
- gambles as a way of escaping from problems or of relieving a dysphoric mood (e.g. feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, depression);
- after losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even (‘chasing’ one’s losses);
- lies to family members, therapist, or others to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling;
- has committed illegal acts such as forgery, fraud, theft, or embezzlement to finance gambling;
- has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling;
- relies on others to provide money to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by gambling (BehaveNet 2008).

It is arguable that it is incommensurate to group problematic internet use with this disorder. It should be noted that no criteria for internet addiction have been currently adopted into the ApA’s ds M-iV-Tr, despite recent arguments that they should be (Block 2008). It is somewhat easy to argue that the application of these criteria to the use of the Internet is awkward and incommensurable. In a recent editorial in the American Journal of Psychiatry, Block (2008) argued for the inclusion of internet addiction in the ds M-V. His editorial included four references to his own work, and eight references to an international symposium on the counselling and treatment of youth Internet addiction held in South Korea (which he attended). This makes his recommendation somewhat biased and it can be argued that, of the South Korean conference papers he cited in his brief editorial,\(^2\) the participants could possibly be addicted to things other than the internet such as gaming (Griffiths and Davies 2005) or gambling, or have other impulse control disorders. I suggest that it is more appropriate to title their internet use as problematic or

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1 Please note: ‘The specified diagnostic criteria for each mental disorder are offered as guidelines for making diagnoses, because it has been demonstrated that the use of such criteria enhances agreement among clinicians and investigators. The proper use of these criteria requires specialized clinical training that provides both a body of knowledge and clinical skills’ (BehaveNet 2008).

2 I have been unable to find these conference papers online (11 July 2008).
even pathological and explain these terms later in this chapter. It is possible there are inherent biases within these studies that perhaps do not objectively consider whether internet addiction is a reality. There are those whose research stands to gain should internet addiction be recognized as a disorder in the diagnostic and statistical Manual. This is an area that remains subjective and contestable, and is why this book has been written.

Young does suggest some very valid questions to consider in regard to long-term consequences, including: ‘Whom are you hurting?’ ‘Where will you be in your work or school life one year down the road?’ ‘Where can you find greater rewards for your time, effort, and energy?’ (1998, 218). These questions are valid and relevant for any activity we engage in, including (over)work in our vocations or careers. As a result of a preoccupation with the internet, it should be acknowledged it is possible for people to develop mood disorders, sleep disorders, and anxiety disorders. However, the main difficulties with Young’s work are the following premises; high usage of the internet is bad, and will lead to damaging engagement with cybersex, pornography, gambling, dependence on those who are not real, and that online relationships are not as worthwhile as face-to-face ones. While people have become a lot more careful about online privacy and are more wary about sharing personal details with strangers, it is still evident that for many people the internet provides intimacy, hope, and a purpose that is not available to them in their real, or biological lives. Additionally, ‘it is possible that exactly the same high degree of computer use exhibited by two people might be considered either pathological or non-pathological depending upon the impact that this has upon their life’ (Charlton and Danforth 2007, 1533). For many people, online interactions provide security and the ability to consider what they write before they say it, and as Amichai-Hamburger and Furnham (2007) claim, may provide a crossover from positive internet relationships to positive face-to-face relationships.

Play on Words

William Glasser defined an addict to be ‘someone whose life is destroyed by heroin, alcohol, or gambling, and often the lives of those around him [sic] are also ruined’ (Glasser 1976, 1). Addiction is defined as ‘the fact or condition of being addicted to a particular substance, thing or activity’ (Macintosh Dictionary Widget 2008). In contrast, the Microsoft Word™ dictionary (2008) defined addiction as ‘a state of physiological or psychological dependence on a drug liable to have a damaging effect’, but the second definition given states a ‘great interest in something to which a lot of time is devoted’. The synonyms for addiction include ‘dependency,
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habit, problem’ (Macintosh Thesaurus Widget 2008). There are discrepancies evident even in these examples.

Another perpetuated phrase in popular discourse is surrounding those that have a ‘slavish addiction to fashion’ (the second definition found on the Macintosh Dictionary Widget 2008). This can be termed a devotion to, dedication to, obsession with, infatuation with, passion for, love of, mania for or enslavement to fashion. If we use this secondary meaning to describe our practice, it may be in fact a correct use of the word: many people have a devotion to, dedication to, obsession with, infatuation with, passion for, love of, mania for, or enslavement to the internet. However, it is of another nature to term this use to be pathological. pathological is defined as ‘Involving, caused by, or of the nature of a physical or mental disease’ (Macintosh Dictionary Widget 2008).

However, informally, pathological is considered to be ‘compulsive’ or ‘obsessive’ (Macintosh Dictionary Widget 2008). It is interesting that the word ‘obsessive’ is used in both pathological and non-pathological definitions.

To add to this confusing and complicated matrix of linguistics, it should be noted that:

- Dependence is ‘the state of relying on or controlled by someone else’ (Macintosh Dictionary Widget 2008).
- To depend is to ‘be controlled or determined by’ (Macintosh Dictionary Widget 2008).
- Depending on is equal to ‘being conditioned by’ or ‘contingent on’ (Macintosh Thesaurus Widget 2008).
- To ‘depend on’ is ‘to need something in order to exist or survive’ (Microsoft Word Dictionary 2008).
- Addicted is defined as ‘physically and mentally dependent on a particular substance, and unable to stop taking it without incurring adverse effects’ (Macintosh Dictionary Widget 2008). This is in contrast to the Microsoft Word Dictionary which defines addicted as ‘physiologically or mentally dependent on a harmful drug’ and secondly, ‘very interested in something and devoting a lot of time to it’ (2008). Wikipedia (2008) defines drug dependency as different from drug addiction and claims drug addiction is characterized by a psychological need for a drug rather than a physical need.

3 Nick Webb has an insightful definition of addiction in his The Dictionary of Bullshit (2005).
4 In this text, space is not available to explore the theoretical and applied linguistics regarding this field.
i argue in this chapter that a temporary obsession (in alignment with a secondary definition of addiction) is acceptable and not problematic. To me, drug dependency brings to mind notions of addiction, dependence, reliance, craving, compulsion, fixation, obsession and abuse. If we focus on the notion that addiction constitutes a dependence on substances and that the removal of the substances causes physical and mental problems, then it seems apt to highlight that if someone says they are addicted to smoking, we can reply, no, you are addicted to the nicotine found within cigarettes. Upon removal of the cigarettes, you will suffer the physical and mental problems of withdrawal. The internet is not a substance. if someone ventures to say they are addicted to running, it may be correct in the sense of having a passion for, or devotion to running, however, it is possible they may be actually addicted to the endorphins one can receive from running. Could this actually be the case that when individuals access and use the internet, they obtain endorphins, and consequently continue the practice in order to attract more of those endorphins? If we come back to the removal of the item, if we remove the Internet, what will happen is that we will be disadvantaged in one of the ways we communicate and in the perpetuation of networking with those whom we deem important to keep in contact with. Therefore, we are not addicted if we do not suffer withdrawal symptoms and mood modification. The Internet is not to blame, just like cigarettes or running are not to blame. It is hard to make things any clearer than Vaughan Bell who stated (2007b, np):

It’s also important to make the distinction between something being compulsive, something that you want to do again (commonly, but confusingly, called ‘addictive’ in everyday language), and a fully-fledged behavioural addiction – a mental disorder where you keep doing the activity even when it has serious damaging effects.

The cinema, reading books, going for walks, chatting to friends and any other enjoyable activity can be compulsive, but it doesn’t make it an addiction, even if it’s a daily time consuming activity and you get pissed off if you can’t do it.

Griffiths (1998) defined addiction as comprising six core criteria: salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, conflict and relapse. He made the following distinction with technological addictions:

Technological addictions are operationally defined as non-chemical (behavioural) addictions that involve human-machine interactions. They can either be passive (e.g. television) or active (e.g. computer games) and usually contain inducing and reinforcing features that may contribute to the promotion of addictive tendencies. (Griffiths 1998, 62)

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5 even the word ‘passion’ can be synonymous with obsession, addiction and fanaticism (Macintosh Thesaurus Widget 2008).
While it is evident that it is possible for someone to be addicted to the internet, it is more possible that popular discourse and phrases used to describe dispositions that are part of our lifestyles in the twenty-first century are not necessarily accurate or beneficial to employ. We need to go beyond literal definitions of words and explore thoroughly the approaches and multiplicities surrounding internet use.

The Internet is an Environment: Internet Addiction Disorder Does Not Exist

Another school of thought believes that the internet is an environment therefore one cannot be addicted to it because only a substance or a behaviour can be addictive. Bell (2007b) claimed the Internet to be a medium for communication hence one cannot be addicted to it.

Building on the arguments stated previously in this chapter, Bell (2007b) claimed internet addiction does not exist because ‘it’s a logical impossibility, a category error, and there’s no good evidence that heavy internet use, in itself, is a risk to mental health’. The Internet is a place or an environment where previous addictions can be acted out, or where previously addictive-like behaviours (or sets of activities) can be practiced. From a comprehensive literature review surrounding the notion of Internet addiction, Yellowlees and Marks (2007, 1452) also concluded that it is ‘unlikely that Internet addiction as a disorder in its own right, exists’.

Each of us chooses to be involved in things which we deem important. Those things are what we value and prefer to do in the way we live our lives. Are we addicted to them? Well, they may not be a substance, but we do have a level of dependence on them. We have an interest in them. We may have an obsession with them. So, while we are dependent on it, if it is removed we are likely to fill our lives with something else.

For some people, it is much easier, cheaper and quicker to send an email than make a phone call, and for many people this is an acceptable response. For others, using the phone or writing a letter are still preferable to electronic communication. Many of us use the Internet at a greater rate than we did ten to fifteen years ago and, as such, seek it out to answer banal questions and research new and existing interests such as the television guide, entertainment news, sports trivia, and so on. Those of us who have personal computers and internet access are now not as reliant on print media, but are ready and able to engage with the online medium in so many more ways. When engaging with digital technologies, we are able to choose what we do with our leisure time and how we communicate with others. Our leisure and our communication are suitably enhanced. Does this mean that we have a natural propensity to be addicted to the internet? Or is it that our level
of dependence on the Internet has increased? Is this a form of addiction? Griffiths (1998, 71) reported on the rise of technology use in our everyday lives:

Ajayi (1995) has reported that where the Internet is concerned what we are seeing is merely the continuation of a decades-long trend of people spending increasingly more time with technology than with humans. She argues that the shift away from family and peers to mass media technology as the primary socialization agents can be traced to the advent of radio in the 1930s, followed by television in the 1950s, and computer networks today.

Chapters 2 and 3 further develop this argument. As established in the introduction, the notions of ‘dependence’ and ‘addiction’ are contestable. Many of us have taken up the use of certain technologies, be they digital or not, in order to keep up with the Jones’s, make our chores quicker, or make our lives more comfortable or easier. Our lifestyle is structured so that we are able to take types of work and participate in forms of leisure that were not available to our forebears. In Western society, we no longer have to grow our own food, hand wash our linen or go to the (real) library to find out about a topic. Whereas in previous generations one parent (stereotypically the mother) would need to dwell or remain within the domestic sphere in order to care for the children, run the household and even shop during the limited hours stores were open, both parents are now enabled and are choosing to work. Many parents now have the option of childcare for their non-school-aged children which allows them more time for work (or for leisure). Retail stores have extended hours to cater for the increased demands for goods being available after traditional work hours. In the western world, our leisure time has increased and we are able to sail around our harbours, frequent book clubs, camp in the bush or woods, play weekly sport, attend tapestry classes and meet prospective partners online. Our lack of dependence on labour-intensive activities means that we are able to engage in more-complex, expensive and intricate leisure pastimes that are not what we used to do before. Throughout history, with the advent of each new significant technology, vocational and leisure practice has changed from that of previous generations.

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6 It is noted that for many families, both parents have to work in order to meet financial commitments and expectations. This comment is made with the realization that I have not included discussion of single-parent families and the demands on them; this is another topic not able to be covered here.
High Frequency Use is a Lifestyle Choice, Leisure Option and Vocational Expectation

Young (1998, 22) suggests that the Internet is a form of escape ‘much like the numbing sensation alcoholics report when they drink’. However, when any of us need to escape, there are various forms of media or activities we can engage in. Sometimes this involves socializing with friends, drinking coffee, exercising, going to the movies, playing a round of golf, reading the newspaper, doing a yoga class or enjoying a glass of wine. This temporary relief can be found in ‘escape-like’ activities. While some are more beneficial than others there are plenty of innocent activities that can be undertaken which, if done too often, can cause the rest of our lives to be unbalanced. If people’s lives are not happy and the problems of real life are too much too handle, is there not a tendency for them to seek to engage more and more in ‘escape-like’ activities? To state the obvious, there are various reasons to escape real life including, but not limited to, loneliness, unhappiness, physical appearance, stress and dissatisfaction with relationships. Some examples of escapism or avoidance can include playing online games (Wood, Griffiths and Eatough 2007), smoking, shopping, exercising and going online (Morahan-Martin and Schumacher 2000). All of these can be categorized as leisurely activities and habits.

What is so different about losing track of time when on the Internet when one can do the same on Nintendo Wii™ or through reading a book, watching a television program or working long after everyone else has finished? How is losing sleep over a chosen leisure activity any worse than losing sleep while on the Internet? Of course, there are significant and detrimental distractions available on the internet, but pornography is available through the television, while gambling and sex are available through the telephone. If people wish to engage in these types of activities they can do so; the internet is just one of many media that provide this facility.

despite the fact that tobacco prices have steadily increased over the years, as have warnings and advertisements stating things such as, ‘smoking causes lung cancer’, people continue to smoke. While I cannot empathize with those who are addicted to nicotine as I have not been a smoker myself, there are many people who have given up smoking because they have had a baby, because of their health or because they decide it is too expensive. These people have chosen to be free from the habit.

Some people joke about being addicted to shopping, but we would be foolish to do anything other than state that this activity is a form of leisure in which people choose to participate. For some, they know they should not spend money on clothes and accessories and yet they still choose to rack up unnecessary credit card debt. Nevertheless, people have the right to decide for themselves the form
of leisure they engage in, whether it be reading, shopping, or using the internet. The idea that high engagement with the internet is an acceptable form of leisure, is supported by Charlton and Danforth (2007, 1533) who claimed:

high engagement should not be confused with the concept of positive addiction forwarded by Glasser (1985) since the latter features withdrawal symptoms, such as guilt and anxiety, when a behavior (such as running or meditation) is not performed according to schedule. These withdrawal symptoms compel an individual to perform a behavior in order to relieve the symptoms, although the behaviors have positive effects in the form of increasing self-esteem rather than negative outcomes such as conflict. With high engagement, the absence of withdrawal symptoms means that the individual is not compelled to perform the behavior towards the end of symptom alleviation, but rather engages in the behavior in pursuit of enjoyment.

From this, we can suggest that high engagement and problematic internet use are more suitable terms to use rather than ‘internet addiction’. We now turn to exploring the notion of positive addiction and a continuum of addictive dispositions.

**Continuum of Addiction**

Another discourse believes that there are behaviours that are potentially addictive and studies have focused on the nature of gambling, overeating, sex, exercise and computer game playing. What must be realized and acknowledged is that of course when one overindulges in an activity for an extensive period of time, other things in one’s life cannot be attended to in a satisfactory manner. I would like to suggest
The Multiplicities of Internet Addiction

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a continuum for the placement of dispositions: where something is liked at one end and that same ‘thing’ may cause addiction at the other.

Figure 1.1 suggests that what may be a liking for something can be positive and beneficial but, as one moves toward the dispositions surrounding obsession and addiction, that the values and beliefs associated with this practice may become negative and destructive. A ‘like’ can become a ‘preference’ which can then become a ‘habit’. Habits can turn into ‘obsessions’ which are debatably different to ‘addiction’ based on the arguments within this chapter. Yet obsessions can turn into addictions should they be perpetuated.

William Glasser argued that not all addiction is negative. His book *Positive Addiction* (1976) especially focused on two behaviours (running and meditation) whereby participants who considered themselves to be addicted to that everyday practice would suffer negative symptoms if they did not engage in the behaviour. Their frame of mind was enhanced when they engaged daily in the behaviour so they became dependent upon the practice in order to function effectively. Admittedly *positive addiction* sounds like an oxymoron, so let me explain further.

Glasser (1976) claimed there are three things essential to our human lives – that of loving others and being loved and accepted, being happy and being involved in things we consider to be worthwhile. The case study examples given in his book were of happy people who were actively engaged in running or meditation, who had found meaning in their lives. One of the contributors to their happy and meaningful lives was their *positive addiction* to their preferred activity. Engaging in that addictive activity gave them the strength to be a person who successfully engaged in what they saw as being worthwhile, not settling for less or giving up which Glasser associated with being weak. He claimed there to be three choices of weak people: firstly to give up, secondly to engage in negative actions and be over-involved in emotions, and thirdly to choose negative addiction to drugs, alcohol, gambling, and so on. Glasser’s thesis was that ‘many people, weak and strong, can help themselves to be stronger, and an important new path to strength may be positive addiction’ (Glasser 1976, 11).

In light of this argument one could suggest that for many people the internet makes them stronger or increases their social confidence (Amichai-Hamburger and Furnham 2007; Morahan-Martin and Schumacher 2000). It provides benefits and advantages for their every day lives. It is possible we could deem internet addiction as positive for those people whose lives are more satisfied and strengthened by their engagement with the internet. One of the essential characteristics of Glasser’s notion of positive addiction is that the ‘positive addiction state of mind’ is aligned with a non self-critical headspace (which contributes to one’s personal sense of wellbeing and strength). For those whose use of the Internet is concerning or problematic this non-self-critical headspace or state of mind is unlikely. For those
who frequently use the Internet, and suffer negative symptoms from non-use, it is unlikely that they are positively addicted, but a better description is that they are ‘totally absorbed’ (Morahan-Martin and Schumacher 2000, 27), which can lead to losing track of time (Wood, Griffiths and Eatough 2007), and may be considered problematic depending on the person(s) and the context.

Throughout the life of a person it is easy to observe different temporary fads that are at certain times obsessive. I remember as a child, my temporary obsessions included horses and toys such as My l il’ pony™, c are Bears™, and cabb age Patch Dolls™ (though I did not receive either of the latter two). Other examples of obsessions for young children have been slot cars, l ego™, Bratz™ dolls, and Transformers™. For young adults, activities such as skateboarding, skiing, mountain biking, movies, radio controlled vehicles and learning to drive can all be temporary obsessions. On the internet, people of all ages have access to unlimited topics which the medium provides an endless opportunity to explore. From sport, to politics, to gaming, to music, to dating, to entertainment, to work possibilities, to the news, the Internet is infinite and ever growing. For an adult the complexity and infinite nature of the Internet means that a temporary obsession with one topic can move seamlessly to another topic, and so on, and never end. The practice may be seen as ‘addictive’ but really the medium or the environment is a structure that remains the same, and yet continues to offer excitement and new fields to explore. Interest waxes and wanes and obsession spikes and fades. Yellowlees and Marks (2007, 1449) reported, ‘excessive Internet use is something that could wear off over time in the majority of individuals’.

When I first began using the Internet I mainly used email. I was then introduced to instant chat. My interest in music was reignited due to the prevalence of artists promoting their songs online. I began a blog a few years ago. My father suggested we chat on Skype™ when I was overseas. My constant use of Apple™ computers led me to use iTunes™ and the ipod™ as my preferred media players. My brother told me Facebook was ‘really cool’. For my work the use of online search engines and databases proves invaluable. And so I have engaged in and developed my use of the internet medium. The internet does not get stale; new additions and improvements are inevitable and the Internet as a network has both been formed by and is forming society.

Pathological Internet Use

In a comprehensive literature review and critique of the empirical research on Internet addiction Widya nto and Griffiths (2006) concluded that if Internet addiction does exist, it affects only a small percentage of the online population. They critiqued Young’s focus on excessive use as determining Internet addiction ‘to assume frequent Internet use was excessive, pathological or addictive was
potentially misleading as it ignored contextual and dispositional factors associated with this behaviour’ (Widyanto and Griffiths 2006, 39).

It should be noted that Mark Griffiths also applied the six core criteria of addiction to video game playing and explored whether video game addiction exists (Griffiths and Davies 2005). While being cautious about whether it should be a ‘distinct clinical entity’ (Griffiths and Davies 2005, 365), he also asserted that there is therapeutic value in a wide variety of medical contexts for those who play video games (Griffiths 2005). Video or computer game addiction is one of the sub-types of Internet addiction (Young 1999), all of which according to this monograph are contestable.

There are multiple labels and acronyms that one should be aware of such as:

- Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD).\(^7\)
- Pathological Internet Use (PIU) (Morahan-Martin and Schumacher 2000).
- Excessive Internet Use (EIU) (Hardie and Tee 2007).
- Compulsive Internet Use (CIU).

Davis (2001) highlighted two areas of Pathological Internet Use (PIU) – specific and generalized:

Specific pathological Internet use includes those people that are dependent on a specific function of the Internet. Clinical and media accounts of this include overuse (abuse) of online sexual material/services, online auction services, online stock trading, and online gambling. It seems reasonable to assume that these dependencies are content-specific, and that they would exist in the absence of the Internet. Specific PIU is related to only one aspect of the Internet, and exists entirely independent of multiple internet functions. Generalized pathological Internet use involves a general, multidimensional overuse of the internet. It might also include wasting time online, without a clear objective. Often, generalized PIU can be associated with the ‘chat’ found online and dependence on e-mail. This is assumed to be related to the social aspect of the internet. The need for social contact and reinforcement obtained online results in an increased desire to remain in a virtual social life. (Davis 2001, 188)

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\(^7\) According to Young (1999), the sub-types are cybersexual addiction, cyber-relationship addiction, net compulsions, information overload and computer game addiction.

\(^8\) The first person to name ‘Internet Addiction Disorder’, Dr Ivan Goldberg, did not believe it existed. He did so as a satirical spoof (dates of his instigation range from 1986–1995).
Hence, Davis is attributing specific PIU with previous addictions whereby the internet is the environment where these prior addictions are acted out. He claims generalized PIU to be aligned with pathology and disorders. Davis does not use the term ‘addiction’ to describe these categorical patterns of behaviour; his terms are helpful and specific rather than ‘Internet addiction’ which is unhelpful, general and debatable.

Caplan (2002) preferred to use the label ‘Problematic Internet Use’ which is another preferable phrase to ‘internet addiction’. He highlighted how people who were already lonely and perceived that there were benefits in using the Internet for social relationships rather than face-to-face relationships were in danger of being more susceptible to problematic internet use. While his methodologically sound study was cautious in its arguments, Caplan was possibly unfair to those people who like the safety of online engagement and being able to think about their responses before having to say something on the spot or not having to read body language. Is this really a sign of poor self-esteem? This suggests that what one person deems unacceptable might be completely acceptable to another (Charlton and Danforth 2007), especially in the field of Internet use for leisure.

The element of choice is something that is perhaps not readily considered and yet should be. We choose which types of technologies we use, we choose which technologies we depend on and we choose which forms of leisure we wish to engage in. Some of the types of leisure we engage in directly correlate with the technologies we depend on for work, or choose to engage with for our leisure.

The plumb line of ‘who says this is too much’ is a contentious issue. For one to say ‘one glass of wine per night is too much’ is incommensurate with another who says ‘three glasses of wine per night is fine’. Both these ideas would be abhorrent to someone who thinks one should only drink (if at all) on the weekends. While I have critiqued Young’s application of alcoholism and drug addiction criteria to internet addiction, if we use this same analogy some people will be happy to spend a few hours browsing the internet each evening, whereas others will believe that, if they are focused on their computer screen for more than an hour per evening, they are neglecting their family and their household responsibilities, and that they are overusing the internet.

You may know of someone who was fired from their job because they did not fulfil their responsibilities at work, choosing to spend their time online gambling, or on eBay™ or even taking the opportunity to sneak a peek at pornography. Were they bored with their job and needed some arousal or stimulation (Torkildsen 1986)? Were they addicted to the Internet? It is opportune for research to be conducted on such people, to determine the multiple variables that have affected or caused this situation. However, the argument for whether previous addictions are exacerbated or perpetuated within the internet environment is still relevant. We
also have to consider whether they just did not like their job and wanted to get out of it. Some people are incapable of making changes for themselves, and they rely on others to make decisions for them. A question to ask is: did they place more value on their online activity than they did their job? We must be sure of why they spent so much time on the internet to the detriment of their vocational position. Since the termination of their position did they seek treatment for their dependence on technology, have they changed their profession, and have they moved into the realm surrounding the interest that most excites them? Have they developed their own eBay™ business because they were waiting for the perfect moment to begin? Or are they just addicted and need to attend a centre for internet addiction, just like those who are at the bottom rung of their lives need to attend a rehabilitation centre? We make decisions and choices and, for many of us, we know what the consequences are. Those who suffer from addiction have gone beyond the ability to make responsible decisions.

There are children and young people who will access inappropriate websites. Many adults choose to access these too. Privacy filters and security monitors are continually increasing. Children and young people are being educated about what is acceptable in regard to their internet use. However, young people have a tendency to wish to explore the ‘no go’ zones. They must make the choices about their future engagement with these sites.9

For those who are compelled to continue their involvement with certain internet sites and feel they have no choice but to do so, their internet use is problematic. It may be the case that their internet use constitutes addiction. If so, then we should not be readily claiming our ‘inclinations’, ‘likes’ or ‘temporary obsessions’ to be addictions because we undermine the implications and seriousness of the word. Addiction is a serious and complex issue; it is not something that should be glibly referred to as a possibility without extensive consideration of suitable criteria for diagnosis. Being addicted to something is not favourable. In recent times, celebrities have been glorified and received more attention because of a stint in rehab. A report from the United Nations warned us about the influence of celebrity junkies on their fans (ABC 2008). It is common for popular discourse to highlight who is addicted to what and skim over the fact that addiction destroys people’s lives. Being an alcoholic means that one is always an alcoholic; it is a daily, constant battle for anybody who is addicted or who has been addicted just to exist. We should not admire people who are indifferent to being addicted, or who

9 This ties in closely with the notion that children and young people are able to decide what types of websites they will view and why they will do so – if they have received instruction and are trusted to make appropriate decisions, they may do so (Johnson, N.F. 2007c). However, we are not sure of this being the case so moral panic ensues and tends to prevail.
think it is cool to celebrate ‘going to rehab’. We should not accept this uninformed
discourse in the media and in our daily conversations.

What must be realized is that addiction is a serious matter, and that for people
to joke, or light-heartedly admit that they are addicted to the Internet, or their
smartphone or their favourite television program, is disparaging of and dismissive
of the fight that individuals undergo with addiction; it trivializes the ongoing
struggle with alcohol and drug addiction and other real addictions. it is arguable
that alcoholism and drug addiction not only include psychological and mental
addictions, but also a chemical dependency. These three areas are contestable with
regard to internet addiction.

We must be aware of and in tune to the potential that ‘voices of denial’ or
‘blaming others’ are not acceptable for spending what we consider to be ‘too
much’ time or ‘time-wasting’ on any activity. What we must decide as individuals
is how much time per day and per week on any activity – using the Internet or not
– is an acceptable amount. Chapter 2 explores this issue.
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In September 2007 every Australian family received a copy of the booklet NetAlert Protecting Australian Families Online in an attempt to raise family awareness of the potential impact on children of inappropriate online content as well as online predatory behaviour (DCITA 2007). There are many similar initiatives taken by governments throughout the world to warn parents about their children’s practices. In this chapter, I identify and discuss some criticisms of high usage, of both child and adult users, and the possible side effects of this high usage.

There are multiple reasons for the rise of technological use in western society. As will be discussed in chapter 8, there are new forms of privilege evidenced by the rise of technologies in the western world and the predominance of neo-liberal economic philosophy or ideology. But there has been an extensive movement toward using computers in classrooms, which is also been influenced by the ‘New Right’. The following section explains why this is so.

The Push for Computers in Education

There are many articles and books reporting the benefits of using computers (e.g. Clements and Nastasi 1999; McKenzie 2000; Rowe 1993). As well as advantages, there are negative consequences and challenges that accompany using computers in education. Many authors discuss both the negatives and positives of computer technology while acknowledging the costs, potential problems and current issues (e.g. furlong et al. 2000; Gaines, Johnson and King 1996; Greenhill 1998; Hinostroza, Guzman and Isaacs 2002; Wenglinsky 1998).

Some literature anticipates the limitations, downsides and side effects of using computers. Other authors ask critical questions and highlight flaws in the assumptions upon which the adoption of computer education is based. Chris Bigum and Jane Kenway (2005) highlighted four discourses prominent in regard to the take-up of computers within schools. They used the following terms to describe four discourses concerning the assumptions about and orientations toward computing technologies: booster, anti-schooler, critic and doomster (Bigum and Kenway...
Boosters are of the utopian view that placing technologies in schools will improve education and society, and that each successive wave of technology is an improvement on the previous state of play. A sub-group of the boosters are the anti-schoolers who envisage the demise of schooling as technology and the internet develop. Education would be customized and negotiable for the paying individual. Critics are cautious about the use of technologies within schooling and are concerned with the cultural, human and social dimensions of change. Doomsters tend to embrace a dystopic view that life was good before technologies came about and we should get rid of these technological invasions.

Armstrong and Casement are two critics of the boosters’ discourse. They assessed the fundamental reasons for adopting computers in education. They queried the belief held by some that those ‘with computers will outperform those without them’ (Armstrong and Casement 2000, 63). Though computers are not necessary for learning, in a digital age and a digital culture, boosters argue that computer use and literacy is essential, not to learn, but to survive, because of the ramifications of worldwide use of computers, the popularity of computers, globalization, and technology being more and more the way of the future (Morritt 1997; Spender 1995).

However, Armstrong and Casement (2000, 2) raised noteworthy questions about the effects of computers in education on our perceptions of the role of schooling and what constitutes legitimate practice in schools: ‘Computer technology seems to have taken over public perceptions of what education is all about. It’s almost as if nothing worthwhile goes on in schools unless computers are involved’. This is a pertinent challenge of public perception. This understanding permeates popular culture and discourses of education as, for instance, the one laptop per child organisation (OLPC 2008) advocates that each child’s life will be improved and enhanced if they have a computer. The belief is that not only will children’s lives be improved but that their education, and its potential, will be improved. Providing children with a laptop is seen as providing them with the power to learn.

Another well-known critic or doomster has been Larry Cuban (2001) who claimed the push for computers in schools stemmed from the new right movement toward deregulation and the commodification of education. Since the 1980s, this ideology promoted that schools should be made more efficient and productive, suggesting they be run like businesses. In addition, ‘if technology were introduced to the classroom, it would be used; and if it were used, it would transform schooling’ (Cuban 2001, 13), and, consequently, this reform in schooling would help all of those in the future who need to be prepared for the technological revolution in the workplace.

Armstrong and Casement stated computer reform in schools stemmed from two beliefs. The first being that, ‘Computer technology can make education more
productive, relevant, and interesting for students of all ages. Students will learn more and more quickly because they will be more motivated to learn’ (2000, 2). The level of frustration that can occur and the amount of time that can be wasted when computers are used in schools (Healy 1998) raises questions about whether students will learn more quickly. Many studies investigated relationships between computer use and student motivation (see below). Healy (1998) maintained, ‘just because children like something does not mean it is either good for them or educational’ (53–4). Some literature suggests that ‘liking something’ does improve motivation and self-efficacy (Barak, Waks and Doppelt 2000; Howland, Laffey and e spinosa 1997; lu 1998; Cardamalia and Bereiter 1996; Ward and Tiessen 1997). One study found using a computer did not increase motivation (Miyashita 1994), while another study found results on motivation when using computers can be varied and conditional (Kinzie, Sullivan and Berdel 1992). Additional literature states that those who have had little experience with computers are not as confident, or are not as positive in attitude, as those who have had more experience (Clark 1997; Dawes, Horan and Hackett 2000; Hennessy 2000; Kirkman 1993; Levine and donitsa-schmidt 1998; Miyashita 1994; pedretti, Mayer-smith and Woodrow 1998; Soyibo and Hudson 2000; Woodrow 1994).

The second belief for the rationale of computer use in education is: ‘Because computers play an ever-larger role in our lives, students must understand and be able to take advantage of the potential of technology if they are to participate fully in society’ (Armstrong and Casement 2000, 2). Many educators claim that it is important to educate students about computers and increase their skills, but some think that students are likely to gain these skills anyway because of how ubiquitous computers are within society. The digital divide between those that ‘have’ and ‘do not have’ is still very wide (Brabazon 2008b; Johnson, N.F. 2004). There still exist children whose only use of computers is at school. There are still computers that sit unused in classrooms and their best function at present is to collect dust.

In chapter 5 I will introduce the concepts of digital newcomers, digital insiders and digital outsiders, the last of which are disinterested in computers and do not like to use them. Educators need to think through the ramifications of western society becoming a digital culture, the power of digital discourse (Millar 1998) and whose interests are being served, and whether they will be part of it. These statements challenge us to question whether ‘just because computers can be used in schools is … a good enough reason for deciding that they should be used’ (Armstrong and Casement 2000, 18).

Schools in Australia are now part of the digital education revolution heralded by Kevin Rudd’s Labor government. It was one of Prime Minister Rudd’s pre-election promises (2007), which resulted in a 2008 announcement of $1.2 billion AUD of new funding to be invested over the following five years. The two main
focuses are to fund every secondary school student with a laptop computer and provide fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) broadband connections to every school:

The digital education revolution, as a major part of the Australian Government Education Revolution, is a key strategic tool in achieving a revolutionary improvement in Australia’s education and training to world class standards.

The aim of the program is to contribute sustainable and meaningful change to teaching and learning in Australian schools that will prepare students for further education, training, jobs of the future and to live and work in a digital world. (Commonwealth of Australia 2008)

This suggests that education cannot be world class unless the latest and the best is present within classrooms. Another website stated:

The digital education revolution will dramatically change classroom education by ensuring that all students in years 9 to 12 have access to information and communication technology.

The Rudd Government believes that every Australian child deserves a world class education.

To be able to compete globally, Australia needs a world class education system.

This includes investing in our school infrastructure – including computers in schools and trade training centres, investing in our teachers and establishing a national curriculum. (Australian Labor Party 2008)

These statements correlate with the boosters’ belief that by adding technology and computers to schools, education will be improved. Critics of this digital revolution have suggested that the Rudd government has not considered the costs of installation and ensuring that the computers work. What must be considered is how professional development can be provided for teachers so that they are able to effectively incorporate the students’ ownership and use of their laptops into school programs. There are numerous issues involving the integration of computers into classroom programs (Johnson, N.F. 2007d) and they are not limited to the rapidly changing nature of technology, inappropriate software design, the contextual nature of learning, and emphasising what must be learnt, not how that will happen (Mishra and Koehler 2006). This practical concern is also reflected in issues surrounding the physical effects of using computers.
Physical Concerns

There are potential physical risks from overexposure to computers: vision, postural and skeletal problems, dangers of radiation, and the displacement of normal physical activities of childhood and adolescence (including playing sport, music, recreational play, interaction with peers, and so on) (Healy 1998). Examples of potential problems are work-related musculoskeletal disorders, children’s use of the mouse (designed for adult hands), ‘computer vision syndrome’ (computer eye strain), intermittent blurring, general eye fatigue, electromagnetic radiation, a sedentary lifestyle, and use of non-ergonomic equipment (see Armstrong and Casement 2000). Capron (2000) discussed ergonomic considerations surrounding computers and warned about possible problems such as a sedentary lifestyle, back problems and repetitive strain injury (RSI), now titled occupational overuse syndrome (OOS). He suggested the following strategies:

- Reduce glare from the computer screen.
- Do not bend your wrists as you type. Forearms should be horizontal.
- Ensure lower back support.
- Place feet firmly on the floor.
- Use zoom on documents to enlarge the text.
- Take regular breaks.
- Keep fingernails short.

Many of these strategies that combat poor posture are common in schools and workplaces. Though Armstrong and Casement (2000, 143) claimed, ‘Computers do have physical effects on those who use them and these effects can be serious and long lasting, if not permanent’, we still remain unsure about the long-term effects of computers within everyday society.

Healy proposed that computer overuse might interfere with cognitive development. She believed, ‘Age-appropriate computer use may help establish some forms of connections, but inappropriate use may also build resistant habits that interfere with academic learning’ (Healy 1998, 133). Healy explained the importance of ‘play’ to young children, which could be displaced by overexposure to computers:

For the young child, movement and physical experience provide the foundation for higher-level cognition through integration of the brain’s sensory association areas, and educators in many cultures make sure to incorporate physical play with formal instruction. Language, foresight, and other hallmarks of cognitive intelligence are connected in the brain through performing rapid movements in sequence and by developing a bodily sense of ‘beat.’ The brain areas responsible for playing the piano, doing needlework or carpentry, forming words into a meaningful sentence, understanding language, or planning a party in advance...
all require specially ordered sequences of movements and thoughts. These find their roots in early object and social play. (Healy 1998, 219–20)

Healy suggested that if computer use replaces these important and essential activities for children’s cognitive and social development that the children of the future would be likely to have poor coordination, retarded motor development and struggle to read (Healy 1998). It is unlikely that the children of our future will only have to communicate through a computer network. It remains to be seen if future generations will need less physical coordination in an ever-increasing digital world. Notwithstanding, it remains that this type of criticism has been levelled at most new technologies. For example, Spender (1995) claimed that in the movement from manuscripts (and scribes) to print (fifteenth century), the physical concerns of excessive reading were believed to include headaches, gout, arthritis, haemorrhoids, asthma, epilepsy and indigestion, to name a few. In addition, when television was introduced, it was believed that television viewing was also a threat to health. Obviously, one can be an inactive couch potato, but the concerns about change in media such as reading and television viewing has not affected public health to the extent anticipated by those sceptics of change.

Neil Postman’s position as a doomster was well documented in Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business (1986). Postman criticised the advent of television and claimed television was not only biased and powerful but, as a representation of public discourse (political, religious, informational and commercial forms of conversation), it influences society (not necessarily for the better), as opposed to the former (and better) influence of the written word. He argued that television was ‘transforming our culture into one vast arena for show business’ (Postman 1986, 80), and that ‘like the brain itself, every technology has an inherent bias. It has within its physical form a predisposition toward being used in certain ways and not others. Only those who know nothing of the history of technology believe that a technology is entirely neutral’ (1986, 84).

Postman’s notion of television becoming the popular epistemology of society was evidenced by the following quotation: ‘Television is our culture’s principal mode of knowing about itself’ (1986, 92). Standards have increased; people demand ‘quality’ and ‘good’ television. There are regulations in place to promote standards and quality. However, not enough people engage in thinking about television and what is worth watching (or thinking about). Perhaps that is why the advent of the internet is positive because more people are able to express opinions and contribute to knowledge and the knowing of ourselves. Society has contributed in the forming of the internet, and the internet contributes to the forming of society, for those who have the ability and are advantaged to have a voice (Brabazon 2008b).
Again, until more empirical research is completed to determine the effects on physical health, and the effects on social relationships (perhaps as a result of more computer interaction than social interaction), we can only speculate about the possible harm inflicted by living life in front of a LCD screen. Many of the criticisms were made in the late 1990s and it is possible to say that most of these prophecies predicted ten or more years ago are not current actualities. Moral panics about new developments will continue in our future. Green and hannan (2007, 15) claimed, ‘When they first emerge almost all new technologies have provoked panic over their potential impact. Debates driven by moral panic on the one side and technological determinism on the other are in stark contrast to the way young people view and use technologies’.

My concerns with the physical effects of living one’s life predominantly in front of a computer screen are evidenced in the stress and tension that tends to be found in my neck and between my shoulder blades. Additionally, the posture I have when stretched out on the couch while writing on my laptop is relatively poor. With the blur of space and time of work and leisure, the focus on digital engagement to suffice our work and leisure, and the stressful demands on our time to succeed, I wonder what the long-term effects of this physical display of continuing stress in my back and neck will mean for me.

**Parental Control**

When do we label everyday practice as high usage? How much is too much and constitutes a move towards obsession, addiction or problematic use? How do parents know what to monitor? Nikken and Jansz (2006) pointed to three different ways of mediating children’s video game playing. These were restrictive mediation, co-playing and active mediation. These are different ways parents can go about monitoring the usage of young people’s interaction with multiple forms of media. Restrictive mediation can include forbidding the use of certain games or practices, as well as gathering information about them. Active mediation includes pointing out and scrutinizing the good and bad features of a game. These two types of mediation are possible courses of action for parents to take up. However, what Nikken and Jansz found was that when parents played the game (co-playing) with their children, the parents did so because they believed there were socio-emotional benefits to be had through their playing, and that the other two types of mediation were used because parents perceived there to be negative behavioural effects of video game playing.

Forbidding children to engage in certain types of activity is one solution, but if one does not know much about the activity, then one is making an ignorant decision. There are benefits in active mediation and jointly seeking out what are the benefits, spinoffs or effects of engaging with a certain type of media, and then
engaging with that for an extended amount of time. I would like to stress that children are capable of knowing what is safe, but one needs to educate them about safety and why it is important.

For both children and adults, there are many decisions one makes when we go online. What to do with emails in our inbox, what articles to view, what hyperlinks to click on, what advertisements to read, what quizzes or polls to fill in, and so on. It is possible to argue that there is a continuous process of developing digital literacy when we are online. The concept of digital literacy, critical literacy and multiliteracies is a huge area of literature that cannot be adequately discussed here. Many people have developed dispositions that include an interest in and capacity to negotiate digital technologies. This may constitute part of what it means to be a contributing citizen in this digital age. Children’s and adults’ involvement in online leisurely activity has benefits for learning and expertise and should not be disparaged. This argument will be unpacked further in Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

What is apparent is that far more people are using the internet positively than there are those who are pathologically addicted to the internet. Consider those whose businesses are enhanced by the internet, and those who only have internet businesses. Communication is enabled, as Hammersley found in 1995:

people can easily communicate with others whom they would normally never meet. Communication costs are low. People can keep in touch with friends with minimal time and financial costs. It allows people to be taken seriously and [be] listened to. It allows people to present a different persona, which may deviate in significant ways from one’s everyday, face-to-face persona. It allows people to be boring about one’s favourite subject(s). (Hammersley 1995, cited in Griffiths 1998, 72)

Caplan (2002) suggested that those people who have low self-esteem, are lonely and prefer online social relationships (as opposed to face-to-face ones) are more likely to be prone to problematic internet use. However, while this is a useful insight, the Internet seems to help socially inhibited people, and as their confidence is built up from online relationships, there is a crossover to face-to-face relationships: ‘The Internet provides a rich environment which includes significantly positive aspects as well as negative ones, and, when used appropriately, the internet may greatly improve the quality of life for its users’ (Amichai-Hamburger and Furnham 2007, 1033).

The social support available on the internet is sometimes not available in one’s biological or real life. What does become concerning is when people’s virtual lives

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When Do We Say ‘Too Much’?

replace the importance of their biological (or real) lives. Consider the phenomena of ‘Second Life’ (Linden Research, Inc 2008) and other online virtual worlds. Second Life allows one to imagine and create a desirable (or preferable) life of one’s own choosing. One’s identity, looks, focus, occupation and friends are all made by choice. The empowerment possible for a person who creates a s econd Life avatar is considerable. There is also the ability to make a living through providing goods and services within s econd l ife.

For many people it remains undesirable to spend a lot of time within second life. I personally do not have the time, nor do I want to spend the time focused on another life when my own life is demanding enough by itself. Yet I am in the enviable position of my life being fulfilling and happy. It is obvious, though, that for people whose lives are unhappy, lonely or miserable, the opportunity to create a life that is happy and fulfilling is a tempting and welcome alternative. It is likely that people with this sort of experience have a propensity to become very attached to their virtual lives. This may be a positive addiction for these people and one could not blame them for seeking to engage in a virtual life preferable to their real lives. This of course could be similar to the concept of the cyborg (see Haraway 1991) whereby a combination of the artificial and natural systems actually is birthed because of the interconnectedness humans have to technology; think how many technologies seem to now be an extension of ourselves (McLuhan and Fiore 1967; McLuhan and Powers 1989). The person with a mobile phone attached to their thumb or ear comes to mind.

Healy (1998) pointed to the possibility of people being socially inept because of their preferred engagement with computers as opposed to people, but it remains that for the majority of people this is not the case, yet may still happen in the future. Griffiths (1998) researched some cases whereby some people were indeed socially inept and physically sick because of their preoccupation with computers, but he also stressed that if Internet addiction does exist, then it is likely to occur with only a very small number of people (Griffiths 1998; Griffiths and Davies 2005). What is not known is how widespread problematic Internet use is. If individuals and families consider what the symptoms of problematic internet use are, and then consider how much they want technologies to be part of their lives, they will be able to decide when too much is too much.

The question must be asked whether it is healthy for anyone to do any activity for an extended amount of time? Subsequently, who determines how much is an extended amount of time? We have to consider whether ten hours, twenty hours, or thirty or more hours per week is too much. The labour movement determined that forty hours a week was enough to spend working for one’s living. But there are many people who work in excess of eighty hours per week. That tends to be thought of positively because that is just what one has to do in order to be successful in their career. There seems to be little status or cultural approval if one
only does their 35–40 hours per week. While we admire those who have healthy lifestyles, it is arguable that western society admires those people who are very committed to their jobs and/or to their voluntary work.

Is anyone esteemed because they relax or take it easy? You may have heard the saying that on their deathbed, no one ever says ‘i wish i spent more time at the office’, yet the mentality stands that if one works hard and does long hours (though not at the expense of one’s relationships with family and friends of course!) then they must be successful. It is easy to see how this mentality pervades other parts of society, and with our obsessive or compulsive focus on doing something well, it is easy to be engulfed in (or captured by the thought of) doing something well or successfully. Therefore, this requires time to do such things. If we take this analogy and cross over to forms of relaxation or entertainment, is it any wonder that people, both young and old, tend to focus on a form of mastery which requires time, experimentation and a high level of motivation (Johnson, N.F. 2007a). When one watches television for long periods of time, the medium is questioned. But if someone watches many hours of sport on television, this is not denigrated to the same degree. When someone spends a lot of time practicing their art, it is esteemed, but when one plays video games it is disdained because it is viewed neither as an art nor as a form of self-expression. However, this is contestable. As James paul Gee has noted, there are many good learning principles evident in the construction of video games (Gee 2003, 2007). Gunter (2005) cites both positive and negative implications for social, physical and psycho-physiological health when one plays video games. There are lot of decisions when playing video games, including the creation of an avatar. The exploration one engages with in such a game could be viewed as self-expression. One’s involvement in an art form (such as dance or visual creation) can be seen as a form of relaxation, yet one’s involvement in playing video games, or browsing the Internet or spending time on Facebook is viewed as unhealthy and on the path to addiction. This form of leisure provides an additional means to relax and have fun.

It must be stressed that use of the internet to engage in cybersex is another moral judgement that needs to be made on the part of the individual. Accessing pornography, gambling and paedophilia is detrimental, and this is where caution must be exercised because of the ease of the internet for people to explore these avenues. It is just not acceptable that this type of caution is exercised to the same degree in regard to moral forms of entertainment and leisure that the internet also supports. Chapter 3 explores the nature of leisure and the development of technology in order to further extend this argument.

Is surfing the Internet and browsing for information about personal interests any less harmful than reading a book? The suggestion of possible addiction is enforced by the permeation of the ongoing understanding that new technologies should be
queried and used with caution. The next chapter will address the components that make up this question regarding the historical development of technology, and how childhood play and leisure has changed over time.
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Chapter 3

Technological Development and Childhood Play:
The Changing Nature of Everyday Leisure

This chapter discusses concerns about the state of childhood as it once was, and whether children are missing out on the ‘good old days’ due to the dominance of technology in western society. The development of technology throughout history is highlighted, which shows how the digital age is a societal development occurring in similar ways to the move from the agricultural age to the industrial age and finally on to the print age.

In this chapter I argue that ‘play’ is closely associated with technology and that the development of play reflects the development of technology. To give a road map for the reader, I will define the concepts of play, recreation and leisure, whilst also discussing the forms of play evident throughout historical ages. I will explain and elaborate on the nature of technology, and claim that the various ‘ages’ throughout history are represented by the technological artefacts, which we can call ‘typology’. I will focus on the idea that the ‘good old days’ of what many considered to be positive forms of childhood play are merely a representation of previous historical ages, and that in this digital age, new forms of play, recreation and leisure are undoubtedly an inevitable consequence of technological development.

Play, Recreation and Leisure

Many people think that play is what young children do, and indeed, play is an important part of the development of the child and helps one to know about children’s learning, interests and curiosity (Degotardi 2005). In The Matrix Ate My Baby, Gibbons (2007) discussed and drew attention to the nexus between technology and play, asking critical questions about young children’s experiences of technology. Gibbons highlighted the purpose of play, the nature of play, and the role of technology and its expectations of children. He suggested that certain expectations become the norm because of what governs the child and the adult in regards to their knowledge of the nature and purpose of children and play. As ‘play has many meanings and many purposes’ (Gibbons 2007, xvii), his monograph is an excellent critique to help one reflect on play within early childhood in formal
and informal settings. However, Dockett and Lambert (1996, 200) claimed play occurs throughout our lives:

play does not cease as a learning medium at the arrival of a certain age. Children continue to play through primary school. Adolescents play – and adults play as well. Though time allocations for play tend to be more clearly defined in the early childhood years, individual and group play continues throughout life. play enables learners to work through their ideas, to try out newly acquired skills and to explore alternatives. Such undertakings enable learners, regardless of age, to use play as part of their work and to work during their play.

Though play can be unstructured, it can also be structured, and can be active or passive. Adults may engage in play as part of their work (Kraus 1984). Play can be discretionary, agreeable and trivial, but can also involve acute focus, vexation and uncertainty. What appears to be play for one person may be considered boring for another (Torkildsen 1986). Often play happens because of the need to seek arousal or stimulus (Torkildsen 1986).

Recreation includes many forms of play but also encompasses non-playlike activities. it is usually goal-oriented or community-oriented, whereas play may not be. Recreation comes under the umbrella of leisure and is separate or contrasting from work (Kraus 1984; Torkildsen 1986) and helps us to be restored to fulfil our working duties:

historically, the term recreation stems from the latin word recreatio, meaning that which refreshes or restores. in its traditional sense, recreation has been regarded as a period of light and restful activity, voluntarily chosen, which restores one for heavy, obligatory activity, or work. (Kraus 1984, 35)

Leisure is discretionary, non-obligated time spent out of work and domestic obligations. it is unlimited and may provide challenging activity, accomplishment and pleasure (Kraus 1984). Active leisure includes physical and mental exertion and can include walking, yoga, kickboxing and football. However, active leisure can also include playing chess or painting a picture which requires mental effort but little physical effort. interestingly, active leisure and recreation can overlap. Passive leisure includes that which does not require physical and mental exertion. These include watching movies or television, or playing slot machines. All of these types of leisure constitute relaxation and suit different people. James Murphy (1981) listed different forms of leisure including: playing and watching popular sports, outdoor recreation including boating, hunting, fishing and camping, travel and tourism, commercial entertainment and cultural activity, gambling and technology-based activities.
Richard Kraus (1984) demarcated the differences between play, recreation and leisure: ‘Play can occur during work or leisure, whereas recreation takes place only during leisure’ (Kraus 1984, 48). George Torkildsen (1986) discussed how the lines between play, recreation and leisure have become blurred due to their integration and interrelation. He highlighted various similarities and differences between the three. This non-demarcation of play, recreation and leisure is not the focus of this chapter, but it is important to realize that leisure is multifaceted.

In each age, there are practices that are introduced and that come to be accepted. Some of these practices help to define the age, and some of these artefacts comprise the age. I now offer a brief review of the history of play, recreation and leisure.

Prehistoric Play, Recreation and Leisure

The era of prehistoric play includes the primitive societies of the Neolithic (or Stone Age), the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. Kraus (1984, 53) claimed that in primitive societies, work was varied and creative, ‘rather than a specialized task demanding a narrow aspect of the worker’s skill, as in modern industry’. This suggests that in modern industry there is a notable need for leisure, recreation and play because some occupations are repetitive. Kraus (1984, 35) claimed, ‘A modern, holistic view of work and recreation would be that both have the potential for being pleasant, rewarding, and creative, and that both may represent serious forms of personal involvement and deep commitment’. However, as prehistoric societies grew more complex, they did develop specialist functions and, as the ruling classes developed, they also developed time for leisure (Kraus 1984). For children, play was focused on games, contests and rituals that were designed to prepare them for adulthood.

As the Bronze Age was a period where bronze was the main technology being used, and developed, archaeologists often use these finds to determine dates. Turney (2006, 65) claimed the ‘evolution of artefact style can date finds: a technique called “typology”’. As we can classify archaeological finds according to prehistoric ages, it may be possible to associate the technology found in those eras with the type of play, recreation or leisure that predominated. Though this chapter does not focus on qualifying this statement, I do suggest that the print age and digital age do indeed link the predominant technology with prime forms of play.

Ancient Play, Recreation and Leisure

In ancient civilizations such as Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia, Israel, Greece and Rome, there were common forms of play which reflected each age and the type of technology available. In ancient Egypt, sports were considered to be purposeful for
both education and recreation. The upper classes enjoyed spectating, and ‘music, drama, and dance were forms of religious worship as well as social entertainment’ (Kraus 1984, 57).

in ancient Assyria and Babylonia, this continued, but sports such as boxing, wrestling, archery and hunting became popular. Banquets and feasting were a common pastime. in ancient israel, though music and dancing were an important part of religion and recreation, certain dancing became associated with worldly or sacrilegious dance, condemned by the ancient Jews (Kraus 1984).

Ancient Greece saw the advent of philosophy. Greek philosophers began to make distinctions between work and leisure (Torkildsen 1986). Well-born aristocrats engaged in both leisure and recreation that comprised athletics, art, philosophy and religious festivals. The importance of leisure and recreation as a part of education was evident:

Young children enjoyed toys, dolls, carts, skip ropes, kites, and seesaws. When boys reached the age of seven, they were enrolled in schools in which gymnastics and music were primary elements. They were intensively instructed in running and leaping, wrestling, throwing the javelin and discus, dancing (taught as a form of military drill), boxing, swimming, and ball games. (Kraus 1984, 59)

In ancient Rome, play and sport were valued for their practical benefits, in wide contrast to the Athenians who treasured the cultural, aesthetic and spiritual value of play. Kraus (1984, 61) stated, ‘Young Roman children had toy carts, houses, dolls, hobby-horses, stilts, and tops, and engaged in many sports and games. Young boys were taught various sports and exercises such as running and jumping, sword and spear play, wrestling, swimming, and horseback riding.’ However, the downfall of ancient Rome occurred as its citizens grew ‘physically weak and spiritually corrupt’ (Kraus 1984, 63). Ancient Rome was unable to deal with too much leisure and not enough work, and it began to decline (Torkildsen 1986). They were corrupted with cruelty; one outworking of this was the persecution of Christians, possibly considered to be an additional leisurely pastime.

Agricultural Age: Play, Recreation and Leisure

The agricultural age included the Dark and Middle Ages throughout the fifth to fifteenth centuries. During this time, many aspects of Roman life were forbidden as a reaction to Roman decadence. fanatical asceticism – the ‘idea of salvation through masochistic self-deprivation’ (Kraus 1984, 64) – grew in popularity. hunting was the lofty pursuit for noblemen. othertimes included games, gambling, music, dance, sports and jousting. Many travelled for the purpose of sightseeing, as well as attending religious events, fairs and parades. The end of the
agricultural age was heavily influenced by the invention of the printing press in the 1430s by Johann Gutenburg. Its importance is rivalled by few other inventions, because of the social, political and scientific change experienced by Europe after its introduction.

The Renaissance Period (fourteenth to seventeenth centuries) was a significant time of development and reformation. Aided by the printing press, music and literature swept through Europe. As there was an increasing interest in play as popular entertainment and as a medium of education, music, dance, theatre and opera all became professionalized. Parks and recreation areas were developed, and some private estates were opened to the public to help facilitate the development of these public spaces. Restrictions to sport such as football and tennis and who could play them began to be enforced. However, the Protestant reform evident in this time (Martin Luther, John Knox and John Calvin) tended to emphasise solemnity and austerity rather than dancing, singing, festivals, idleness and gluttony. It was unlawful to engage in recreation on Sundays and other holy days up until King James I issued a declaration on lawful sports in 1618 to support lawful recreation (Kraus 1984). Kraus (1984) and Murphy (1981) reinforced the influence of the Protestant work ethic on our modern understanding of play, recreation and leisure:

For centuries, the western world has given full allegiance to the so-called Protestant work ethic. In essence, this value system saw work and economic productivity as the dominant force in national life; it was closely tied to religion in that work and worship were seen as spiritually linked. Play and leisure were distrusted and discouraged – at first through condemnation of idleness during the colonial era and later by minimizing their values and seeing them as potential evils. Indeed, when the recreation movement got under way in the United States and Canada, to a great degree it was based on the fear that the new leisure of the working class might simply be used in debauchery, drunkenness, and other forms of antisocial pursuits. (Kraus 1984, 10)

As people have chosen to ignore or moderate the traditional Protestant beliefs about leisure, there has been more acceptance of pleasure, which has resulted in an increase in discretionary time as well as an increase in the choice and possibilities for leisure (Murphy 1981).

**Industrial Play, Recreation and Leisure**

The revolution in agriculture, manufacturing and transportation marked the industrial revolution in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There became little time for leisure as extensive holidays provided in previous ages disappeared whilst the factories now demanded long hours of relentless labour (Kraus 1984).
As a result of the labour union movement to regulate industry’s abuse of workers, the international celebration of Labour Day, or May Day, was established by different countries throughout the seventeenth century. The eight-hour-day movement that brought this about advocated eight hours for work, eight hours for recreation and eight hours for rest.

The twenty-first century now provides countless options to pursue play, recreation and leisure, and technology has been shaped and has shaped many of our leisurely pursuits. As we have reviewed the historical development of leisure, I now focus on what constitutes technology and how it has developed throughout history.

What is Technology?

Defining technology is problematic because the domain that this category denotes is highly dependent on the context in which the term is used. Thordike and Barnhart Dictionary (1983, 1129) gave four definitions of ‘technology’:

- The use of scientific knowledge to control physical objects and forces;
- The entire sum of practical methods for controlling physical objects and forces;
- Any method for carrying out a process involving physical objects and forces; and,
- Science of the mechanical and industrial arts.

However, social scientists and sociologists extend their definition of technology to ‘refer to all making of material artefacts, the objects made, their use, together with their intellectual and social contexts’ (Mitcham 1978, 231). Hacker (1989) defined technology as ‘the organization of material and energy to accomplish work’ (5) as well as ‘machines and the social relations’ (7). The contexts and purposes for which technologies are designed are important and give meaning to the term ‘technology’. Existing social and economic power relations determine which technologies are designed and valued, who uses them and to what purpose. As a social scientist, the definitions above (given by Mitcham and Hacker) are applicable to what I mean when I use the word ‘technology’. Another point I wish to highlight is that technology is not neutral and is gendered, of which I now explain.

Technology is Gendered

A feminist and sociological perspective regarding technology claims that, ‘Technology is both a source and a consequence of gendered relations’ (Wajcman 2004, 7; see also Hacker 1989). These gendered relations are argued to be
‘materialized in technology, and masculinity and femininity in turn acquire their meaning and character through their enrolment and embeddedness in working machines’ (Wajcman 2004, 107).

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to offer a comprehensive review of the gendered nature of technology, I make the following points I consider important in this brief review. Technologies are socially shaped (Hacker 1989; Wajcman 2004; Webster 1996) by cultural structures, processes and constructs. They are represented in part by physical artefacts, machines and the mechanical (Hacker 1989), and include human activities and know-how (Webster 1996), as well as social relations (Hacker 1989). Wajcman (2004, 107) claimed, ‘Technological change is a contingent and heterogeneous process in which technology and society are mutually constituted’ as they seamlessly evolve and are negotiated and struggled over (Webster 1996). When new artefacts arrive in a workplace, they are not gender-neutral as they quickly acquire a gender by ‘association with its user or its purpose’ (Cockburn 1985, cited in Webster, 1996, 58) and new artefacts are gendered by the expected tasks and potential of their producers and proprietors (Webster 1996).

From this point of view, it is a myth to say that the computer (as a technological artefact) is neutral (Bromley 1998; Woodfield 2000) as Bromley (1998, 15) highlighted that, ‘it really should come as no surprise if information technologies turn out to benefit primarily the most powerful actors in society’. Specifically regarding computing, Webster (1996, 9) claimed, “Computing” … is not only taken to mean computers as artefacts, but also the expertise and knowledge, culture and values of the computing profession, and the gender divisions and gender relations involved in the production of hardware and software’. Therefore, we can state that technology is not neutral (Postman 1986). If technology is gendered (de castell and Bryson 1998; Green 2001; Littleton and Hoyes 2002; Lynch, Leder and Forgasz 2001; Webster 1996), then technology can perpetuate the dominance of hegemony (Millar 1998). In the development of technology, it is appropriate that we now turn to exploring medium theory, professed to be evident in the development of human civilization.

Medium Theory

In the late 1950s and 1960s, Marshall McLuhan (1911–80) was concerned with the ways in which communication technologies extended the human senses and how it changed what it meant to be a human being in the world (McLuhan 1964). McLuhan saw communication media as an extension of the human body. This way of understanding technology is known as medium theory. For example, clothing is an extension of our skin, the telephone is an extension of our ears, a wheel is an extension of our feet and body, and nowadays, the computer (or the system configuration we use) is an extension of our personalities (Cuthell 2002). The
medium of computers has changed our lives not because of its content but because of how it has affected our culture and behaviour. McLuhan (1964) believed media affected our whole social and psychic complex, with the consequence that how we are affected in our culture and behaviour as a result of any new medium is much more significant than the actual media itself.

Medium theorists have ‘divided history into stages marked by the dominant mode of communication:

- The spoken word in oral cultures,
- The written word in scribal cultures,
- The printed word in print cultures and
- The various electronic means of communicating in electronic, or more recently, digital cultures’ (Lynch 2002).

The most emphasised sense in an oral culture would be hearing, leading to an acoustic logic (McLuhan and Leonard 1967). This has also been referred to as a tribal logic, because of the interdependency of tribal members on each other; for example, tribe members had to speak and listen to each other, drawing mostly on their sense of hearing as an essential part of their lives, necessary for survival. In the nascent stage of scribal cultures, papyrus (manuscripts) was used so narratives and history could be recorded. Tribal members became less dependent on one another. This was the beginning of the emphasis on the visual sense, fully realized after the advent of the printing press (c. fifteenth century) which hailed the arrival of the print culture. McLuhan (1964, 96) claimed, ‘phonetic writing translated tribal man into a visual world’. In being able to refer to a text, or an author, an individual could have independent thoughts and gain independent knowledge, without having to rely on and trust other members of the tribe.

McLuhan believed, with the advent of electronic media, we would return to an acoustic logic that ‘recalls the structures and roles of a tribal village, except that electronic circuitry (instead of voice) encouraged the qualities of the tribe on a global scale’ (Lynch 2002). McLuhan termed the new society a global village, in which retribalisation was to occur. He believed the instantaneousness of electronic communication would be similar to the dependence and necessity of oral communication between tribe members. In addition, as all village citizens had equal access to all public information (Levinson 1999), the Internet enables us to each have equal access to all public information. Levinson (1999, 175) argued that McLuhan’s ‘notion of the global village is ... an attempt to understand the new world of electronic media via reference to the older world of villages’.

Many medium theorists argue that the print culture promoted hierarchical relations of power and facilitated centralized control. Digital culture and cyberspace opens up egalitarian opportunities for individuals, regardless of status.
The immediate contact possible between individuals in cyberspace brings into effect a form of the tribal culture present before the development of text. This perspective sees the growing dominance of digital technologies as an opportunity for liberation rather than as a mechanism for control and the reproduction of traditional power relations.

Steven Johnson (2005, 176) showed how we tend to be suspicious of new developments:

When your culture revolves exclusively around books for hundreds of years, you can’t detect the subtle ways in which the typographic universe alters your assumptions. But if you switch from cinema to radio to television in the course of a lifetime, the effects of the different media become apparent to you, because you have something to measure them against.

The change of technologies is so fast that we are unable to explore the effects of past developments because new ones are already in place. Tomorrow’s technology is here today. Do we really need these new ‘advances’? What we do need to do is question whether these artefacts are in fact advancing anything.

Yoon (1996, 171) claimed popular public discourse to advocate individuals and institutions (both public and private) should ‘adopt and learn about computers in order to take advantage of convenient services and to modernize their life styles’. This discourse positions people as passive, in that they take up technologies because they have been ‘told to’, but as Yoon (1996, 177) explained, there are stronger influences as arguably technology and power are so interrelated that, ‘one can detect the presence of technological power even when people voluntarily use and enjoy the benefits of technology’. Therefore, as humans engage in the everyday use of technology, they also engage in the power associated with that technology, whether consciously or subconsciously. Yoon (1996, 176) argued that this resulted because technology, power and knowledge were intertwined:

Technology is normalized in everyday life, including the workplace, home and public places, to the extent that it has become a part of one’s life style and thinking process. But as part of life style and thought, technology thus shapes what counts as ‘knowledge’ in a society. In turn, this ‘knowledge’ plays an important role in consolidating power in the contemporary technological society. Thus, knowledge and power are so closely connected to one another that these two cannot be discussed separately.

Green (2001, 175) believed that ‘for an object or a technology to be accepted, it has to be found a space and assume a function’. Therefore, if the computer becomes part of the everyday leisure of a household, it may be accepted as part of
the intersections between ‘technology, personal consumption and the construction of identity’ (Green 2001, 174). This is supported by Stepulevage (1999, 63) who stated ‘everyday experiences serve as sites for constituting our relations with ic Ts’ (information and communication technologies). Through everyday experiences with ic Ts, the construction of identity in relation to technology can be negotiated (Green 2001).

New Forms of Play, Recreation and Leisure

Technology has created more opportunity for play, recreation, and leisure through reducing the amount of time required to conduct manual tasks. Technology has also been able to develop new forms of play through new products and recreational opportunities (Murphy 1981).

The four phases of civilization (Lynch 2002) – oral, scribal, print, digital – can be found throughout prehistoric civilizations, ancient civilizations, the Middle Ages, the renaissance period, the industrial revolution and, more recently, in the technological or information revolution of which we find ourselves presently positioned. The prehistoric or primitive civilizations would be classified as oral cultures. The ancient societies were primarily acoustic cultures, though evidence of scribes copying documents by hand was widespread. However, the development of papyrus, the written alphabet, and the capacity to read and write was evident in some parts of the world, but not in all. The print age overlaps with the industrial age and in some parts of the world with the renaissance period, but the main technology or artefact of the print age was the book. As part of our play, leisure and recreation, we have read books throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. No longer is it a privilege to read as it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (in western societies).\(^1\) The digital age is constituted by the development of computers. We can call the digital age the electronic age, the information age or a computer-based society (Capron 2000). Capron claimed that the remarkable thing about the computer age is that ‘we have leapfrogged through four generations of technology in about 40 years’ (2000, 537). The development of the vacuum tube and the transistor in the 1950s, the integrated circuit in the 1960s and the microprocessor in the 1970s has meant an incredible shift in the way our lives are conducted. The exponential developments in speed, reliability and storage capability has effected incredible change to our everyday lives and leisure, which the original founders (Charles Babbage and Ada Lovelace) were unlikely to have considered.

\(^1\) I acknowledge that many people throughout the world in 2008 are unable to read and their lives are relatively unaffected by the advent of the printing press.
In the history of play, the importance of public space in the forms of parks and recreational spaces has become a preoccupation for many people. Dr Karen Malone is the Asia-Pacific Director of UNESCO’s Growing Up In Cities Project, and regional facilitator of unicef’s child-friendly cities initiative, and has researched the development of child-friendly cities that empower children to research and instigate change in their cities. This includes the development of public, child-friendly spaces. Many have focused on this kind of innovation because of the lack of spaces, or rather of safe spaces. Jenkins (1998) discussed how the lack of spaces beside urban, high-rise apartments meant that his son had nowhere to play. When told to ‘go outside and play’, his 11-year-old son would reply, ‘Where?’ and rightfully so. There are of course those who avidly focus on the need to create safe, physical spaces for play especially within urban environments (casey 2007; Malone 2002, 2004, 2006). Casey (2007, 6) claimed,

The constraints and fears that limit children’s opportunities for play, particularly outdoors, deprive children of essential childhood experiences and opportunities – opportunities to develop friendships and negotiate relationships; opportunities to grapple with the full gamut of emotions including those such as jealousy, boredom or anger, as well as happiness and satisfaction; opportunities to take risks, have adventures and misadventures; to have contact with nature and the environment.

Nothing is like the ‘real’ thing, but for some young people, the ‘real’ thing is not available in their environment.

Notably, Henry Jenkins discussed how many of the places he frequented as a boy were gendered, just as many literary texts were gendered, which seemed to perpetuate the understanding that boys play outside and get dirty whereas girls should play with dolls and read. For instance, he labelled the following as typical boys’ books: Huckleberry Finn, Treasure Island, The Black Stallion, The Jungle Book, the themes of which he claimed were evident in video games (action, adventure, fighting for one’s life). In comparison, ‘girls books’ like Little Women, The Secret Garden and Anne of Green Gables tend to accept family and domestic obligations, secrets and romance, and are quiet and contemplative. As a child, I read all of these titles, and was not concerned with whether they were considered girls’ or boys’ books. However, Jenkins advocated that video games, while not an ideal replacement for ‘going outside and playing’, provided less-gendered spaces: ‘Video games did not make backyard play spaces disappear; rather, they offer children some way to respond to domestic confinement’ (Jenkins 1998, 266).

Jenkins suggested that perhaps the video game culture appealed more to boys because of the typical nature of boys’ play. What is evident is that within the genre of video/computer games, exploration and the formation of identities can occur in a safe space (though not all games are appropriate spaces) (Bullen and Kenway
The Multiplicities of Internet Addiction

2002; Jenkins 1998; Johnson, N.F. 2007b; Kenway and Bullen 2001). So while providing child-friendly, public spaces is appropriate, there needs to be focus on how these spaces do not promote the gendered ideas of boys having more mobility and range in the public sphere, while relegating girls to the private sphere.

Predictions of Leisure in the Digital Age

Throughout history, people have questioned developments of new technologies. People question change, question improvement and question innovation. But sometimes people do not ask the right questions at the right time. Change happens. Shift happens. What are the effects and implications of implementing/taking on this new technology? Not enough people have questioned the new developments. Many people have developed new technologies in order to make money, without considering what the impact or effect of the technology will be, let alone whether a new technology is needed. In 1985, Cynthia Cockburn talked about how technological artefacts were developed for different reasons other than what they are intended, including being developed for ‘markets’/audiences other than who is targeted (see Webster 1996).

In 1981, Murphy discussed two possible scenarios for post-industrial society in North America. One, a *continued-growth state* would be represented by the basic goals that have dominated the industrial era (e.g. material progress, individualism, freedom of enterprise, few restraints on capital accumulation, social responsibility being mainly the concern of government rather than other institutions). These larger goals have been approached through a set of fundamental subgoals (e.g. efficiency, productivity, material wealth, continual growth of production, of consumption, and of technological and manipulative power). They have resulted in processes and states characterized by division of labor, specialization, cybernation, stimulated consumption, planned obsolescence, private exploitation of resources held in common. Some people will argue that this scenario will continue to counteract human ends, represented by enriching work roles, resource conversation, environmental enhancement, equitable sharing of the world’s resources. Industrializing the production of goods and services has resulted in the creation of an insatiable consumer demand. (Murphy 1981, 194)

The second, a *steady-state society*, would result in a movement toward elected simplicity, lesser consumption, focus on community and nature, and quality work experiences. This state of society would be aligned with a balanced perspective on quality of life, use of technology and the role of human institutions (Murphy 1981). Murphy referred to self-generated forms of leisure evident in this steady-state society. These included: daydreams, fantasy, reflection requiring only peace,
quiet, and one’s imagination (Murphy 1981). The entertainment of friends and interaction with acquaintances provide sources of stimulation and social feedback resulting from these interpersonal relations. This is evident in online interaction.

The perceptive prediction of our future fate made by Murphy in 1981, has made me acutely aware of what western society has become in the twenty-first century. Murphy predicted that should the continued-growth state of society occur without consideration of the steady-state society, this would result in ‘narcissistic behavior’ (Murphy 1981, 198), the inability to adapt to new energy sources, ‘conspicuous leisure, a life style representative of a consumption-convenience ethic’ (199), and total computerization. It seems that many western cultures err on the side of the continued-growth state. It is interesting that narcissism and consumption are aligned with total computerization. All of Murphy’s predictions are considered to be negative, and it is hard to disagree. Total computerization will not happen without detrimental effects. In our trajectory towards this prediction, there are many things we should consider when we embrace digital technologies. These effects are not all detrimental, but they are life changing. Our lives are so different compared to before when we did not have our own personal computers. The everyday use of computers and the internet as one form of leisure (including play and recreation) arguably overlap both of the continued-growth state and steady-state societies. We each have to decide when our take up of digital technologies is enough, and resist total computerization based on our ideas and beliefs of what practices of leisure, work and family should be upheld, and what digital practices we do not wish to take up in the future. This means we need to carefully consider the construction of the steady-state society and challenge the almost imperceptible and seemingly inexorable encroachment of the continued-growth society in the western world.

So what forms of play, recreation and leisure do we engage with in this digital age?

- Watching television.
- Playing video/computer games.
- Internet browsing regarding interests, hobbies, entertainment, current affairs and sport.
- Access to electronic books.
- Massive multiplayer online role-playing games (MMPORGs).
- Online social networking with friends and special interest groups.
- Online shopping.
- Living virtual lives (for example, Second Life).
- Instant messaging.

Some of the forms of leisure (including play and recreation) in the print age are still prevalent in today’s digital age – movies, sport, television, shopping (recreation).
However, a distinct change in the forms of leisure evident now is that many of them are forms of learning and develop expertise. Later chapters will elucidate this claim.

Stern’s (2007) eye-opening monograph into the world of instant messaging (IM) as a site for the construction of one’s identity also demonstrates how IM (which consumes a significant amount of young people’s everyday practice) is a form of leisure. It is leisure that is significant because teenagers are communicating with their friends. They are socializing in cyberspace and have everyday cyberrelations with their friends who in many instances are actual, real-life friends they see at school or on the weekends.

Steven Johnson (2005, 149) claimed that our fluid intelligence (g) was being developed through the increase of our leisure time spent interacting with digital media and technologies that force us to ‘fill in and lean forward’ – another way of saying that modern, popular media tends to be interactive and constitute active leisure. Johnson (no relation to this author) claimed that narratives evident in television especially have increased in complexity and are multi-threaded. This means that we need to make sense of what is going on and, therefore, should no longer be considered as just passive recipients of certain television genres.

Engagement with digital technologies and media constitutes many forms of play, recreation and leisure in this digital age, whether the practice overlaps the continued-growth state or steady-state of society. Being avidly involved in leisurely activity that also has benefits for learning and expertise should not be disparaged just because ‘it’s not what we used to do before in the good, old days’.
This chapter offers a brief introduction to Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice and some of his key concepts. As an international influence in sociology as well as many other fields including anthropology, philosophy, education and science, Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) is best known for his book entitled, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984). I do not claim that this is an exhaustive or authoritative chapter on Bourdieu, as many people have written whole books, or whole chapters on each of the notions introduced in this chapter. Various people recommend ‘how to read Bourdieu’ and what to read first, however, if one has a basic understanding of philosophy and sociology, they are likely to have a higher level of readiness, as opposed to someone who has never studied those fields.¹ For those familiar with Bourdieu, I advise you to skip to the next chapter. For those who are unfamiliar with Bourdieu, I acknowledge that you may not have a comfortable grasp of the concepts by the end of this chapter as one chapter does not do this topic justice, but hopefully this text will give you a taste of the complexity of Bourdieu’s writings.

Bourdieu’s formula for studying social practice was written as \([(h abitus) (capital)] + field = practice\) (Bourdieu 1984, 101). I will explain each of these terms in turn – *habitus*, *field* and *capital*.

**Habitus**

*Habitus* is that which is written on our bodies. The embodied way of life that constitutes each of us as individuals and our place as part of a group (social class, gender, age, able-bodied or not) shapes our future actions just as we have been shaped by our previous history. ‘*Habitus* is that presence of the past in the present which makes possible the presence in the present of the forth-coming’ (Bourdieu 2000, 210). Habitus has to do with how one perceives truth and how one understands reality. Our values, beliefs, tastes, habits and patterns of action all constitute our *habitus*. Who we are, is determined by what we have been, which drives what we will be in the future. The term ‘*habitus*’ is used to explain the dispositions that influence individuals to become who they are, and yet also includes the conditions of existence (Bourdieu 1990) which are displayed every day in their relations to

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society in and through individual activities. habitus explains how the body is present in the social world as well as the social world being present in the body (Reay 2004). It shapes and produces our actions (Adkins 2004; Nash 1999) but is constituted by a system of our dispositions (Bourdieu 1998) which have influenced what we were, who we are and who we become.

Our dispositions include the ways we are disposed to act and the preferences we have to engage with animate and inanimate objects. Dispositions have been formed by our upbringing and life experiences and continue to inform our future choices, engagement and actions. Dispositions include habits, beliefs, values, tastes (Reed-Danahay 2005), bodily postures, feelings and thoughts that Bourdieu argued were socially constructed (Bourdieu 2000). Dispositions are formed by history; they are made, not inherent, and they are inculcated from the past into the present (Bourdieu 1990). By inherent and inculcated, I mean that the social agent’s dispositions are embodied and internalized in the social agent’s view of the world, and in ways of moving and acting in the world. The inculcation of dispositions (Bourdieu 2001) happens throughout childhood as children watch and listen (and physically experience their surroundings, environment and relationships). Therefore the habitus those children are surrounded by (predominantly their family) becomes part of their own habitus. Lovell (2000, 12) claimed that ‘Habitus names the characteristic dispositions of the social subject. it is indicated in the bearing of the body (“hexis”), and in deeply ingrained habits of behaviour, feeling, thought’. Bourdieu referred to the general nature of societal habitus but, as habitus is multi-layered (Reay 2004), he claimed dispositions were more specific at the individual level.

As habitus is a product of history (Bourdieu 2000), which in turn produces more history (Bourdieu 1990), in addressing the key research questions, this study examined the system of dispositions (Bourdieu 1990) of each participant in the field of home computer use for leisure, which is where their technological expertise had been constructed, developed and established.

In terms of understanding Bourdieu’s epistemology in reference to habitus, the following quotation demonstrates a relationship with the world and an exposure to the world that constitutes knowledge, which in turn enables an agent to be oriented towards that knowledge:

Habitus, a particular but constant way of entering into a relationship with the world which contains a knowledge enabling it to anticipate the course of the world, is immediately present, without any objectifying distance, in the world and the ‘forth-coming’ [l’a venir] that it contains (which distinguishes it from a mens momentanea without history). Exposed to the world, to sensation, feeling, suffering, etc. in other words engaged in the world, in play and at stake in the world, the body (well) disposed towards the world is, to the same extent, oriented
towards the world and what immediately presents itself there to be seen, felt and expected: it is capable of mastering it by providing an adequate response, having a hold on it, using it (and not decoding it) as an instrument that is ‘well in hand’ (in the terms of Heidegger’s famous analysis) and which, never considered as such, is run through, as if it were transparent, by the task that it enables the agent to perform and towards which it is oriented. (Bourdieu 2000, 142)

The evidence of habitus can at times be obvious but can be obscure.

it is pertinent that I explicate the importance of power to Bourdieu’s theory in the construct of habitus – something that Woodfield (2000, 153) clearly described:

Habitus plays a significant part in the attempt by one group to gain, and/or maintain, power over another. it both produces and expresses hierarchical difference, and with expression comes reinforcement. indeed, the manifestations of different dispositions are functions of symbolic power struggles between those occupying distinct social spaces and possessing concomitant sets of divergent interests; these symbolic struggles are in turn functions of struggles over material resources.

Woodfield (2000) explained this outworking of habitus and power by the following example: when new members of a dominant group are socialized, an individual has either the ‘right’ disposition(s) or has been given the ‘right’ disposition(s) so that the new members appear to be selected because they already had the required qualities.

habitus enables the social practice to be observed in one’s life trajectory (therefore what I have examined in the lives of the participants). Hodkinson (1998, 97) relates how life trajectory and habitus interrelate:

From childhood, young people amass conceptual structures (schemata) which serve as tools for understanding aspects of their experiences (rumelhart, 1980). A schema structures what a person knows of the world, by filtering out ‘irrelevances’ and allowing sense to be made of partial information. in this way, two lights seen from a car in the dark can be turned into a cat or an approaching vehicle. A repertoire of schemata contributes to the dispositions that make up habitus. As new experiences are gained, schemata are modified and developed and as they change so does what is recognized in the surrounding world. in this interactive way, the life history of the individual shapes and is shaped by his/her common sense experience. in choosing any action an individual uses his/her own dispositions. We finally conclude that no one can step outside such personal development and therefore decision-making can never be context free.
An example of habitus is a churchgoer who through their church attendance learns the dispositions and practices of that church, and therefore in their acceptance of the ‘structured structures’ (Bourdieu 1990, 53) s/he becomes part of the ‘structuring structures’ (Bourdieu 1990, 53), all of which constitute the social practice considered appropriate by the church as a group. Bourdieu (1990) referred to the systematic social order that takes advantage of the body’s disposition to memorize states of being in great collective ceremonies and the like, which then can be reactivated through the body’s capacity to act in ways specific to such occasions. Therefore the social order recreates the social order. Though the field is likely to remain the same in each church, as a result of the similar negotiation of habitus and capital by those in the field, a comparable social practice would be exhibited.

For the purpose of this book I will define habitus as internalised principles resulting from one’s upbringing (structured structures) that result in an agent’s action and view of the world, comprising dispositions that reflect the ongoing construction of an agent’s social position (structuring structures) (Bourdieu 1971).

**Criticisms of Habitus**

One criticism of Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is that it appears to limit an individual to reproduce only what they know, therefore reducing and limiting their ability to act on the world. In other words, the concept of habitus has been criticised as being overly deterministic (Lovell 2000), reflecting a lack of agency. Agency has been defined as ‘the idea that individuals are equipped with the ability to understand and control their own actions, regardless of the circumstances of their lives’ (Webb, Schirato and Danaher 2002, ix). Reay (2004, 434–5) challenged this criticism and argued: ‘While habitus reflects the social position in which it was constructed, it also carries within it the genesis of new creative responses that are capable of transcending the social conditions in which it was produced’.

Bourdieu himself grew up in a poor, rural, farming community (see Reed-Danahay 2005), but was able to negotiate a new field of academe. However, problems resulted from this, as his former acquaintances rejected him because of his actions in moving out of what he knew and out of what they knew (peasant farming). He referred to himself as a ‘class defector’ (Reed-Danahay 2005, 27).

I acknowledge that the concept of habitus is contestable and still heavily debated in current academic circles (see Nash 1999; Robbins 1998). The following quotations illustrate this ongoing debate:

Bourdieu’s ‘formal rival in France, Alain Touraine (2002: 103; Reed-Danahay’s translation), wrote in an essay assessing Bourdieu’s work after his death that his strongest thesis, that of the habitus, “was one of the great questions of
Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice

Bourdieu was outraged at ‘those who did not understand that his theories could be liberating for those who seriously listened to them. He felt he had been misunderstood (by what he called ‘fast readings’ of his work) to imply that resistance was impossible and that social life is determined by the structures of domination; at the same time, he felt misunderstood by those, alternatively, who thought his work implied a theory of rational action, to which he was adamantly opposed’. (Reed-Danahay 2005, 17)

Michael Grenfell (2006) claimed that, after habitus as a basic concept was first introduced in the 1950s, Bourdieu developed and extended the concept substantially, yet simplistic understandings seemed to prevail. This occurred despite the continuing maturation of his conceptual theory. This highlights that Bourdieu himself did not see the concept of habitus as deterministic, but more as a means for helping to understand and explain the logic of practice. As people continue to employ Bourdieu’s theory of practice in their writings and data analysis, it is evident that new texts continue to complement and extend Bourdieu’s theory.

The concept of habitus is fundamentally connected to the field within which habitus is developed. Grenfell and James (1998, 14) used the useful image of ‘fish in water’ to describe the mutually constitutive nature of habitus and field. As the concepts are based on ‘identical generating principles and … structural homologies between the two’ (Grenfell and James 1998, 16), it is appropriate that I explain next the concept of field.

Field

Bourdieu (1992, 72–3) defined a field as a ‘configuration of relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon the occupants, agents or institutions’. A field is Bourdieu’s metaphor for representing sites of cultural practice (Webb, Schirato and Danaher 2002). One example is the field of education, which encompasses everything relating to schooling of all ages. There are many smaller fields within this field such as tertiary education, distance education, vocational education and early childhood education. In addition, some fields have more power than other fields. Within this field, there are fields that stretch across each of these such as educational leadership, educational policy and curriculum. However, the curriculum of tertiary education can function as a sub-field of education. One has to learn the terms of discourse, the accepted practice within the field, and how to behave (accepted or acceptable dispositions) in each field.
Habitus and field only function in relation to each other and can be described as a fish (habitus) in water (field) (Grenfell and James 1998, 2004). To take this point further, Grenfell (1998, 87) claimed ‘Habitus brings with it field and field the notion of habitus’. The conventions and organization within a field determine the appropriate discourses and activities that are used, which additionally determines what capital is valued. Within each field (social space), there is that which is excluded, and that which is included. These contexts (fields) shape and produce praxis.

The acceptable praxis in a field arises from the hierarchical ruling principles that govern a field. However,

it appears as if everyone is free to play, everything is negotiable. if it were not, the ‘rules’ of the games themselves would not be accepted. e veryone plays, but differential structures ensure that not everyone is equal. This misrecognition is an essential component of the legitimate and the social processes described. (Grenfell and James 1998, 25)

Bourdieu described the other factors that are present in a field:

The principle of vision and division and the mode of knowledge (religious, philosophical, juridical, scientific, artistic, etc.) which prevails in a field, in association with a specific form of expression, can only be known and understood in relation to the specific legality of that field as a social microcosm. (Bourdieu 2000, 99)

Each field can be part of a bigger field, but each field is delimited. Bourdieu likened knowledge of a field and its practices to knowing the ‘stakes of the game’ (Bourdieu 2000, 151) or knowing the ‘rules and principles of the game’ (Grenfell and James 1998, 20). From there, strategies that an agent may use to act on the world come from an agent’s ability to ‘play the game’ (Reed-Danahay 2005, 35) and/or take advantage of the opportunities that come their way. Bourdieu claimed that the code of culture (rules of the game) is not imposed and fixed as a way of being. Actions and ways of being can be generated, created and invented, though they are limited within structuring mechanisms. Grenfell and James (1998, 20) claimed ‘many of the rules and principles of the game go on in a way that is not consciously held in the heads of those playing it’.

When we talk about the field of science, or an artistic field, or a sphere of activity, we are referring to a context where something takes place, or can be observed. A field is usually bounded in that it has boundaries, where rules or language do not apply outside of those boundaries. Bourdieu delineated what a field is and how it operates, and discussed the rules that each field has (see Bourdieu 2000; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). A field also includes people who are positioned within the
field. The field I focused on is teenagers’ home computer use for leisure. This is a sub-context or sub-field of leisure, and I argue it to be a sub-field of learning (and of education).

Bourdieu’s theory helped me to describe, understand and investigate the social practice found in this field through the application of descriptions of capital and habitus within this field. Grenfell and James (2004, 510) claimed that capital was both a ‘product and process within a field’; hence the link between field and capital, and it is to this concept that I now turn.

**Capital**

The term ‘capital’ has multiple meanings within Bourdieu’s framework. Bourdieu used ‘economic capital’ as the basis for writing about and developing the concepts of other capitals, that is, cultural, social and symbolic. Bourdieu (1986, 47) introduced capital in the following manner:

\[
\text{capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations (‘connections’), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of a title of nobility.}
\]

Each of the capitals that Bourdieu described is the product of an investment of an appropriate kind, from which an investment can be secured and returned (Moore 2004), and is also symbolic, neither actually concrete nor physically present. It is possible for physical representation of capital to exist, for example, having the ‘right’ accent in speech. To explain further the link between field and capital:

Bourdieu reasons that capital attracts capital, as like attracts like, and the various forms are, in many ways, inter-convertible. So, for example, high academic qualifications traditionally tend to ‘buy’ good jobs with good salaries. Yet, at the same time, as ‘players’ in the market acquire more capital, it becomes devalued. For example, there is qualification inflation, where over time a given level of certification no longer guarantees the same prestigious jobs. Capital exists in ever changing configurations in relation to the fields which generate it, and, the values of its three forms are constantly being renegotiated in implicit and explicit ways. (Grenfell and James 1998, 21)
in understanding capital, it is important to remember that capital is accumulated over time. Additionally, forms of capital are intertwined in that most forms can be converted into other forms.

**Economic Capital**

Capital in any form is recognised within Bourdieu’s framework as a valuable resource. In regard to economic capital, the valuable resource is money and economic capital is interested in increasing monetary profit in contrast to the other types of capital. Money may be institutionalized through the titles to properties.

Bourdieu (1986) proposed that economic capital was at the root of the other types of capital, and that the other forms of capital were transposable and disguisable forms of economic capital. Indeed, there seems to be a strong link between the ‘having’ of money and the acquisition of cultural, social and symbolic capital – a point that shall be argued later. This suggests that one cannot have cultural capital without economic capital.

One of the main differences between economic capital and the other capitals is that money and property titles can be transmitted instantly through gift, trade or purchase. Other forms of capital require economic capital and investment of time in order to be acquired. Moore (2004) claimed that economic capital translates into cultural capital, but economic capital still must be spent to acquire objectified cultural capital (material objects). A person who wins a lottery may have no previous cultural capital so, in order for the economic capital to be transubstantiated to cultural capital, s/he must choose to spend his or her economic capital on cultural capital objects to begin with in order to obtain some cultural capital. Of course, not all forms of cultural capital (including those associated with ‘taste’) can be bought; it is worth pursuing the notion of cultural capital in more detail.

**Cultural Capital**

Webb, Schirato and Danaher (2002, x) defined cultural capital as ‘a form of value associated with culturally authorised tastes, consumption patterns, attributes, skills and awards’. If one has cultural capital, one has invested in cultural assets and embodied social attributes, which seems to be a natural occurrence – yet cultural capital is socially conferred (Moore 2004). The cultural capital found in the habitus of one’s family and class becomes their cultural capital also.

Bourdieu related how he came to consider capital in his theorizing: ‘The notion of cultural capital initially presented itself to me, in the course of research, as a theoretical hypothesis which made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes by relating academic success’ (Bourdieu 1986, 47). This highlights the fact that much of
Bourdieu’s writings deal with issues of education (Grenfell 2004). Chapters 5–9 focus on the learning that occurs in this informal field of home computer use for leisure, exploring the links to schooling as formal education.

Bourdieu (1986) claimed that cultural capital exists in three states – embodied, objectified and institutionalized. Table 4.1 explains these three states of cultural capital.

This table and its definitions of the states of cultural capital will be drawn on in chapter 8 to analyse the capital of the participants in my study. Bourdieu asserts that ability and talent are both a product of the investment of time, which comes from possessing economic capital that affords agents to invest the time:

Table 4.1  
States of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embodied state</th>
<th>Objectified state</th>
<th>Institutionalized state</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d ispositions (temperaments) of</td>
<td>c ultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries,</td>
<td>Educational qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the mind and body</td>
<td>instruments, machines)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c haracter and virtues (morals)</td>
<td>Material objects</td>
<td>Certificates, Diplomas, degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c annot be transmitted, that is,</td>
<td>Through the purchase of fine art, the acquisition of</td>
<td>Qualifications can be used as a rate of conversion between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>given to, or bought by someone</td>
<td>a library, possessing high-tech equipment, one has</td>
<td>cultural and economic capital, similar to ‘human capital’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>else</td>
<td>bought cultural capital with economic capital</td>
<td>whereby one gains a qualification, which then amounts to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of speech</td>
<td></td>
<td>possessing more earning power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demeanour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c an be increased by investing</td>
<td>Quality of dress (clothing)</td>
<td>The pieces of paper confer cultural competence on the holder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time into self improvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becomes a type of habitus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Multiplicities of Internet Addiction

if the best measure of cultural capital is undoubtedly the amount of time devoted to acquiring it, this is because the transformation of economic capital into cultural capital presupposes an expenditure of time that is made possible by possession of economic capital. More precisely, it is because the cultural capital that is effectively transmitted within the family itself depends not only on the quantity of cultural capital, itself accumulated by spending time, that the domestic group possess, but also on the usable time (particularly in the form of the mother’s free time) available to it (by virtue of its economic capital, which enables it to purchase the time of others) to ensure the transmission of this capital and to delay entry into the labour market through prolonged schooling, a credit which pays off, if at all, only in the very long term. (Bourdieu 1986, 54)

The participants in my study acquired some cultural capital from being computer experts. As I have explained economic and cultural capital, I now turn to explaining social and symbolic capital in the next sub-subsection.

Social Capital and Symbolic Capital

According to Bourdieu, a person with a title of nobility (for example, duke, duchess, earl, lady) has a great deal of social capital. It is of course symbolic and cannot generally be earned; it is a credit that has been given because of a durable network (Bourdieu 1986). Other titles of nobility such as Officers of the Order of Merit or being deemed the ‘Australian of the Year’ are examples of social capital conferred and awarded on the holders by others who have a great deal of social capital. While these constructed structures demonstrate social capital in the developed western world, it is arguable that a member of the British monarchy, for instance, may not have the same status in a communist country. In this situation, a British monarch would retain his/her title, while at the same time her/his position may not be as valued or esteemed as it would be in Commonwealth countries.

Social capital and symbolic capital are closely linked. Bourdieu (1986, 57) went as far as to say that any form of social capital is actually symbolic because it is so ‘totally governed by the logic of knowledge and acknowledgement’. For example, symbolic capital, that is, implied capital, can be given only by those who recognize it. Capital is taken as natural, that is, a person’s attribute. Symbolic capital exists only through the esteem and recognition of those who believe in its existence; therefore social capital is seen as a tool for reproduction of the dominant class. The dominant class relies on the dominated class for the symbolic capital to be perpetuated. Bourdieu further explained the link between symbolic domination and habitus:

Domination, even when based on naked force, that of arms or money, always has a symbolic dimension, and acts of submission, of obedience, are acts of
knowledge and recognition which, as such, implement cognitive structures capable of being applied to all the things of the world, and in particular to social structures. (Bourdieu 2000, 172)

An example of this symbolic force could be in the form of a rich businessman (for example, Donald Trump), who because of his wealth has a lot of influence in various areas (most recently in television). Symbolically, power is associated with wealth, therefore persons who comply with his initiatives recognize his power. Indeed, in certain cases, some persons may be forced to concur with his will, because their symbolic capital is far less than his. Fidel Castro, in communist Cuba, had much symbolic capital in the form of arms, which of course ensures obedience to his initiatives and symbolic domination of the Cuban people. Of course, the use of arms would contribute to the physical domination of the Cuban people. But in both examples the belief in symbolic capital is reproduced for further generations.

Both social capital and symbolic capital conceal their relationship to economic capital, and cultural and social capital can never be completely reduced to an economic form. Therefore cultural capital cannot be a direct transubstantiation of economic capital (Moore 2004). Each of these forms of capital was evident in the lives of the participants and is detailed in chapter 8.

In respect to the study I drew on that influenced the writing of this book, I used Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice to identify the participants’ multiple (and contradictory) understandings of expertise, and the ways they attained expertise and performed as experts in out-of-school settings. Discussion focused on how most of the teenagers gained their expertise independently with minimal input from their schooling experiences. I used the framework of Bourdieu to map the habitus (dispositions) of teenage technological experts – boys and girls – and the trajectories that brought them to their status.
This chapter presents the recent qualitative study I completed involving eight teenagers in New Zealand. These teenagers demonstrated their expertise in their use of their personal computer and the internet. The study focused on how the teenagers became experts and explored the types of practice and leisure common in the lives of contemporary youth. This chapter also focuses on the noted difference in perspective and approach between those who have always had computers and digital technologies in their lives (digital insiders), those who have not (digital newcomers), and those who are indifferent to digital technologies (digital outsiders).

Traditionally, schooling has functioned as a key means for socialization, but now, the dominance of schooling as a means of socialization is arguably less apparent due to the huge influence and nexus of media and popular culture, which has transformed how children conduct themselves within the world. C. Luke (1996) explained how children, since infancy, have been immersed in multiple texts of popular culture. She highlighted how television, advertising and toys at both home and school shape the way children understand the world and understand themselves, including gender. Kenway and Bullen (2001; Bullen and Kenway 2002) wrote about the influence of media advertising, entertainment and consumerism upon western teenagers. They argued that children’s consumption of goods actually socializes them and that children are unable to distinguish between advertising and entertainment, as the two have converged (Kenway and Bullen 2001). The texts of popular culture provide entertainment, and this entertainment has become pivotal in how identities and understanding are constructed (Downes 2002). This influence constructs education and older generations as anti-youth, anti-leisure and anti-popular culture (Kenway and Bullen 2001).

Because of the shift in postmodern society in regard to technology, youth and multimedia, new realizations ‘of the relationship between technologies, pedagogies, schooling and media culture’ (Green and Bigum 1993, 127) need to occur to cater for the changes in contemporary western culture. Green and Bigum (1993) hypothesized that: ‘a new kind of human subjectivity is forming, an entirely new identity formation emerging from the nexus between youth culture and the increasingly global media complex’ (122), and highlighted ‘the emergence of a new type of student, with new needs and new capacities’ (119). From this
basis, I claim there are key challenges facing educators who seek to respond to generational change and the resultant aliens in the classroom (Green and Bigum 1993) in ways that go beyond simplistic, stereotypical or limiting understandings of youth and youth culture. It is arguable that the learning preferences of youth and some of their actual non-schooling sites for learning are antithetical to current-day inauthentic practices within schooling (Brown et al. 1993). This is not a new revelation or insight as, in a similar vein, other authors have suggested practical changes to the structure of schooling (Gee 2004; Goodson et al. 2002; King and O’Brien 2002), the administration of schooling (Luke, A. 2002) and the curricula within schooling (Bigum 2002, 2003; Goodson et al. 2002; Kenway and Bullen 2001; Mackereth and Anderson 2000; Moore and M. Young 2001; Postman 1993). What is obvious is that these premises have been argued as early as 1993, yet the argument for needed change remains the same. The changes evident in popular culture and youth culture need to be reflected through changes in schooling (Downes 2002).

Generational changes have occurred not only as a result of the practice of children’s leisure, construction of their identity, consumption and in the media of popular culture, but generational changes have also helped to produce the changes found in children’s leisure, construction of identity, consumption and the media of popular culture. In this chapter, I discuss and critique generational categories, in search of terms that are demonstrative and yet reflective of differences between categories of similarly minded people.

discourses surrounding the developmentalism of children imply a ‘linear progression from the simple to the complex and from the irrational to the rational’ (Kenway and Bullen 2001, 3), without giving attention to the ‘multiple and complex ways that adolescent and adult discourses interanimate each other’ (Alvermann 2002, viii). It is implied that because children do not ‘fit’ the childhood development of old that they need to be ‘fixed’, or that they are ‘deficient’. However, I argue that they are simply different. As Rushkoff (1997, 12) argued, ‘As a kid has trouble imagining himself ever living long enough to make it to adulthood, we have trouble imagining our culture developing past its present childhood level’. This is in keeping with my argument that older generations do not necessarily recognize, value or legitimize the practices of younger generations, particularly when the practices may be quite different to forms of earlier generations (an interesting example of this is the struggle for adults to accept the shorthand spelling of s Ms or mobile phone text messages). I now turn to examining the literature about generations and how discourse surrounding the development of adolescence has classified distinct generations. Technologies and consumer-media culture (Kenway and Bullen 2001) have particularly characterized the most recent generations. After briefly describing the concept of generations, I discuss the influence of media and digital technologies on children and young people.
Generations

In a qualitative study focused on exploring the attitudes of Australians to establish which patterns in life in Australia are changing, Mackay (1997) presented descriptors of three generations. Those born in the 1920s were termed the ‘lucky’ generation, the post-war baby boomers were termed the ‘stress’ generation (born in late 1940s and early 1950s), and those born in the 1970s were termed the ‘options’ generation. Mackay (1997, 3) defined a generation by stating that:

Biologically, a generation is measured by the time it takes an organism to reach sexual maturity: human generations have therefore been traditionally defined in 15-year spans. Colloquially, we are less strict than that: we tend to speak of generations in terms of a group of individuals who were born at about the same time, or in the same era, and who have been subject to common social, cultural and economic influences.

perhaps the most renowned term – Generation X – was coined by douglas Coupland (1992) in his fictitious writings. There have been many different terms used, and some distinctions made to clarify when the generations actually start and begin, such as in the united states of america. for example,

- Boom[ers] – January 1946 to December 1964;
- Bust – January 1965 to December 1976; and

However, classifications such as these are commonly disputed, as is the origin of the term ‘generations’, the history of generations and whether a generation is in fact a generation or not. Typically, Generation X is the generation that followed the Baby Boomers generation. Generation Y (Bullen and Kenway 2002) followed Generation X. Generation Y can be known as,

- Millennials (Hagood, Stevens and Reinking 2002; Gee 2004),
- Screenagers (Rushkoff 1997),
- Generation M or Generation Media (Rideout, Roberts and Foehr 2005),
- The Net-Generation, or N-Geners (Tapscott 1998).

The purpose of including this information about generations is to focus on Generation Y – the millennials, screenagers and net-Generation that were the focus of my study. However, it is not a purpose of this book to argue for incontestable definitions and delineations of generations.

Generation Y is argued to be those born between 1980 and 1995 (Bullen and Kenway 2002), who tend to be oriented toward consumption and shopping, and be influenced by the notable spending of their stressed working parents (Bullen and
Kenway 2002; Mackay 1997). In terms of the leisure of millennials (Generation Y), Gee (2004) noted that millennials spend a significant time in unstructured activity compared to those in Generation X. Further, the media-consumer culture has become an important resource for pleasure and identity building (Bullen and Kenway 2002). This has continued from the shared popular culture literacies of Generation X. Tara Brabazon (2005) elaborated how media including music, film, print and dancing all help to comprise the identity of Generation X-ers. Hagood, Stevens and Reinking (2002) argued that millennials drive several industries such as fashion, entertainment and technology and are the most researched group of people in history. Their spending is important because they comprise a market segment valued at US$150 billion a year (Hagood, Stevens and Reinking 2002).

Tapscott (1998) claimed there were ten themes of the Net-Generation culture:

1. Fierce independence.
2. Emotional and intellectual openness.
3. Inclusion.
4. Free expression and strong views.
5. Innovation.
6. Preoccupation with maturity.
7. Investigation.
8. Immediacy.
10. Authentication and trust.

All of these themes are claimed by Tapscott (1998) to be inherent in the young people found in developed countries. The notion that all people of a certain age have essentially the same characteristics is problematic and places limitations on the ability of a person to make choices. I return to this notion later in the text.

Because it is argued that Generation Y is preoccupied with media, we now move to discussing aspects related to the digital nature of their leisure practices. Rushkoff (1997) claimed that these millennials, which he termed screenagers, enjoy being self-determining and are comfortable with non-linear, complex experiences, which is arguably what they find in front of a screen. Rushkoff argued that because discontinuous media is the rule for screenagers, it has resulted in them adopting a ‘social philosophy very different from their predecessors’. They do not work to recombine and reduce the seemingly endless stream of media bits into coherent, unified pictures, and they no longer believe in hard-and-fast answers to the world’s problems (1997, 44).

Criticism directed at those who write about generations often reject the idea that there is any essential character to Generation X, Y or M, citing the diversity that exists within any group around factors such as gender, socio-economics, race and
Introducing Some Teenage Technological Experts: Digital Insiders

so on. The political usefulness of the terms is often regarded as weakened thanks to the uptake by media and advertising texts that have arguably used such terms glibly and unreflectively. What the literature on generations does highlight is that there are patterns around experiences, dispositions, actions and attitudes. This impacts society, including schooling and beliefs about differences between generations, especially between parents and their children. For example, Hagood, Stevens and Reinking (2002, 79) argued that by ‘defining the Millennial Generation as youth who solely spend their time mindlessly and acritically playing with computers, video games, and music, we run the risk of dismissing the highly engaging and increasingly valid literacies they create in their engagement with various media’. They continued by stating that though generational categories are stably depicted, the ‘literacy practices of one generation are not necessarily particular only to that generation’ (Hagood, Stevens and Reinking 2002, 79). For an older generation to dismiss a younger generation’s practices, it is arguable that delegitimization and misrecognition of their undertakings is intertwined.

In 1996, John Perry Barlow wrote about digital natives and digital immigrants in order to distinguish between those who have always been immersed in digital media (specifically personal computers) and those who have been introduced to it at some point in their lives and are newcomers to its use. The phrase digital natives is regarded as problematic from the standpoint of postcolonial theorists. This relates to the suggestion that ‘natives’ have some inherent character, a problematic suggestion in literature that has long positioned the ‘essential’ native in opposition to ‘immigrants’. Of course, in this case the ‘essence’ ascribed to the native is designed to be a positive recognition of particular sets of skills (computer competence) but the historical pattern of ascribing differences between natives and immigrants (or natives and invaders) makes the easy use of these terms unlikely. For this reason, I wish to employ the terms digital insiders and digital newcomers (Goodson et al. 2002), as these terms allow for multiple experiences, rather than just being at one extreme or the other of a continuum. It is this distinguishable difference of being either a digital insider (always immersed in digital media since birth) or digital newcomer (introduced to digital media) that I am referring to when I discuss generational differences in the following chapters.

The use of the phrase digital insider helps us recognize that practices are conceptualized quite differently by newcomers and insiders (Goodson et al. 2002). This is illustrated very clearly in the different sense they make of activities, time and pleasure. Although this is valuable in helping us to understand what has changed, it is also important to be looking at what has not changed.

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1 See Lankshear and Knobel (2003), and Goodson et al. (2002) for more discussion about the mindsets of insiders and outsiders.
### Table 5.1  Introducing the participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Anne</th>
<th>Charli</th>
<th>Chris</th>
<th>Jake</th>
<th>Joe</th>
<th>Lisa</th>
<th>Tom</th>
<th>Tim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>sex</strong></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>14 – 15*</td>
<td>13 – 14*</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16 – 17*</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15 – 16*</td>
<td>16 – 17*</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>location of computer</strong></td>
<td>Kids’ wing</td>
<td>hall</td>
<td>dining room</td>
<td>Kids’ wing</td>
<td>dining room</td>
<td>lounge</td>
<td>Bedroom</td>
<td>Bedroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of internet access</strong></td>
<td>Broad-band wireless</td>
<td>dial-up</td>
<td>dial-up</td>
<td>Broad-band</td>
<td>dial-up</td>
<td>dial-up</td>
<td>Broad-band</td>
<td>Broad-band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>performance</strong></td>
<td>Average to above</td>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many people have developed dispositions that include an interest in and capacity to negotiate digital technologies. This constitutes part of what it means to be a contributing citizen in this digital age. If they are not contributing in digital forums, and/or are indifferent to digital technologies, do not have access to or are not interested, then they may fall in the category of digital outsiders. I will give further examples of this conjectured category throughout this text.

Previous literature on generations tends to purport an essentialist character to age groups of people and categorize them accordingly, though not all of the literature is essentialist. The tendency is to try and identify common attributes of life worlds of those in a particular age group. Using generation type terms is a trend throughout literature but, nevertheless, I argue that there are distinct generational changes that have occurred with the advent of digital media, hence the focus on technology and its nexus with everyday use. I will use the terms digital insiders and digital newcomers to reflect the division between young people who are digital insiders and adults who are digital newcomers. In this text, the word ‘generation’ may be used, but will usually be in reference to this divide between digital insiders and digital newcomers because of the distinct changes that have occurred in recent history. It is my argument that some digital newcomers do not recognize, value or legitimate the practices of digital insiders specifically in regard to their understanding of leisure, learning and schooling (Lankshear and Knobel 2003).

Digital newcomers tend to talk about computer use by children or digital insiders as something that is optional or a simple matter of personal choice, that is, it is something they can do without if they were motivated to engage in other activities (Goodson et al. 2002). However, in the current age, Internet access is so fundamentally tied to access of knowledge (both formal and social) and leisure that it seems somewhat strange to think about engagement with computers as an unwelcome departure from the norm of traditional childhood play and leisure. Admittedly, those that are indifferent to technology and do take up traditional childhood play and leisure are possibly positioned as digital outsiders. This raises some questions about whether parents of digital insiders or digital outsiders are able to conceptualize legitimate learning spaces if they see the use of certain technologies as problematic. However, the everyday association and engagement with computers seems to be a necessity for some digital insiders as will be discussed and highlighted throughout this book.

Teenagers as Technological Experts

My research study (Johnson, N.F. 2007a) explored the construction of technological expertise amongst a heterogeneous group of New Zealand teenagers, specifically in regard to their home computer use, which for many of
them was their primary site of leisure. Chapter 6 specifically focuses on what comprises this everyday practice.

Eight teenagers aged 13–17 were observed and interviewed for this qualitative study. The participants comprised five boys and three girls; each attended one of various secondary schools located within a provincial city in New Zealand. They, their families and/or their friends considered them to be technological experts.

The method of selecting participants was through what is known as snowball sampling (Patton 2002). First, I asked people that I did know if they could recommend others who fitted certain criteria, then asked those initial participants if they could recommend others. In this study, the teenaged technological experts (the phenomena of interest) were selected because they were in some sense unique (Merriam 1998).

The data gathered for the qualitative study was collected through employing ethnographic techniques. Initially, I conducted an observation with each participant. The observations were approximately an hour long, and consisted of me observing the teenager using a computer in a manner that they described as typical of their use on any given day. During the observation, I recorded what they did, and how they did it, and recorded most of what was said to me. I kept a detailed record of events to develop ‘thick’ descriptions in order to be credible and trustworthy. Sometimes I asked questions to clarify what it was they were doing and why.

Through the use of these semi-structured, open-ended, semi-formal interviews, I encouraged participants to explain their perceptions, experiences and attitudes. The second session was an interview. The third session usually combined an observation and an interview.

During the observations, I recorded the teenager’s use of his or her computer, in that I wrote down what they did, when they did it and, if possible, why they were doing it. I asked questions during the observations to query things I did not understand or know about.

Each of the five boys attended the same co-educational secondary school. Three of the boys attended the same elementary school. Two of the girls attended the same secondary school (different to the one the boys attended), while the third attended a public girls secondary school. Participants were not selected on the school they attended. It was not a purpose of the study to obtain a representative sample.

2 In a subsequent study, I am exploring further the phenomenon of teenagers as technological experts in a project named ‘The Teenage Expertise Network’ (with Dr Valerie Harwood).
Introducing the Participants

There were eight participants in this study, three females and five males. Table 5.1 summarizes some of the demographics of these teenaged technological experts. The three females will now be introduced, who at the time of the study were aged between 14 and 16.

The Young Women: Anne, Charli and Lisa

For Years 7 and 8, Anne (all names are pseudonyms) was in a classroom where each child had their own laptop. Anne did not use the computers at her current school very often and did not attend any computing class. She was resolute that the computer classes for the first two years at her high school were very easy, and far too simple for her level of expertise. Her strengths at school included mathematics and science. She was considering a career in computers but was not sure as she expected to find computer programming boring.

Charli was a member of an online community, whose members wrote poetry and prose to share with each other. People were able to view different genres of poems in this community and write comments on others’ poems. Charli first posted an original poem three years ago and was ‘quite proud that I’d done something myself and I knew everything about how to do it’. Charli had met many people through that site and, from there, was recommended another website that allowed people to create their own websites, from which she created her own. Many of her associated friends from the poetry site also had their own website with this other community (piczo™). Charli had spent a lot of time creating her own website. Charli had friends that she had met online which she calls her ‘friends overseas’. ‘Yeah I love my friends overseas. I love them. Sometimes like I think I’m closer to them than I am like with people here, just because they’re that, like I just have that much more space, cause I love, I need my personal space.’

Lisa had taught friends and family about how to use the internet, use sites, make sites, download music and make (burn) CDs. Lisa had played an important role in others’ lives through recommending websites and showing people how to use the computer for different purposes. She did not seem to have a role model or someone who had shown or taught her things on the computer. She had her own way of learning new things on the computer: ‘Um, probably like, go round the very edges of it first and then just see what happens and then just keep moving in further, to what’s like in the centre, or something. Yeah [laughs]. Like working round the idea of something.’ Lisa believed she was learning from herself when

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3 In New Zealand, Years 7 and 8 are equivalent to Years 6 and 7 in Australia and Grades 6 and 7 in the USA.
she was on the computer. Lisa maintained that her parents did not really take any notice or care about her computer expertise.

**The Young Men: Chris, Jake, Joe, Tom and Tim**

A description of each of the five boys is presented below. At the time the interviews were conducted, they each attended the same secondary school. Tom and Tim were good friends, but the other boys did not know each other or Tim and Tom. They were aged between 13 and 17.

Chris spent a lot of time playing video/computer games, but this was usually on his PlayStation™ machine. He viewed his computer learning and use as fun. Chris believed he was a computer expert, but that this had been ignored and somewhat discouraged at his school. He listed many software programs that he believed he was skilled at using. He reported that the elementary school he formerly attended played a significant role in the development and encouragement of his expertise.

Jake was the network administrator for his secondary school and was responsible for 140 networked computers. Sometimes he got paid for the out-of-school work he did for his school through the managing of their hall/auditorium, as he was accomplished in sound and lighting technologies. Jake did the sound and lighting at a local church which had a modern sound and lighting system, as well as for his secondary school which was known as a mini-concert venue in the local area. He did video work including the ‘editing and running’ of videos. His technical knowledge gave him a sense of worth. Jake spent about six hours a day in front of a computer, two hours a day behind a lighting desk and about nine hours a week behind a sound desk.

Joe had many interests and he researched them on the internet. They included space and flight, sports, popular music, current events, games and scientific learning sites. He also visited sites of interest surrounding art, art history, weather, climate change and astronomy (planetarium website and Cyber Sky™). He read widely using the Internet medium, especially science fiction, as he believed sci-fi ‘extends your imagination’.

Tom spent most of his time online playing the game, *World of Warcraft* (WOW™). WOW™ is a massively multi-player online role-playing game (MMORPG). WOW™ is a continuation of *Warcraft™* i, ii, and iii, but they were formerly real-time strategy games (RTS). He originally played first-person shooter (FPS) games. Tom’s time on the computer was divided into 70 per cent games, 10 per cent homework and 20 per cent web design (‘maybe, yeah’). If Tom was at home, he was usually on his computer. Tom had 45 websites (on his record) that he has designed since the age of ten or eleven. He used Macromedia’s *Dreamweaver™*
to design the pages, though he knew HTML (a computer programming language). He mainly designed websites to promote Counterstrike™ gamers (another online game) but had also designed them to develop his portfolio and gain experience.

Tim spent 2–3 hours per weekday on the computer, and approximately seven hours per weekend day and seven hours per day in the school holidays. Tim had a paper run from which he earned money to pay for things such as his WoW™ subscription. Tim had no idea of what he wanted to do when he left school and did not seem to be involved in many things other than computers. He had not looked at what he could do to make the most of any opportunities that come his way, even in regard to computers: ‘I don’t really take, like use the skills that I’ve got on the computer anywhere else’.

Rideout, Roberts and Foehr (2005) conducted a nationally representative survey in the United States of America of 2032 third to twelfth grade students aged 8–18. It was entitled Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8–18 Year-Olds. The survey focused on recreational (non-school related) use of media, including television, videos, movies, computers, the internet, video games, books, magazines, newspapers, DVDs, radio, CDs, tapes and MP3s. There are four aspects from their study that I wish to highlight:

- This media generation devotes more than a quarter of each day to media (an average of 6.5 hours per day).
- Media takes up and/or impacts virtually every aspect of young people’s lives.
- Media use begets media use; those with easy access to media spend more time using it.
- Media multitasking, the use of multiple forms of media at one time, is a growing phenomenon.

in the lives of the eight participants in my recent research study (Johnson, n.d. 2007a), it was clear that these four aspects from this study of Generation M were evident.

in my study, I focused on the understanding and performance of expertise from a sociocultural perspective, claiming that a psychological perspective does not adequately include or consider various aspects of sociology and consumer-media culture. What I found was interesting in that participants’ understanding of expertise was multiple. I have begun further research projects with the aim of elucidating new and insightful definitions of expertise from a sociocultural perspective. The focus of this book is the practice of everyday life for digital insiders in the twenty-first century. The next chapter focuses on the nature of this everyday practice in the field of home computer use for leisure, specifically for the young people within this study.
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in my study i found that, for youth, online engagement may help to develop technological expertise. The internet is a vehicle for learning and leisure and provides an important social networking tool. In this chapter, the everyday practice that these digital insiders engage in will be described, including how they learn while engaged in leisurely use of digital technologies. in my observations of the participants, i found them engaged in daily practices involving computers and associated technologies, which will now be described. These practices include face-to-face and online friendships.

The activities i observed participants engaged in were as follows:

- MSN™ and other forms of instant chat/messaging (for example, iChat™).
- Surfing (browsing) the web.
- Checking and sending email.
- Homework tasks including research.
- Website design.*
- Research of popular culture (for example, television shows, celebrities, products).*
- Game playing – online and offline.
- Configuring their own preferences for the computer.
- Downloading music for their Mp3 players.*
- Writing compact discs of music downloaded from the internet.*

Not all the participants engaged in the activities marked with an asterisk (*), in that i did not observe these activities with every participant. The activity of research almost always involved the use of the internet search engine Google™.

While the first four activities were sometimes completed also at school, or at other computers at various locations, all of the activities were conducted mainly at home on the computer that they used. The participants did describe activities that i did not observe, which included spending time on the computer with their friends and family, sharing a task or project, playing a game or exploring a topic together. For these young people, what Mackereth and Anderson (2000, 186) stated resonates with their practice: ‘For some students, computers are becoming a key
cultural context in their own right, the medium by which they both communicate and experience much of their world’.

In exploring this field of home computer use for leisure, we need to identify who are the actors or agents within this field. The young people who were digital insiders made up the focus of this study. These participants were able to develop online relationships or online relations with people who were not seen face-to-face (though could be seen if they used video), but were real people who the participants communicated with in a digital forum. I have termed the relations within this field as cyber-relations (Johnson, N.F. 2007a). Some of those with whom the participants interact also exist in face-to-face friendships, but many other interactions do not take place in person, nor are they personified. These cyber-relations the teenage technological experts had consisted of some or all of the following relations:

- with people they have met face-to-face and then connected with online,
- with people whom they have only met online,
- with other online gamers,
- with others who are online,
- with others who have similar interests,
- with friends who are friends of their friends,
- with others who are economically privileged,
- with the global village (Levinson 1999; McLuhan and Powers 1989).

The first six categories included website design, synchronous and asynchronous communication, game playing, information searching (surfing or browsing) for personal interest and for schooling activities. These activities were undertaken mostly as an individual practice, though were also completed in collaboration with others positioned in the field including gamers, other experts, peers, unknown online persons and others of similar economic standing. I now focus on explaining the last two aspects found in this list.

**Economic Privilege and the Global Village**

In a previous article, I stated that those without access to, and/or proficiency with the latest digital technologies are marginalized, and I argued for a new identity category of technological efficacy (Johnson, N.F. 2004). Technological efficacy is not only about having access to computers, but the inclination, skill and confidence to use computers (Johnson, N.F. 2004). I went on to explain how unequal patterns of access can in the most part be explained by intersections of gender, ethnicity, ‘race’ and socioeconomic status, and this unequal access can exacerbate individuals’ prior marginalization and exclusion. I concluded by stating that those who are left behind are those that cannot embrace technology.
The people that come into this category are not actors in this digital age. Their prior exclusion leads them to further, perpetual exclusion (Brabazon 2007). The divide is increasing between those with use of technology and the means to access the latest technologies, in contrast with those who have no technology and no means of access. Neither wanting to favour a binary position, nor ignore those along the continuum between no technology and technology saturation, these ‘in-between’ actors are limited by their attitude to, value of, and confidence with the use of computer-based technology. Therefore, as we head towards 2010, the identity category of technological efficacy has a defining role in one’s construction of identity in western society.¹ These people who have no access to technologies could also be included in the broad category of digital outsiders, along with those who are indifferent or not interested in using digital media.

The Matthew effect (Merton 1973) states that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer: as the participants gained basic computer literacy skills through the economic capital of their families – provision of computer/s and internet access – it then meant that the participants were set up to develop levels of expertise or, at the least, attain high levels of skill. Another way to put this in Bourdieuan terms is to say that the agent’s habitus made decisions advantageous for the agent. The habitus of the parent/s is passed on to the children, though the habitus of youth culture is distinct from the previous generation. It seems that economic capital and a certain type of habitus are required in order for expertise to be obtained and performed by teenage technological experts.

The economic privilege of these digital insiders went a long way to help develop these cyber-relations from which they gained social capital, in terms of self-worth and identity, and skill that constituted their perceived level of technological expertise.² The immediate contact possible between individuals in cyberspace brings into effect a form of the tribal culture present before the development of text. This is the ‘global village’ that the participants are part of. I return to this discussion in the final chapters of this book, to extend this theory and argue that both leisure and learning in this digital age is a development in line with the advent of a new age (from oral, scribe, print to digital media). This will offer new perspectives in understanding the everyday practice of digital insiders.

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¹ There are of course initiatives such as Nicholas Negroponte’s One Laptop per Child project (OLPC, 2008), which is seeking to address this issue, not in western society, but in economically disadvantaged countries.

² This is explored in more detail in chapter 8.
How Did the Participants Learn?

Questions concerning how and where people best learn have informed significant amounts of research over the past twenty years. Debates about learning styles, learning preferences and the kinds of intelligences supported by or catered for in traditional and transformative pedagogical models are widespread. Outside the specific field of ‘learning theories’ however there is still the need to look critically at the extent to which dominant understandings of learning held by teenagers match up to, or are in tension with, the dominant understandings of learning held by the significant adults in their lives (including teachers and parents). This involves distinguishing between the myths that adults may have about how children/teenagers learn regarding computers and how they actually do learn when using computers. Digital culture reflects the possibility for the diverse construction of individual positions, in regard to challenging traditional structures of schooling.

As will be illustrated in the following text, the practice in this field of home computer use for leisure of teenage experts is a positive endeavour for personal expression. Part of the participants’ focus is on learning and developing their knowledge and skill, specifically in regard to their computer use. It is arguable that this field is a valid, real and accessible space for learning, even though many people may only view the practice as pointless fun (Kirriemuir and Mcfarlane 2004).

The participants stated various ways they went about learning new things relating to technology and especially when it came to computers. Learning techniques used by the participants included:

- Trial-and-error (figure it out myself).
- Ask someone (friend or parent, face-to-face or online, through email).
- Watch someone.
- Research using the internet.
- Ask questions by posting queries on online forums or message boards.
- Use software help menus.
- Tutorials (both online and offline).

Two boys mentioned reading manuals as a last resort for learning. Tom specifically referred to having to read a manual in order to ‘get his fix’ when he was banned from using the internet (which meant he could not play the online game World of Warcraft™). Jake joked about a high-pressure situation where he had to use a manual at the last minute in order to learn how to operate a new piece of lighting equipment: ‘I read up the instruction manual and [there was] a lot of “if this doesn’t work, I’m gonna die”’. 
The Blur Between Leisure, Learning and Expertise

I asked the participants about how they preferred to learn. Jake, Charli and Lisa stated they were visual learners. Chris knew he had strong learning preferences for the musical and intrapersonal types of multiple intelligences (Gardner 1992). Chris believed he was learning all the time when he was on the internet and that he was learning all the time at school. He pointed out that he probably was learning more slowly if there was no music on or if it was in a noisy environment, or if there were lots of people around.

Joe was confident in his ability to figure things out himself, or alternatively he would ask his dad, or ask teachers during the time he was in computer classes at school. Tim was asked, ‘How do you think you learn best?’ He replied, ‘Oh like hands on, practical sort of stuff like experiments and that. I probably understand it a lot better when I can like actually do it and see how everything works and that, instead of just reading about it or getting told about it, yeah’. Tom’s first port of call to learn something was trial-and-error and figuring it out himself, or then he would ask somebody he knew. Alternatively he would ask or research his queries on the internet.

When I asked Anne, ‘How do you think you learn best (when you’re in a classroom and there’s no computer)?’ she replied, ‘Um, probably, oh it depends what sort of environment it is. But probably the teacher talking to us or involving us in a discussion, or reading interesting stories about it, not just textbook work, but interesting information.’ So next I asked, ‘Thinking about how you learn, how do you think you learn best?’

On the computer? Um, I learn, like [when] I have to do an essay, I think I learn more [by] looking on the Internet, finding my own information then rewording it, rather than the teacher give me textbooks and telling us to write an essay [on] that information. Just because there’s so much more information on the internet and so many different sites and I find it just a lot easier than flicking through a book.

This suggests that Anne ‘makes do’ with what is going on in a classroom but suggests that she probably prefers to use a computer. When I asked her, about whether she was learning all the time when she was on the internet, she said, ‘n o, not at all. There’s a lot of times when I just go on to play games or have a, like look up celebrities or something. Very un-educational!’ In one reading, this could be seen to point to Anne believing that learning can only take place contextually, or when in a specific environment set aside for learning (like a classroom), and not incidentally. On the other hand, it could also signal Anne’s recognition that most adults tend to regard that kind of activity as non-educational.

Charli’s notions of learning are starkly contrasting, illustrated in the following excerpts from her interviews:
Charli: I think you are always learning, no matter what you’re doing, even if you’re on [watching] the TV. I think you’re always learning.

Researcher (R): So what kind of things are you learning when you’re on the internet?

Charli: You’re learning new things, like when you explore, like the Internet Explorer, like with properties of a computer, but when you, even when you do things that you’ve done before, it’s still learning because it sticks with you. It’s like you’re memorizing it, sort of?

r : so you learn all the time on the internet, are you learning all the time when you’re at school?

Charli: Not always. I don’t think so because when you’re on the computer, you sort of choose to go on or not, but at school you have to go, so it’s like you’re not always in the mood, and if you don’t wanna be taught, then you just, you don’t let them. You’re just disruptive and stubborn and stuff, so you’ve gotta be in the mood for it, that’s why I think that computers are like more good. More people will learn from computers I think.

r : cause they want to be on it.

Charli: Yeah, but then that goes both ways because sometimes like, they teach you like maths at school, but you don’t like maths, but they teach you it anyway, and it’s something that’s probably really valuable in the future. But um, mmmm. They teach you it whether you like it or not.

Joe also believed he was learning all the time. His views add to Charli’s statements regarding learning at school.

R: Do you think you’re learning all the time at school? If you look at the two different places where you sit down [one being at the home computer, and the other, sitting in a school classroom], and you’re meant to be paying attention, what do you think about that?

Joe: Well, sometimes at school, you can get really tired and then, don’t feel like learning, but um, I think you do learn at school all the time just as much on the computer as well. But I don’t think you can really compare them both, yeah, it’s totally different.

r : Because … ?

Joe: Because you’ve got a teacher teaching you. Yeah, and then on the computer, it’s just you by yourself, scanning through things.

r : so what are some of the variables with having a teacher teach the class?
Joe: You’ve got surrounding noise, you have to put up with like stupid people [laughs] sometimes, and yeah, it gets annoying. The other thing is, the disadvantage at school is, is that if suddenly you lose what the teacher is talking about, it won’t be the, yeah, you can’t actually like go back and, you can ask them, but it won’t be the same. It won’t be the same. So yeah, you have to like stay on task. But with the computer, you can go back and you can read the same thing, so yeah.

Joe also thought he was learning all the time when on the internet:

As you read through the websites, you’ll be learning something anyway, so y’know, it’s um, if you go on the first page, it’ll be current events, so you just quickly scan through it before you go on to something else, or if you’re waiting for a website to open, yeah, you’ll be reading something anyway, so you will be learning, yeah, of course.

For Tim, it depended on what he was doing and the value that he deemed it had as to whether he was learning anything of value. When playing games, he was relaxing, and it was a form of entertainment. He was learning how to play the game better when playing it, but he said he wasn’t ‘learning anything that you need in life’.

In regard to how they learned new things on the computer, Tom, Tim, Jake and Charli all mentioned asking somebody else for help, whether it was a peer or another expert. Jake, Tom, Lisa, Charli and Joe all referred to being confident enough to figure it out themselves. Joe and Chris mentioned that they still relied on their fathers for help, and for Chris, his father was still an important resource.

I wondered who had taught them the computer basics in the past. Lisa did not refer to a specific person who had taught her, or a time period where she had learnt a lot. Anne emphasized how much she had learnt from her teachers in her Year 7 and 8 school experiences. In regard to who taught them the basics of computer use, Tim (mother), Joe (father), Chris (father), Anne (both) and Charli (father) all stated that one or both of their parents taught them the initial basics. Jake was self-taught. Tom claimed to be self-taught, though he may have underestimated the role his two elder brothers and his parents played in his development.

Digital Insiders

Part of the practice of these teenagers comprises ‘keeping up’ with their friends (aka the teenage Jones’s), and being familiar with a variety of media texts in order to communicate and socialize with their peers. Instant messaging and email (and arguably use of a mobile phone, though this study did not focus on this) have
become the normal practice in this field and possibly in the larger field of leisure. Others have documented the rise of and interest in instant messaging (Stern 2007), the preoccupation with MySpace and Facebook social networking tools (boyd 2007, 2008), and there is much literature promoting the use of technologies (blogs, wikis, podcasts and so on) when teaching children in elementary and secondary schools (see writings and blogs by Karl Fisch (2008), Ian Jukes (2008), Marc Prensky (2008) and others).

Julian Sefton-Green (2004) discussed some of the informal learning that can occur when children and young people engage with information and communication technologies (ICTs). These include the acquisition and development of new and existing communication skills, social experimentation and relationship construction and behaviour, interacting with adults as age-anonymous equals, self-motivation, self-teaching, personal identity construction and practical technological skills. Informal learning is described as that which occurs ‘outside a dedicated learning environment and curriculum’ (Naismith et al. 2004, 3). Sefton-Green (2004) stated that as research in the field of informal learning begins to emerge, a door opens to developing new theories of learning as the way learning is changing is discovered and explored. He claimed that study into the way children teach themselves to orientate themselves to games, master games, use design skills and engage in moral learning, in informal learning settings, could be valuable, as self-motivated and self-controlled learning is becoming a more integral part of school and the workforce.

danah boyd (lower case intended) is one of the few people who have been researching social networking and its importance for teenagers. She has focused on the American context, where MySpace and Facebook began. Over two years, she employed ethnographic techniques including participant observation and interviews to document the use of and attitude toward the practice of engaging with social networks (boyd 2008). She suggested that, ‘Perhaps instead of trying to stop them or regulate usage, we should learn from what teens are experiencing?’ (boyd 2008, 23).

I believe social networking tools are very important in the lives of many youth in the twenty-first century. This is captured particularly well by an 18-year-old who said to her mum, ‘if you’re not on Myspace, you don’t exist’ (boyd 2008, 1). From my personal experience, I know that for people such as myself, the ability to communicate with old friends, and/or recent acquaintances when it is aligned with the convenience of internet communication means that using online social networking tools is beneficial. While it is not the same as meeting someone face-to-face, nor would it replace that experience, it is far less time-consuming, and it is very easy to send someone a quick, brief note on their website rather than phoning or visiting them. It lets them know that you are thinking of them, especially if a face-to-face visit is not possible. The area of social networking and its multifaceted
nature provides new territory for research possibilities; hence I am in the process of instigating research projects surrounding the informal learning that is occurring in sites such as these.

It is possible to argue that children’s preferences for learning have changed (Downes 2002), from that of previous generations, or from those who are digital newcomers, so therefore, it is difficult for many digital insiders to make connections with traditional, formal learning (Downes 2002). We now turn to the discussion of traditional schooling and the performance of school to explore this disconnection.

The Performance of School

Some of these students think that schooling is what one does when one is ‘in school’ and is performing in practice ‘school-like’ things. It is possible that schools and teachers place too much emphasis on ‘place and space’, and that what should be emphasized more is what is being performed rather than where it is being performed (Bigum 2005). School is performed in places and spaces where it has to be, but it is arguable that school-like learning could be performed in their home and leisure space without them realizing it and, for some of the participants, it was. Maddock (2006) conducted ethnographic case studies with nine British children and found the children’s home learning to be rich, unique, diverse and spontaneous. Just as learning at school is not always obvious, and just as there are many activities that go on at school which are arguably not valuable in terms of education (for example, waiting in line, listening to a teacher’s lesson on a topic already understood, walking from one area of the school to another), is that not an argument that could also support leisurely home computer use?

Learning can be performed or achieved at school without the thought of it being a school thing, if tasks are considered to be fun. Just as six of the eight participants did not see the relevance of school to their everyday lives, many of their schoolteachers did not know about their competence and expertise in their ‘out of school’, home life. Seven of the eight participants thought their teachers did not know about this field of interest and expertise they had. This leads us to question just what school is. Is it a place or is it a state of mind (Bigum 2005)? For me, as a distance learner in my postgraduate studies, my sense of university (known as ‘school’ in the USA) was almost solely about engaging with digital texts, digital libraries, digital communication and online technologies such as instant messaging and internet telephony. I had few face-to-face interactions. This suited me as a learner and as a person positioned in a digital culture/world though I am classified as a digital newcomer. For me, the state of mind of school is constituted about how, when and what I am learning, not really where I am situated. Schooling is a state of mind for me, not a place I go to. I learn all the time, and sometimes it
is with print media, or the television, or with talking to people, but most often it is in engagement with digital texts on or offline in front of my computer screen. Bourdieu claimed, ‘We learn bodily. The social order inscribes itself in bodies through this permanent confrontation, which may be more or less dramatic but is always largely marked by affectivity and, more precisely, by affective transactions with the environment’ (2000, 141).

is it possible to argue that the environment that one transacts with no longer has to be a physical space that one travels to and from, and that cyberspace provides the affectivity necessary for many elements of education? All of this leads me to suggest that some of the participants viewed school as irrelevant because the scholastic view (Bourdieu 2000) found in school is also irrelevant and does not relate to students’ reality. Current out-of-school learning and associated technological interests seem to further enlarge the divide between the relevance and reality of school to their daily lives and future existence.

The participants in this study were able to choose what they learned, when they learned and the mode in which they did it. This is arguably a form of leisure. Kimber and Wyatt-Smith (2006) argued a case for having students-as-designers. in this context, it is possible to state that the participants’ practice is performed as an act of resistance to the structures of schooling and the dominant beliefs that constitute good learning. They were also able to choose who and what they learn from – not just what has been set up as exclusive and privileged (Bourdieu 2000). They were able to learn and receive pleasure from their engagement and not have to be concerned about the hierarchization and failure in relation to how traditional schooling determines competence (Goodson et al. 2002). They were in fact designing and engaging in their own learning (peppler and Kafai 2007; Willett 2007).

It is possible to argue that learning is part of the overall field of leisure, and that when one accesses and engages with websites, they are learning. Not all of the participants viewed their practice as learning, and some did not see that what they were doing had any link to their schooling, or possible career paths, or had any relevance to the rest of their lives. This strongly reiterates the widely recognized point that learning and schooling are not always tied. However, some viewed their computer interest and skills to have strong links with their future occupations (Joe, Jake, Tom).

The focus on leisure in this field by these students and indeed by many people who utilize digital technologies can be closely intertwined with learning. This can be attributed to the idea that users have to negotiate and interact with media that has increased in complexity (Johnson, S. 2005). Texts in popular culture, and the ongoing nature of having to negotiate new texts and new forms of leisure, along with the countless decisions required, and the need to make sense of what is going
on, means that learning is inherent to this practice of leisure. It is possible to argue that in this context, Play + Work = Positive Practice. There is a blur between learning or work and recreation or leisure (Brabazon 2007).

Digital newcomers (and perhaps digital outsiders) may in actuality disparage the informal learning that is occurring, claiming deference only to formal learning in ‘proper’, traditional fields. Chapters 7 and 9 closely examine this misrecognition and argue for the need to refocus our attention. The notion that informal learning and leisurely use of computers constitutes a positive practice will be reiterated.
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chapters 7

internet Addiction
in the lives of Teenagers

Highlighting the popular discourse found in the lives of some teenaged technological experts, this chapter reiterates the argument that the notion of addiction is readily and too easily thrown about in everyday language. This chapter gives real-life examples of this occurrence based on recent research.

In my study, the idea of addiction kept occurring in the data despite there being little focus on this area within the research questions. Reference to addiction occurred in various ways, but utterances included denial, jokes and the idea that addiction to one’s computer was something acceptable and freely admitted. This chapter will discuss whether I believe that the participants in my study were addicted or not, and what influenced my analysis of this matter.

In previous chapters, I outlined an initial tension between insider understandings of expert behaviour and how expertise is performed, and newcomer understandings where some kinds of computer activities are more highly valued than others. This is a distinction between ‘working’ and ‘gaming’ that privileges work over leisure. In this context, the amount of time spent on a task is ascribed different meanings depending on the motivation for the task. In addition, there is a point at which time on a computer becomes read as indicative of some level of extreme behaviour, in this case, addiction.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) presented the term ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi 1988) to ‘refer to an experience of sustained pleasure that he found to be reported by artists of all kinds, athletes, scientists, mountain climbers, and many others, when they were absorbed in an activity that sounds to us very much like the process of expertise’ (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1993, 102).

In this chapter, I use the term ‘flow’ because it aptly describes the praxis and performance of expertise in this field. However, flow does not describe how expertise is obtained; it describes a phenomenon that artists, athletes and scientists experience when they are absorbed in an activity that proves to be progressive in nature, and which provides sustained pleasure (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1993). I suggest that ‘flow’ is a disposition of the participants positioned in this field of home computer use for leisure.
Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) described common characteristics of the flow experience, which are listed below:

- Total absorption in the activity.
- A feeling of being in control.
- A loss of self-consciousness (‘which Csikszentmihalyi attributes to all mental resources being invested in the activity, so that none are available for self-reflection’, 102).
- A loss of the sense of time.
- A balance between ability and challenge (so that there is neither too much anxiety and frustration, nor too much boredom).
- Too much repetition means it gets too easy resulting in boredom, so the nature of flow means that the task will be progressive, that is, increasingly more difficult.
- Sustained pleasure, which becomes a motivator for more flow, which could result in the feeling of enjoyable addiction (102–103).

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi was the original person to coin the term ‘flow’. Sandberg (2001, 23) stated that for Csikszentmihalyi, flow meant ‘intoxication and inspiration’. In regard to play, Sandberg made a link between child and adult forms of play:

He [Csikszentmihalyi] compares the feeling of total engagement that marks child play continually under the condition of flow. To be in this condition and experience deep play requires prerequisites from both the environment and the individual. The participants interpretation of play shows that flow for persons in ages 40–49 year [sic] have had a large implication for them in their play memory. A thought is if it depends upon that they start [to] romanticize their childhood. (Sandberg 2001, 23)

These common characteristics of ‘flow’ are found in the practices of each of the participants. Within this field, flow is a disposition that aptly describes these digital insiders’ engagement with computing and digital technologies. This practice is ever-increasing and progressive in nature, so the loss of sense of time, and the loss of self-consciousness are part of the praxis within this field. However, both of these ‘losses’ tend to be viewed negatively by some adults and society as addictive practices. These practices are not boring according to the structures of the field, if they were, they would discontinue these practices. The participants had a heightened and ongoing sense of pleasure and fun because of the nexus between tasks they were able to do within their ability and tasks that were stimulating and provided challenges. This flow they experienced was a disposition that constituted their trajectory toward expertise. It is possible that this concept of ‘flow’ has been misrecognized as ‘addictive-like’.
it was not a purpose of the study to determine what addiction was in the lives of these participants, however, some of them mentioned that they or their parents thought they were addicted to their computer. While two of the females joked about being addicted, all three females denied that they were addicted. One male claimed to be addicted while another denied addiction. The other three males did not bring up the notion of addiction. Most of the parents monitored their child’s computer use, while some did not place any limits on usage. This notion of addiction is discussed because it was a recurring theme in the data, but not because the parents said their children were addicted. The following paragraphs describe the participants’ thoughts on addiction to computers.

‘Not really’ was the phrase Anne used when asked whether she was addicted, but she joked that she and her dad were ‘addicted to FreeCell™’. Anne did not share her explanation of what addiction meant to her, but her use of the words ‘not really’ imply that she was unsure about how addiction might be evidenced in her life. Anne did not deem any of her friends to be addicted to computers or the internet. Her statement that ‘she couldn’t live without it’ is probably more suggestive of her dependence on (or daily use of) the computer/Internet, not that she believed she was addicted.

The parents of Charli monitored and limited her hours on the internet because Charli said, ‘cause they think that I like I just get addicted to it, and it’s unhealthy; I don’t agree with that’. In a later interview I probed this further by stating, ‘so you mentioned to me that you were addicted to the internet?’ Charli replied, ‘That’s just what people say I am but I’m not. Well my mum and dad say I am’. During the time of the fieldwork, Charli was banned from using the Internet and the home computer for three months, for reasons personal to the family. Charli was attached to her online usage in order to be able to communicate to her friends. When she was banned, she stated:

I said to mum, I’ve done a week now but like I just wanna go back on, but then I know that everyone’s disappointed in me, if I like do that. It’s just so hard because, and it’s not cause I’m addicted. Cause like I’ve got friends overseas, it’s ok to not talk to my friends now because they’re at school, and I see them and I can text them and ring them and stuff. But no, my friends overseas, it’s like my only way through to them, it’s so expensive to ring them and stuff. I don’t get to text [sic] them or see them.

Another joke about addiction was made once by Lisa in reference to her mother, who she claimed to be ‘addicted to that site’ – a trading website of new and secondhand items. I did not ask Lisa or Chris what they thought addiction was. Chris did not mention addiction in the observations and interviews. When I asked Joe about whether he thought he was addicted, he said he was not. Jake seemed
to be somewhat dependent on computers considering the amount of time he spent using them, but as discussed previously, this does not constitute addiction.

Tom claimed to be ‘definitely addicted’ to the Internet. During the latter part of the fieldwork, his mother forbade him to use the Internet for six weeks because he did not hand in a school assignment on time. He stated that he read up on a WOW™ game manual so he could ‘get his fix’. Before he was banned, I asked him, ‘so what happens if you can’t go on the computer?’

Tom: Um, I haven’t been without one for that long before, so I don’t know.

R: So basically, you have to go on it every day?

Tom: Yeah, even if I’m not enjoying it, I just go on it.

R: So, what’s that like then, feeling like you have to.

Tom: I dunno, just normal, I’m used to it. I don’t feel like I’m not enjoying it very often.

R: When do you think you first became addicted?

Tom: Pretty much straight away. [We both laugh]

R: So what does addiction mean to you? How would you define it?

Tom: You’ve gotta have it, like if you don’t have it, you just crave it, I guess, yeah, even if you’re watching somebody else and not doing it yourself.

In a conversation about addiction, Tim said he was not addicted to computer games and stated he did not know of anyone else who was addicted to the computer. I asked him whether being addicted to the computer was positive or negative? He replied:

Tim: Oh, if you were like a proper addict, probably negative [smiles]. Because like you’d fully go insane or something if you spent all day locked in a room or something [we both laugh], without going outside, doing no exercise or anything like that. Probably wouldn’t be good for you. So that’s probably negative.

R: Mmmm. Do you have any friends who you think are computer addicts?

Tim: Nah, not addicts. I’ve got friends the same as me, just like playing games and that, yeah. No one that’s like on it 24/7 or anything like that.
Tim’s notion of addiction was expressed in his rebuff: ‘I don’t think like about it all day, every day’. It is important to elaborate on the other dispositions evident in this field, which have led to what I argue is the misrecognition of the practice misunderstood to be addiction.

**Dispositions (Habitus) in the Field**

Further to the disposition of flow, this chapter now highlights and explains three other dispositions that comprise the habitus of the participants in this field of home computer use for leisure. They are:

- Spending time.
- Experimentation.
- Motivation.

These dispositions are the accepted ways of thinking and acting in this field of home computer use for leisure; these are the doxic practices (Grenfell 2004; Lovell 2000). I claim that these dispositions shaped how expertise is performed in this field (Johnson, N.F. 2007a).

As the participants have all spent a considerable amount of time using computers; this amount of time is likely to be an intrinsic part of being a digital insider. Because these digital insiders have always had screens, multimedia and digital technologies in their lives, are they so used to this that they do not even stop to think about how much time they spend using a technological artefact? Their lives are pervaded and saturated with the everyday use of digital technologies, especially the computer. To spend a lot of time on the computer is not only a doxic practice, an accepted way of thinking and acting in this field, it is a way of life that is embodied.

Another disposition found with each of the eight participants is that of spending many, many hours experimenting with their computer. All of the participants used experimentation as their main way of learning and solving problems, or through trying to achieve something when they were using a computer. One more commonality found throughout the discourse and the practice of the participants was the fun or enjoyment the participants had when using and experimenting with the computer. I now focus on the motivation inherent in and resulting from the pleasure of this engagement and experimentation. This study suggested that computer use provides students not only with computer expertise, but also with pleasure and with motivation. Leisure was the primary purpose in using computers for these participants, it was an important part of their trajectory towards expertise. The fun they had with their computer was a great motivator for further use.
Each family demonstrated their level of wealth through owning one or more home computers – possibly one modern-day indicator (symbolic capital) of western wealth. In almost every instance, the participant had exclusive use of a computer. Each teenager had unlimited dial-up or broadband access to the internet. The return on these investments (by the agents and their families) was the participants’ gain of further expertise whose habitus continued to pursue expertise of their computer. All these aspects contribute to giving people with a certain habitus the unrestricted opportunity to spend countless hours using the computer, which in turn could be viewed as having a level of addiction. As Bourdieu (1990, 60) stated:

The habitus which, at every moment, structures new experiences in accordance with the structures produced by past experiences, which are modified by the new experiences within the limits defined by their power of selection, brings about a unique integration, dominated by the earliest experiences, of the experiences statistically common to members of the same class.

This position is exemplified by adult reactions to the enjoyable and novel experiences of young people. From an adult viewpoint, addiction is viewed pessimistically, and can be considered negative for the psychological, physical or psycho-physiological states, where the pertinent action in the field is the ‘fix’. This is evident in dominant discourse. The dehumanizing effect on agents can be linked to a hysterisis of the habitus, which is where the agent’s perception does not reflect current reality, but a past one. Grenfell (2004, 29) defined hysterisis as when the ‘field moves beyond the habitus, whose structural dispositional possibilities can no longer respond to the actuality of the field. This situation – hysterisis – leads to action, which is no longer appropriate or relevant for the present state of the field and the “collective expectations”.

Another way to view hysterisis would be to consider that an individual’s habitus incorrectly understands the current world to be the past world so their habitus is wedged in time. The ‘fix’ is the only capital in the constricted field. As the field of computer use is always changing and developing, so the habitus of these participants responds to changes in the field, which also requires time. This suggests that hysterisis is not applicable in this field. Hysterisis is about a pause in time and these computer users are repeatedly progressing in their use of time and in their use of their home computer and associated software. Therefore, I believe that these participants are not addicted because they are plainly using strategies the habitus has presented as beneficial. So while their practice could be considered addictive-like, it cannot be considered to be a hysterisis of the habitus. The participants are always dealing with change, and negotiating new fields within their field.

In review, the addiction theme emphasizes an occasion to contrast how children and adults read similar performances. The constant use of computers by
these young people is a leisurely practice, and is a way to obtain more expertise. However, participants understand the praxis to be read by adults and older generations in general as negative, as fervent, and as an addiction, rather than as an ability or practice, such as rehearsing the violin for six hours a day, or getting up to go to the swimming club at 4:30 am. Those who are devoted to their art or sport are arguably esteemed, and are not thought to be addicted. Addiction is seen as harmful, or terrible, but really, the praxis of these teenagers is not understood according to the rules of the field in which they are positioned. The habitus of the adults, who may see the praxis as addiction or addictive, is different to the habitus of the students as they have grown up in a different world, have a different habitus and are digital insiders.

In the field that these digital insiders are placed, their social and cultural capital is tied up in the expertise exhibited by how well each one plays these games, or how well they negotiate their way around the computer (skill and confidence levels). Those in other fields do not understand the capital of ‘expertise’ in this field. This illustrates how it is detrimental to value different practices within different fields due to the different capital that is valued. The rules of one field do not apply to another, in the same way that the rules of a game are specific for that game (Bourdieu 1990). Bourdieu accounts for how the ‘rules’ become inherent and part of existence, as the player is unaware of the structures that have produced dispositions and are reproducing dispositions:

The earlier a player enters the game and the less he [sic] is aware of the associated learning (the limiting case being, of course, that of someone born into, born with the game), the greater is his ignorance of all that is tacitly granted through his investment in the field and his interest in its very existence and perpetuation and in everything that is played for in it, and his unawareness of the unthought presuppositions that the game produces and endlessly reproduces, thereby reproducing the conditions of its own perpetuation. (Bourdieu 1990, 67)

In this field of expert computer use, the tendency to display behaviours often read outside the field as signs of addiction, is alternatively viewed simply as a doxic practice in that it is acceptable, especially as part of a trajectory towards expertise. Those that consider the practice within this field to be doxic have also positioned themselves within the field. Part of this doxic practice is the flow which, as stated earlier, comprises a loss of sub-consciousness and a loss of the sense of time.

The quantity of time spent experimenting led some of the participants’ parents to wonder if their children were addicted and whether their activities were unhealthy. The participants made comments regarding their parents’ concern, for example, Tom said that his dad said to he and his brothers that they should ‘go outside and get some vitamin d’. it is interesting that parents’ arguments against increasing time of computer use are generally ingenuous. Arguably,
older generations, digital outsiders, and traditional authoritative figures view this practice as addiction. We need to reframe the way we view the field in which these digital insiders are positioned in order to convey the worth of their praxis, of which the addictive tendencies can be described as doxic and acceptable because it is part of the trajectory towards expertise. There seems to be a conflict between one set of activities (time on task, pleasure, and so on) being read as a ordinary pathway to expertise or an extraordinary pathway to social failure, deviance or poor health. The ever-developing nature of the praxis lends itself to being thought of as addictive-like, but a level of dependence – or a recurring, standard engagement with a technology – is somewhat doxic in this field, and sometimes arrives as an innate, agreeable and enjoyable result of flow (a disposition in this field).

Finally, the doxic practices within this field triggered some of the participants to question (or at least mention) whether they were addicted because of domineering discourses surrounding addiction (which possibly stem from the moral panics of older generations). For some participants, they did not judge themselves to be addicted. For other participants, they happily or jokingly conceded addiction, as they viewed it as acceptable and perhaps were unaware of the gravity of what constitutes true addiction.

Misrecognition of Addiction

The theme of addiction has an in-school parallel in the notion of misrecognition. A recent telephone survey conducted by the Stanford University of Medicine (Aboujaoude et al. 2006), questioned 2,513 adults about their Internet usage in order to determine features of impulse control disorders evident in problematic internet use.1 The questions were derived from established diagnostic criteria for the diagnoses of other disorders – such as impulse control disorders and obsessive-compulsive disorders – and substance abuse. The article concluded: ‘future studies should delineate whether problematic internet use constitutes a pathological behaviour that meets criteria for an independent disorder, or represents a symptom of other psychopathologies’ (Aboujaoude et al. 2006, 750).

This study seemed to assume that a lot of internet usage was problematic. They asked respondents to report unsuccessful efforts to ‘reduce Internet use or a history of remaining online longer than intended, internet use interfering with relationships and a preoccupation with Internet use when offline’ (Aboujaoude et al. 2006, 750). prior to the interviews the researchers determined that these four aspects relating to Internet use were problematic. Perhaps the question that should be asked is whether this constitutes misrecognition on the part of the researchers and the

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1 Examples of impulse control disorders include kleptomania, pyromania and pathological gambling.
... interviewees? For example, the researchers believe the practice is problematic, but have they considered the field(s) in which these agents are positioned? Have they misrecognized the practice within the field? The interviewees are associated with problematic Internet use because they have been asked to identify how they have tried to reduce their internet use, or highlight when their internet use interferes with relationships. Because they are associated with what has been constructed as negative practice, they then assume their practice is negative. This could be a situation where the interviewees misrecognize their use because of the types of interview questions asked within the study.

The interviewees’ use may in fact not be pathological any more than my internet use is pathological, but what it does do is indicate that the fields have moved and changed but the identification of praxis and behaviour has not. Grenfell (2004, 124) gave another example of hysterisis whereby ‘some individuals are simply out of time and space, attempting to apply old ways of doing things and of understanding to a rapidly changing world’. Here it seems that pathological behaviour has been classified by rules applicable to other fields. The field of Internet use as a form of leisure arguably constitutes a legitimate site of praxis (that involves legitimate learning) whereby applying the rules of pathological behaviour to this new field constitutes hysterisis on the part of the researchers and on the part of those being researched (as a result of the participants being influenced by the researchers’ questions). The ‘rules of the game’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), the new field, is not known because the field and its praxis have not been legitimated.

Unless digital newcomers themselves are engaged in the field of home computer use in similar ways to the participants in my study, they will continue to misrecognize and perhaps not accept the praxis within this field. Bourdieu (2000) spoke of co-option, which is evident within relations between digital insiders but may need to be utilized to introduce digital newcomers to the field to therefore assume the habitus particular to the field.

Every field is the institutionalisation of a point of view in things and in habitus. The specific habitus, which is demanded of the new entrants as a condition of entry, is nothing other than a specific mode of thought (an eidos), the principle of a specific construction of reality, grounded in a prereflexive belief in the undisputed value of the instruments of construction and of the objects thus constructed (an ethos). (In reality, what the new entrant must bring into the game is not the habitus that is tacitly or explicitly demanded there, but a habitus that is practically compatible, or sufficiently close, and above all malleable and capable of being converted into the required habitus, in short, congruent and docile, amenable to restructuring. That is why operations of co-option, whether in the recruitment of a rugby player, a professor, a civil servant or a policeman, are so attentive not only to the signs of competence but also to the barely perceptible
indices, generally corporeal ones – dress, bearing, manners – of dispositions to be, and above all to become, ‘one of us’.) (Bourdieu 2000, 99–100)

Part of assuming the habitus particular to the field in order to be accepted or recognized, is to embrace the ways that learning occurs in the field, after first identifying how learning occurs.

While the practice of digital insiders and some of the practice of digital newcomers is ‘addictive-like’ in that it highlights a level of dependence, this practice is not negative, nor a waste of time, nor problematic in terms of ‘over-use’, or not getting outside enough to play as in days gone by. These changes in practice reflect a change in the habitus of these agents because of the change in the fields within broader society and a change in the capital they value. This new habitus demonstrates an evolution of learning preferences and a way of living that is commensurate with positioning within digital cultures. Digital engagement is preferable for some agents over face-to-face interaction. This is similar to how for some people leisure is preferable in company while for others they prefer to be alone. By spending many hours engaged with digital media, expertise may be developed and, in fact, the likelihood of expertise development is increased with more use.

it is arguable that the participants had a level of dependence on the technologies they preferred to use every day. This level of dependence on technological media is ‘addictive-like’. What implications does this have? Does a level of dependence constitute addiction? If so, that would mean we were addicted to our cars, our telephones, our refrigerators and our washing machines (see the introduction and Chapter 1). It would seem that by using Bourdieu’s theory of practice and the concept of hysteresis, that this practice can be read as something other than negative and destructive addiction. it actually demonstrates how these agents are moving quickly, keeping up with the development of technologies. We must accept the praxis by reframing our ‘gaze’ as i have suggested. The misrecognition of the praxis in this field needs to be challenged.

The dispositions the agents had included were an interest in, and capacity to negotiate, digital technologies. The dispositions also included motivation and flow, resulting from the fun they enjoyed. The elements that make up each participant’s trajectory towards expertise can also be presented as dispositions, as part of what makes up their habitus, as part of what makes up part of being a teenager in youth culture, and part of the assimilation, acceptance and association with the multiple texts of consumer-media culture.

As argued in chapter 1, addiction is a serious and complex issue – it is not something that should be glibly referred to as a possibility without extensive consideration of suitable criteria for diagnosis. However, it should be noted that
the scepticism shown towards those who are high-frequency Internet users, or those that suggest *addiction* in a response to heavy engagement with digital media, are also not thinking. This returns us to my main argument in this book that the phrase ‘addiction’ is thrown about glibly, often and unnecessarily.
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There are significant influences on cultural, social and economic capital in the lives of young people today. One of the many privileges that digital insiders have is internet access, along with personal computer ownership. This chapter draws attention to the notion surrounding privilege in this digital age, and will highlight how these new forms of privilege may not only enhance one’s ability and aptitude to learn, but perhaps evoke meaningful self-efficacy in this digital age.

Though cultural capital theory has been criticized for not fulfilling its promises (Kingston 2001), and being somewhat inapplicable outside of French culture (Kingston 2001; Lamont and Lareau 1988), it is useful to highlight how the forms of capital are applicable to this particular field of home computer use for leisure. This chapter combines the presentation of results with discussion of those results. This discussion demonstrates how the participants’ trajectories towards expertise result from the forms of capital evident in their lives and especially in their practice of leisure. As Lareau (1987) explained and highlighted, it is relevant to discuss the cultural experiences found in homes when making connections with school and academic achievement. The practices that constitute cultural capital in this field argue for the further development of Lareau and Weininger’s (2003) comprehensive review that demarcated the definitions, measurements and differentiations of cultural capital. That article also critiqued the dominant interpretation of cultural capital, of which this chapter fits alongside.

Previous research has focused on how schools reproduce social inequalities (Lareau and Horvat 1999). Dumais (2002) highlighted how education expects children to have cultural capital which can only be acquired and passed down by one’s family, and cannot be given to them by education. This is evidenced by Bourdieu (1973, 80) who stated, ‘By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give’. An interesting addition to the literature on how schooling is positioned is the lack of recognition given to informal learning that takes place out of school and is aligned with leisure.

Other research has focused on human capital and its influence on instructional leadership within schools (Spillane, Hallett and Diamond 2003). Human capital involves a ‘person’s knowledge, skills, and expertise and is acquired through the development of skills and capabilities that enable people to perform in new ways’ (Spillane, Hallett and Diamond 2003, 3), and is distinctive from cultural capital
(Lareau and Weininger 2003). As the participants in this study were teenagers, they do not have the human capital like those who are experienced leaders. This chapter questions whether expertise can be equated with ‘human capital’ as the expertise understood and performed by this group of teenagers was closely aligned with their obtainment and perpetuation of forms of capital they received from being placed in the field. I suggest that as the social and cultural capital of the teenagers tends to be misrecognized by adults, it is closely aligned with Kingston’s (2001, 97) statement that highlighted the political risks of ‘saying that some practices are “better” than others’. This field of home computer use for leisure is a new form of leisure (within the last thirty years) and is not a traditional field of expertise or learning. Therefore the field, the capital within the field and those positioned within the field are not valued by those who are not within the field. To put it another way, social or cultural capital in one field does not have the same value in another field (Lareau and Horvat 1999). As esteem (or respect or admiration) is given to someone or something only if it is recognized or identified (Bourdieu 1986, 1990, 2001), it is arguable (as previously suggested) that this field is neither valued nor esteemed and therefore those within the field have little power.

Within the context of this research, using the term ‘trajectory’ is preferable to ‘pathway’ as ‘trajectory’ encompasses various paths and diverse steps that may be taken, not in correlation with a linear or singular pathway. Bourdieu was critical of the idea that life history was linear (Reed-Danahay 2005), preferring to use the term trajectory, which suggests the inclusion of multiple conventions and structures that influence the agent, or in other words the inclusion of the many fields acted in by the agent.

The Forms of Capital Evident in the Trajectory Towards Expertise

Anne believed one could become an expert through taking lessons, figuring out how to work the computer and knowing everything about it. She stated that, as one becomes more experienced, one becomes an expert. She described a technological expert as ‘one that’s good on the computer, [giggles] or good with their technology thing that they do’.

With regard to how to become an expert, Joe thought that it was ‘Just by fully understanding something, y’know, but um, and who is like really confident at doing particular things and things like that, yeah’. Charli agreed with me when I suggested that both positive experiences with computers and the opportunity to do it would help with the development of expertise. She had previously explained that she had never really had a negative experience with computers. Chris believed a technological expert was made through the following:
You have to pick up the right skills, you have to search for those skills, search for the right people who are going to give you those skills, and sometimes it can just come out of the air by pure luck. But if you try and just try and make yourself shown, different people can recognize you and you will be able to pick up a few of those skills – thanks to them.

chris credited a lot to others helping him along his way, though he also stated that his natural inclination to find out ‘why’ and ‘how’ things worked was also significant.

Lisa believed that her computer expertise was obtained by ‘just really fiddling around on the computer and just learning from that, yeah’, and that she had spent ‘heaps’ of time, and ‘a very long time’ on the computer:

Lisa: Yeah, I used to come home every day [from school] and would play on the computer, and listen to some music, mmm, about three years.

R: Oh ok. So it’s something that basically every weekday you’ve done for a long time, for a couple of hours at least?

Lisa: Yeah, 2 hours.

Joe’s research on scientific topics for homework and for exam preparation tied in well with his natural interest in sciences. He claimed that most of his internet use was for homework research. The HowStuffWorks (2008) site was very interesting for him and he initially used it for a school assignment. Technical things of all types are explained on the website, ranging from the ‘sith’ in Star Wars, to lock picking, to how PlayStation™ work, to how GPS works. He said that his friends used it to find out about PlayStation™ and XBOX™. These are all examples of the social capital he possessed which was conferred by others as he gained status and esteem from the knowledge he attained and continued to pursue.

Economic Capital

Regarding ‘economic’ capital, all of the participants had been provided with equipment including a computer and accompanying hardware and software, along with unlimited internet access. Tom mentioned that once he exceeded his internet limit the World of Warcraft (WOW™) game would play more slowly than usual. None of the participants mentioned that they had a limit of internet hours per month, though Joe and chrali mentioned self-imposed and parental limitations they had on how much time they spent using the computer.

Anne’s family had a lot of economic capital and objectified cultural capital. Anne’s family expected that she and her sister would both attend university. Examples of their economic capital follow. Anne’s family emigrated from England.
when Anne was three years old and she has had a computer in the house since the age of two. All of her friends were ‘disadvantaged in the technology department’ as they only had dial-up Internet, not wireless like herself, and did not have the ‘newest computers’. Anne had been provided with no limitation as to the amount and type of computer use.

Charli had exclusive use of the computer owing to being an only child. Her parents preferred to use their business computer, rather than use the home computer. Both these aspects were an important part of her trajectory towards expertise. Charli referred to people who did not have home computers as ‘deprived’.

At Chris’s mother’s house, they had dial-up Internet for one desktop PC. Both Chris and his younger sister had their own personal laptops and broadband (high-speed) Internet at their father’s house, which they were at for a week at a time before returning to their mother’s house. He tended to spend more time on the computer at his father’s place than at his mother’s because of the speed of broadband and because he had fewer restrictions. Chris made comments about how slow computers were at school and at his mother’s, especially compared to his father’s place. He was careful not to say that what he had at his father’s was better, acknowledging that it was different there compared to his mother’s where playing on computers and his PlayStation™ was ‘kept to a minimum’.

Tim and his family also possessed a high level of economic capital, illustrated in the following statements. Tim’s PC desktop computer was situated in Tim’s double bedroom which also had a television, double wardrobe, a chest of drawers, single bed, bedside cabinet and a wardrobe (fitted into the wall). His computer desk was a complete set-up (like Tom’s), but (unlike Tom) he had an expensive office chair. Tim had a Sharp Hi-Fi™ stereo on the top of the computer cabinet from which the stereo sound from the game came through. Tim had had his computer for three years and it was his parents’ old one. He had bought new parts for it to make it better. His brother (aged 14) got his halfway through the previous year (unknown if it was bought by him or given to him). His parents had another desktop computer in their office.

It is arguable that Tom’s family did not have a high level of economic capital, but some economic capital was still present. Tom’s bed was along one wall of his single bedroom while his desktop PC computer and his elder brother’s computer sat along the other side. He bought his computer from his elder brother, but it was one of many in the house (estimated to be another five computers). Compared to Tim, Tom lived in a small, modest house. However, the exclusive use of his own computer and the unlimited access to the Internet were significant contributions to his economic capital and his objectified cultural capital.
Lisa’s computer (desktop PC) was situated in the family lounge area. She arguably had a low level of economic capital, though still adhered to the description of economic capital described above and the description of the ‘objectified’ cultural capital, which all the participants possessed. With this in mind, it seemed that Lisa acquired various states of cultural capital and her social capital from other fields.

Social Capital

Regarding ‘social’ capital, as a result of their expertise and their status of being experts, their standing amongst peers gave them importance, specifically with regard to the field of leisure. Their ability to play computer games well or do other computer-based leisure activities that were valued within the field gave them status and distinguished them from others. By being good at a form of entertainment, they were esteemed because of the value of leisure. It is possible that leisure and entertainment are the most highly valued form of capital in youth culture. Their home computers gave the participants access to kinds of activities that constitute social capital – for example, being able to play online games was a marker of being ‘cool’, and was esteemed.

The social capital Charli had gained can be exemplified in the following illustration: Charli explained that one of her friends had called her ‘professional’ in reference to her competence at using her computer. She also said:

Some of them [her friends] just think I’m just normal cause like this generation is getting up with the computer technology, like with MSN and big things like that. But then others think that I’m kind of a computer whiz, if you like, and stuff.

Lisa seemed not to value the social capital of being an expert, and was unsure of its relevance to her, but for the others the social capital they had was valued, because it was socially conferred that they were knowledgeable and skilful. They had status amongst their peers and within their family.

Because of the economic capital of his family, Chris’s trajectory toward expertise had included the attainment of social capital (status), and embodied cultural capital (type of habitus) in how he worked through things. For Chris, his father had had a significant role in teaching him how to use computers, how to play games, providing equipment to use and giving Chris the opportunity to watch him (his father) use the computer. Chris began his trajectory to expertise through playing games and then learning programs like Word™ and Excel™, and then moving on to graphic programs (for example, Flash™).
The influence of people on Tim confirmed his social capital. Tim believed he became an expert from ‘using it so much, and having friends that know all about it as well, to ask and get things from, yeah’. He thought that other people could become an expert in this way and elaborated by stating: ‘Like if they’ve got friends or parents that can teach them, yeah. Or if they want to find out themselves, there are things on the internet that you can learn, yeah’.

Jake had a high level of social capital exemplified in the status he had as an expert who was constantly asked for help with the computers at school or the equipment in the school hall. He used MSN™ and iChat™ to communicate with those requesting help, with work colleagues and with those whom he deemed as ‘experts’ from whom he could learn. Text (SMS) messages he received on his mobile phone/s also requested help. Jake sought out sources for help and was also a source of help. Jake was aware of the need to empower and enable others to do his job, in the sense that he would often set things up to work properly, check things were working properly and then leave a novice to ‘push that button there’ when needed. He discussed how others had helped him to learn technical things, and so consequently tried to provide opportunities for others to learn and do, which also freed him up to do other required activities.

**Cultural Capital**

Regarding the ‘embodied’ state of cultural capital, McCall (1992, 843) stated that, ‘embodied cultural capital actually manifests itself in dispositions, or put another way certain types of dispositions are themselves forms of capital’. I suggest that the development of computer expertise, or a disposition toward using computers, comes under this category. The belief the participants had in their expertise was only sustainable and ongoing if their expertise was increasing. This self-perpetuated their cultural capital as they sought further expertise. Part of the expertise involved negotiating with interfaces ever-changing within new fields, as well as negotiating more quickly with interfaces because they became more comfortable with the practice. Since birth, these teenagers have had to negotiate with multimedia and make complex decisions and choices regarding information (Luke, C. 1999).

With regard to the ‘institutionalized’ form of cultural capital, that is, attaining a qualification in computing, none of the participants had attained a formal qualification in computers, but all of them had taken computers as a subject in their secondary schooling years (except Anne, who was expecting to take it in the following year, missing the first two years of computers as a subject in her secondary schooling). Tom had advertisements of computer courses on his bedroom walls. Jake and Joe both discussed their desire to take a tertiary course, but Jake more so in lighting and sound, whereas Joe was interested in a computer-programming course, in which he hoped to enrol as a part-time student during the following year. Anne had thought about doing a computing degree at university, but expected to
find computer programming boring. She had asked a young adult male about his job opportunities since obtaining a computer science degree, and was disappointed in his response when he said he had not attained a job and there were few jobs to apply for. Dumais (2002, 44) argued, ‘female students may be more encouraged to make use of their cultural capital to succeed in school’, however the boys in this study seemed to be more focused on school achievement than the girls.

The ‘objectified’ form of cultural capital relates closely to economic capital. The participants owned computers, corresponding hardware and various types of software, Mp3 players, and the agency to buy and download music, and burn CDs. However, they also had access to an infinite base of knowledge, in the form of the Internet, which is like possessing an infinite number of Encyclopædia Britannica™, as well as unlimited access to ‘information’ that might not be included in an authorized encyclopaedia, such as entertainment gossip. In this context, the encyclopaedias are not material objects per se, so the internet (as a resource equivalent to numerous encyclopaedias) is a symbolic form of objectified cultural capital. All of these items cannot be attained unless one has economic capital to purchase them. One could argue that, because the World Wide Web tends to be freely available in certain public places such as local libraries, for instance, one could develop expertise by frequenting the library and using the available computers. However, it was a characteristic of the participants that, because the computer (and the World Wide Web) was readily accessible, and almost always available for use at almost all hours of the day (and night), they were indeed advantaged because of the easily accessible location and ready availability of their home computer and Internet access. Because the participants had a home computer and Internet access, it not only was classified as an objectified form of cultural capital, but also constituted economic capital.

All the participants possessed the forms of economic capital, social capital, embodied cultural capital and objectified cultural capital that have been described previously. Each of the participants was able to access the ‘right kind of knowledge’ (Skeggs 1997, 90) that allowed them to perform the role of ‘expert’ in the manner legitimated within their field because of their economic capital and the resulting capital from having economic capital in the first place.

The following quotation from Bourdieu (1986, 54) reiterates my analysis of the forms of capital evident in this field of home computer use for leisure: ‘If the best measure of cultural capital is undoubtedly the amount of time devoted to acquiring it, this is because the transformation of economic capital into cultural capital presupposes an expenditure of time that is made possible by possession of economic capital’. These young people have developed their cultural and social capital through becoming computer experts, which is directly related to the amount of time they have been able to spend on the computer, which in turn is a direct result of the economic capital of their families. To put it another way,
it is possible that the participants became experts because of their environment, in the same way that athletes become experts because of the provision of lessons, equipment, travel, costs associated with their sport, and so on. The way for expertise has been created through the provision of manuals, software, hardware, the chance to explore and the unlimited opportunity to do so. Those who do not have this opportunity will not be technological experts. Money and provision of equipment are components of the ability to acquire technological expertise, and enable skill and interest to develop. Those who do not have this opportunity are disadvantaged technologically (Johnson, N.F. 2004) and perhaps in their identity (boyd 2008).

in relation to Bourdieu’s theory, habitus and cultural capital are fundamentally tied to the notion of expertise. A computer expert must have a computer (and dial-up or broadband Internet) at home that they are able to access in order to accumulate the time required to become an expert. These computer experts did not need school to help them become an expert in this area, though some acknowledged the role of the school and their teachers in contributing to their trajectory toward expertise. The next subsection is devoted to the importance of computer expertise as a form of capital in this field.

The Importance of Computer Expertise as a Form of Capital

For the participants, the computer or expertise on the computer was important to them, and this aspect could be argued to be a form of social capital in this field. Anne did not mention the importance of computer expertise, other than saying she ‘couldn’t live without it [the computer]’. Charli often mentioned the importance of her computer expertise. It gave her agency with leisure, in her youth culture, and online community:

r: so is your computer use – even though you haven’t really been using it much [recently] – is it still a positive thing for you?

Charli: It is, it is, because that’s like the sort of thing that you choose everything that you do. And it’s cool … like the Internet, it’s got your own restrictions sort of, you can choose what you want to do and you can choose how much you want to do of it, and you give yourself the limits and restrictions.

Charli was banned from the internet for reasons personal to the family. After the ban had been lifted, I asked, ‘How important is it to you to be an expert computer user?’

Charli: I think it’s quite important now like, I went on yesterday, this is probably not really irrelevant [sic], but I went online yesterday to do some homework and
i wasn’t allowed to do anything else, but then i had to type something. Well i reckon like, it amazed me how like out of practice I was with my typing and I was so like bad, and I felt so horrible about it because I had that feeling of being an expert or whatever, that now I felt like it had been taken away from me and that really upset me.

R: So when it was first suggested to you not to use the Internet, how did you feel?

Charli: I wanted to shoot somebody [giggles], literally, like they saw the anger in my eyes, I had just gone from like just getting calm to like ‘oh my god!’, cause he has no idea how like, what it, it’s like how else can I talk to my friends overseas, it’s like my main thing, and yeah.

She realized how important computer access and skill was to her. The strong emotion Charli felt about this topic was also reflected in this excerpt when I asked her during an interview, ‘Has your account been suspended?’ to which she responded, ‘Not mine. I’d kill myself if it was mine’.

When asked, ‘How important is it to you to be an expert computer user?’ Chris said, ‘it is extremely important to me to be an expert in something in your life. Computing just turned out to be my strong point really.’ His expertise gave him social capital (status) as he had been given responsibility amongst his peers to help them with computer problems because the recognition of his expertise had enabled him to do so. His expertise also gave him confidence to work with other new technological items that he came across in life.

Jake’s identity was considerably comprised of his technological expertise illustrated in the following example:

R: Ok, so your expertise in technology, is that a significant part of who you are?
Jake: Yeah, pretty much. If I lost, like if I got brain damaged or something and lost all my technical information, i’d basically would be no one, because i’m known for my technical stuff.

Unlike Charli and Jake, Joe did not portray strong emotion about the importance of his computer expertise, but he conveyed its importance to his future career path:

Joe: Because what i want to be is an astronomer and computers is one of the main things, creating new programs, and writing them, and using them. Computers is one of the important, is an important thing for my career path, so i need it, yeah.
Joe: for astronomy, you need to be able to design your own computer program and analyze data and everything like that. It’s all in computers, even controlling like, for instance, telescopes and stuff, computerized telescopes, you need to be able to use computers.

Joe placed a lot of value on traditional ways of learning, and the attainment of academic qualifications. He strongly valued one of the types of cultural capital, that is, institutionalized cultural capital. Through attaining more institutionalized cultural capital, he would be pursuing the career path he wished to take (astronomer), by investing in that form of capital.

Ilsa concluded that computer use was important to her though she began by expressing doubts about its importance:

r: how important is it to you to be an expert computer user?

Lisa: Um, I don’t think it’s that important, but it’s always good having some knowledge of computers or technology. Cause we’re not left in the dark. Yeah.

r: so what if you didn’t have your computer at all?

Ilsa: i’d probably be a couch potato [we both laugh]. i’d try and do some sport, yeah.

R: So you’d fill your life up with other stuff? It wouldn’t worry you too much?

Lisa: It might, cause it’s like where I get everything from.

Tim and Tom did not mention anything that allowed me to code their statements as ‘importance of computer expertise’, but the amount of time they each spent on the internet suggested that maintaining and developing their computer expertise was important for each of them, as it maintained and developed their social capital amongst others positioned in the field.

As the computer was important to the participants, and because performing that computer expertise was important to them, the significance of computer expertise became a type of social capital, as status was socially conferred owing to ‘being up with the play’. This arguably led to the participants’ desire to obtain more expertise by using and experimenting more with the computer. The use of, experimentation with and progressive nature of obtaining more expertise constituted this site of skill and knowledge. As Lareau and Weininger (2003, 582) stated, ‘Effects of “status,” for Bourdieu, are not distinct from those of “skill” (or by extension, “ability”). Cultural capital amounts to an irreducible amalgamation of the two.’ Those that do not have this economic capital and habitus may find it
difficult to develop technological skill or expertise. It has been shown that forms of capital delineate both the field and the power constructs within the field. For each of the participants, the social capital represented in their computer expertise was an important part of their life. Being an expert and maintaining or increasing their level of expertise was important to each of the teenage technological experts in this study.

Moi (1991, 1036) argued, ‘The capital at stake is always the symbolic capital relevant for the specific field under examination’. As I have examined the specific field and the capital relevant in the field, it can be stated that the cultural capitals have different values depending on the field that legitimates and determines the tradable value (Skeggs 1997). This suggests that, while social, cultural and economic capital – as defined by Bourdieu – is the same for both adults and young people, young people (especially these particular teenagers) value capitals different from those which adults value, or to put it another way, their ‘cultural capitals have different values’ (Skeggs 1997, 29). The forms of capital I identified in this field are valuable to the participants because they were in the field, they determined what was valued, they determined what was at stake for that capital to be valued, and they determined what was acceptable practice (Moi 1991). In turn, the discourses they had access to were constituted by their cultural capital (Skeggs 1997). The participants determined what was the ‘right’ capital and this was arguably different from what some adults value, especially those who are not situated within this field. The teenagers have identified and laid claim to the ‘stakes of the game’ (Bourdieu 2000, 151).

Within society, there continues to be increasing social stratification amongst users of digital technologies (Brabazon 2008b; Castells 1996; Johnson, n.f. 2004). Cyberspace is not available to those who are not computer users. They are not actors in the digital age; instead, they are positioned by dominant discourses as lacking and are excluded from future developments. Those who are users are privileged. Therefore, those that are unwilling to accept new technologies, those who are poor (unable to afford a computer and/or Internet access), and those who do not have access (through position in remote locations, or Third World locations) are discriminated against, whether they choose not to be users or whether they do not have the choice to be a user. These people are digital outsiders. For those in western society disinterested in digital technologies and access to cyberspace, they have positioned themselves as digital outsiders because they do not value engagement with digital technologies, however, they are exercising their right to choose.
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This chapter builds on the notion that many young people seem to have a limited connection with their schooling and associated experiences. I claim that daily engagement with digital technologies constitutes leisure, which can be closely intertwined with learning and the possible development of expertise.

This chapter builds on previous arguments that discussed how the participants in my study learned, and how they viewed learning, in the field of home computer use for leisure. This closely corresponds with obtaining and maintaining expertise. By engaging with ideas concerning the performance of schooling, I argue that the participants’ practice is misrecognized, which prevents the participants’ practice from being considered a legitimate site of both learning and leisure. The values these young people have are dissimilar to the values associated with traditional ideas of schooling, learning and leisure. Bourdieu’s idea of misrecognition (Bourdieu 2000) will be evident in this chapter, specifically regarding how the teenagers in the study understand learning, and how these teenagers believe that adults differ from them in their understanding of learning. I continue the claim that the cultural capital in this field of home computer use for leisure is perpetuated by the pleasure and learning that the participants gain through obtaining more cultural capital. I also highlight some of the moral panics and digital myths surrounding misrecognition of the practice of leisure.

The Perpetuation of Capital, Pleasure and Learning

The participants in my study – both the males and females – acquired capital as a result of using computers. Their computer expertise (that has been attained) is a form of cultural capital that is not only sustainable, but is possibly a site for the development of more capital within this field and in other fields.

The following two interview excerpts give examples of how the participants have acquired capital in different forms, and how they feel confident in being able to explore new fields:

Joe: They [girls] can use a computer and stuff but just going that extra bit further to, and like what I do for my future career, which I’m trying to get to, I use my computer to help me for that, and like for example, my sister, she wants to become a doctor but what she does on computer is just look at Hollywood stuff,
y’know, movies [researcher laughs] and all that, yeah, yeah, waste of time. Yeah, you can have fun on computer stuff, there’s a lot more to it though, yeah and you can really use it in a good way.

Chris: If I wanted to take up new things in computing, I’d be able to pick up on it.

r : Your mum said before, that you often, she thought that you were good at computers because you often looked up finding out why, rather than just accepting.

c hris: Yeah.

R: So could you talk about that?

Chris: Well, I really don’t know how I came to be like that, it’s just what happened, it’s part of my nature where I want to look into things because I really want to learn. I want to, with computing I found that, if I really want to know a program and if I really want to know how to use something, I have to understand how and why it ticks, because it helps and I can relate to different things with that knowledge. So I’ve found that it’s assisted me in lots of different, not just, lots of different ways, not just computing.

not all of the participants viewed their practice as learning, and some did not see that what they were doing had any link to their schooling or possible career paths, or had any relevance to the rest of their lives. Some of the participants saw the link between what they did and a future career (Tom, Joe, Jake, Chris); some saw the link between what they did and their schooling (Charli, Anne); some did not see any link (Tim, Lisa).

The capital in this field of home computer use for leisure is valued by those who situate themselves within the field. It tends to not be valued by those not positioned in the field, nor by those who do not know the rules of the game (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) or who do not have a feel for the game (Nash 1999).

The participants are empowered to gain capital in other, different fields if they choose to do so, because they are able to choose what they learn, when they learn, and the mode of which they do is arguably in the form of leisure. in this context, it is possible to state that the participants are performing an act of resistance to the structures of schooling, and the dominant beliefs that constitute ‘good’ learning.

How capital links to the habitus of youth, and their family, strongly correlates with their sense of social capital (status), and their understanding of learning. They have been enabled to learn because of the provision of equipment and Internet
access, which in turn has encouraged them to experiment, which consequently has developed their expertise, therefore increasing their motivation. The teenage experts did not gain a significant amount of learning in the area of computing from formal education and traditional schooling; they mostly gained their technological expertise by independent means. While Chris maintained that he did learn a lot from his teachers at elementary school, and Anne claimed she had learnt a lot in her two years in a laptop classroom (which occurred previous to the study), the other participants maintained that they had basically taught themselves.

One could argue that within the broad field of schooling, because these children’s expertise is not in the form of a qualification (institutionalized cultural capital), that their expertise is not valued. However, it is also debatable that because their peers esteem them, they have status (social capital), which should mean that their expertise would be valued and acknowledged by their teachers. Of course, this does not apply as the teenagers and the teachers have positioned themselves in different fields. This is perhaps an indication of differences between teenagers and adults (or digital insiders and digital newcomers/digital outsiders\(^1\)). This also lends weight to the argument that the teachers do not recognize the praxis in the field of teenagers’ area of expertise as legitimate sites of education.

The Performance of Schooling

It seems that many students have a limited connection with their schooling and associated experiences. Students know they should succeed in school, yet school seems to be situated in former fields akin to that of a print culture (McLuhan and Fiore 1967), or print-based literacy (Lankshear, Snyder and Green 2000) whereas it is arguable that the participants’ habitus and the fields they position themselves in – that of a digital culture (Levinson 1999; Lynch 2002) – have changed. Some students accept the difference between the freedom of home computer use and the limitations of school computer use (Selwyn 2006), but others continue to be alienated from schooling (Gee 2003, 2004; Green and Bigum 1993; Kenway and Bullen 2001). It is possible that the learning that is occurring in schools is a far cry from what these participants are learning in and through cyberspace. Is it more appropriate for the students to state that their ‘directly perceived reality’ (Bourdieu 2000, 17) is what goes on in front of their computer screen? For some students, engagement in cyberspace is a preferred reality, rather than schooling, which may appear to be an irrelevant reality.

As will be illustrated in the following text, for these teenaged technological experts, the praxis in this field of home computer use for leisure is a positive endeavour for personal expression. The participants’ focus is on learning and

\(^1\) Of course, it should be acknowledged that not all young people are digital insiders!
developing their knowledge and skill, specifically in regard to their computer use. As stated previously, the praxis in this field can lead to the attainment of further capital. It is arguable that this field is a valid, real and accessible space for learning.

The following examples show how Jake was strong in his sense of ability and technological nous, and in his sense of what he could do for the community through a lighting company that he managed. Jake first got the Internet at his home in this way:

My parents didn’t want to get internet. But then i found out that it was just when Zfree [an isp ] had just started. so i signed us up with a Zfree account and they didn’t even know, until the Zfree letters started coming home saying ‘thank you for being a customer’. ‘And then they’re like, ‘What’s this Zfree company?’

‘oh it’s free internet.’

‘So that’s what that fax tone is when I pick up the phone.’

‘Yeah.’ so it was really naughty of me actually.

We do lighting for churches and stuff for next to nothing, like donations. ‘cause we understand that they can’t afford to hire mass amounts of lighting for hundreds of dollars, so what we do is we do the best job we possibly can with what we’ve got spare from shows. We have to make sure we don’t hire out to more than two concerts or else we don’t have enough gear’, cause we’re still building and buying gear. But we do the best show possible for the least amount of money.

Through drawing on her technological knowledge and skill, Lisa had been able to teach others how to use computers (as shown in this example):

r: so who have you taught – you don’t have to name all their names – but y’know, give me a general idea who you have sort of taught that to?

Lisa: Well, different ages really. Like mum, dad, my brother, Kevin [male friend, pseudonym], c harli, yeah. And there’s my nana [giggles]. Yeah, every range of age.

R: Oh ok. Oh cool. So is that quite a positive thing for you to teach other people that sort of stuff?

Lisa: Yeah, cause it makes me feel smart [giggles].
For the participants, Bourdieu’s following statement rings true specifically in regard to their use of home computers as a primary site of leisure:

Since the desire for fulfilment is roughly measured by its chances of realization, the degree of inner satisfaction that the various agents experience does not depend as much as one might think on their effective power in the sense of an abstract, universal capacity to satisfy needs and desires abstractly defined for an indifferent agent; rather, it depends on the degree to which the mode of functioning of the social world or the field in which they are inserted enables his habitus to come into its own. (Bourdieu 2000, 150)

This relates to the earlier statement made that suggested that the everyday practice by these teenagers in this field constitutes an act of resistance to the structures of traditional schooling, albeit a subconscious one.

Some of the participants’ expertise was recognized as positive within a school context and alternative trajectories to ‘school expertise’ were constructed to meet these recognitions (Jake); others were disillusioned with schooling and how it could relate to what they were interested in, admittedly in different ways from each other (Chris, Anne, Lisa); some viewed schooling and traditional ways of learning as being an inherent part of their careers (Joe, Chris). But what is important is that these participants achieved (in their own eyes) a degree of expertise for which their schooling had not been particularly responsible. Indeed, with some of the participants, schooling had had little influence in their trajectory toward computer expertise.

**Misrecognition and Legitimation**

Learning (arguably part of a trajectory towards expertise) is a form of embodied cultural capital, one that was not recognized by all the participants. The learning that occurs in this field was possibly not recognized as legitimate by traditional figures. This strongly reiterates the recognised point that learning and schooling are not always interlinked. However, some participants viewed their computer expertise as having strong ties to their future occupations.

The most significant finding of this study suggests that those within the field of teenage technological expertise value the diverse forms that capital has in this field, and the diverse pathways toward it. They therefore legitimate the praxis found in the field. Those who do not know the rules of the game (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) in this field, on the other hand, misrecognize the practice (or perhaps it goes unnoticed, see Maddock 2006). For Bourdieu:
The countless acts of recognition, which are the small change of the compliance inseparable from belonging to the field, and in which collective misrecognition is ceaselessly generated, are both the precondition and the product of the functioning of the field. They thus constitute investments in the collective enterprise of creating symbolic capital, which can only be performed on condition that the logic of the functioning of the field remains misrecognized. (Bourdieu 1990, 68)

This quotation suggests that misrecognition is a fundamental condition of maintaining a field. Hence, as misrecognition is revoked, a field would change and broaden, which is perhaps what needs to happen with the structures of schooling. According to the students, some of their school teachers tended to be ignorant of the expertise their students had, which may have caused the participants to gain more capital because the teacher did not know about them (they have ‘one up’ on their teacher), or feel that their expertise was of no consequence as their teacher did not bother to find out, or show interest in exploring this area with them. Therefore, the students’ capital was neither recognized nor valued. It is probably not a realistic notion to expect secondary school teachers to know of every child’s area or level of expertise. However, I suggest that it is realistic to expect teachers to know about children’s computer expertise in order to be able to utilize him/her in the classroom to help others, or in the very least instance to help themselves as teachers with negotiating software and connecting hardware. Yet, because other ‘powerful fields’ arguably do not esteem this field, and the practice in the field is therefore devalued or misrecognized, it is questionable whether the cultural capital they have obtained, that is, their expertise, was in fact the ‘right’ cultural capital. Skeggs (1997, 90) argued that, ‘it takes a considerable amount of schooling and extracurricular work to impart the “right” cultural capital’, but it is these ‘very personal dispositions, their affections, which generate evaluations and regulations of themselves’ (Skeggs 1997, 90).

Unless adults themselves are engaged in the field of home computer use in similar ways to the participants in the study, they will continue to misrecognize and perhaps not accept the praxis within this field. If the praxis within this field of home computer use continues to be misrecognized by adults, what does that mean for teenagers? The praxis evident with the participants not only suggests but demonstrates new learning spaces that challenge dominant structures within traditional, formal schooling. Teachers are unlikely to challenge or resist dominant structures of traditional schooling because that would upset the field that they are placed in and the legitimacy of that praxis (Goodson et al. 2002). Teachers may question what actual power they have to possibly change dominant structures, especially if the structures constrain the teachers’ agency. The teaching found in secondary schools is questionable when students can design and be involved in new learning spaces that suit their needs and make connections with the type of
education that suits them, and additionally connect with other, similar learners. As Grenfell (2004, 81) maintained:

Many students and pupils are still excluded … in forming a relation with education, which suits them. They may not connect with what education offers them because the way thinking is represented in its systems is simply alien to their own cognitive habitus. in these cases, they exclude themselves and/or are excluded.

The field of schooling has changed because fields are ever changing (Grenfell 2006). As the habitus closely interrelates with the field, the habitus challenges the field, but a hysterisis (where the habitus of the agent perceives the current world as the past world so that the habitus is stuck in time) on the part of those people who continue to construct schooling is arguable, because it is not favourable for teachers, school administrators, curriculum designers, and so on to identify their own misrecognitions. As Brabazon (2002, 188) said, ‘it would be damaging for teachers to spend all their energy revealing … the power they gain from the system while that system is crumbling around them’. Grenfell (2004, 194) stated, ‘It is not in the interest of those who benefit from keeping these processes and products occluded to acknowledge them’. To me, this notion raises numerous implications regarding the provision of resources, namely computers and high-speed internet, and suggests the uptake of a teacher’s role aligned with a constructivist, facilitative approach, which may be in direct contrast to everyday, actual practice.

Bourdieu argued that if enough people understand society and the way it works, then change can be effected through acts of resistance. If enough people perform acts of resistance ‘within a particular field (or several), then the structure of the field changes and with it the subsequent constituent habitus’ (Grenfell 2004, 186).

As we move towards 2010, it remains that if the premise is correct that many teenagers have different learning preferences and abilities, and schools are established on the previous print culture, then schools (or parts of schools) and teachers may need to change to reflect the digital culture of this current age (Lankshear and Knobel 2003). It is conceivable that teachers and school administrators would not wish to change or challenge structures that provide employment and financial security (see Grenfell 2004). King and O’Brien (2002) suggested that teachers might wish to delegitimate students’ competences with digital technologies, because of the direct correlation with the destabilization of their control. However, if new learning spaces produce expertise that does not require traditional, formal schooling, and if teenagers perform acts of resistance in relation to how, when and where they prefer to learn, there are many implications for the role of traditional schooling, formal learning and the traditional role of the teacher.
expertise is usually gained through formal means, for example, technological or computer expertise is traditionally thought of as being gained through computing degrees. When expertise is gained through informal or non-traditional means, it is questioned. Those that gain computer expertise through leisure, outside of school, in informal ways are questioned, and are possibly misunderstood or misrecognized.

Moral Panics and Digital Myths

If the practice within this field of home computer use continues to be misrecognized by digital newcomers and digital outsiders, what does that mean for digital insiders? The practice evident with the participants not only suggests but demonstrates new learning spaces that challenge dominant structures – traditional, formal schooling. Many medium theorists argued that digital culture challenged centralized, hierarchical power. Angela Thomas (2005) focused on an online community called ‘Gathering of the elves’ created by a 13-year-old girl. She examined the discursive and social practices of a group of approximately 60 children who are actively involved in a number of online activities related to the Tolkien world of Middle Earth. These children, average age 13, engage in online role-playing games where they create collaborative and ongoing stories based on their created fictional Middle Earth characters. (Thomas 2005, 27)

Thomas found that within this online community, there was evidence that ‘learning is multilayered, involving exploration, experimentation, engagement and participation, practice, storytelling, rituals, discussion, overcoming difficulties, negotiating and valuing identities and motivation’ (Thomas 2005, 30). This demonstrates the wide-ranging nature of informal learning that can be evident within a field of leisure. A comprehensive study conducted by Green and Hannon (2007) included ‘conversations with individual children, diaries, focus groups in formal and informal educational settings and our polling of 600 parents’ (Green and Hannon 2007, 16). The following three moral panics given as examples from Green and Hannon (2007, 31) can be dispelled by Thomas’s findings:

1. The internet is too dangerous for children.
2. Junk culture is poisoning young people and taking over their lives.
3. No learning happens and digital technologies are a waste of time.

Green and Hannon’s seminal work on moral panics and digital faiths provide much support that leisure can be a place of learning. Children are capable of monitoring themselves and their safety. Though children may be tempted to explore taboo topics, many of them decide for themselves that these taboo areas
are not for them at the moment (Johnson, N.F. 2007b). There are dangers that must be addressed. Young people must be educated about these dangers and placing limits and monitors on children is appropriate. There are people in cyberspace who seek to prey on young people and there are those who seek to abuse the trust of young children. But children are becoming much savvier and privacy filters and securities are becoming more widely available and used. The important thing is not to generalize one-off, unusual instances as being applicable to all.

Cyber-bullying and extreme communities (Bell 2007a) are real in the virtual world. Their existence should not be dismissed, neither should it be considered that they are as widespread as they are sensationalized to be in the media. Many recent publications have provided guidelines to parents about advising on the need for supervision and managing internet content and communications (dci TA 2007; Enhart and Madden 2007; Enhart, Madden, Macgill, and Smith 2007; Nielsen/NetRatings 2007). They have been designed to raise family awareness of the potential impact on children of inappropriate online content and predatory behaviour.

A survey conducted of 286 north American undergraduate students found a strong association between the use of Facebook and the development of social capital and personal wellbeing (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe 2007). As young people’s lives are extensively shaped by communication technologies (Davies 2007; Green and Hannon 2007), it is important to understand and build on the (blurred) boundaries between the consumption and production of communication technologies (ACMA 2007; White and Wyn 2008) and the blend of consumption, information and communication media (Ito 2006; Kenway and Bullen 2001). More research will help us to unearth more accuracies to inform us about how to combat cyberbullying and extreme communities in the lives of young people and dispel digital myths.
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Conclusion
Reframing our Gaze on Internet Addiction

In this chapter, the notion that informal learning and leisurely use of computers constitutes a positive practice will be reiterated. I affirm that the advent of digital technologies and their use is a new form of leisure. This is evidenced by the rise in news and entertainment websites that focus on what could be labelled as ‘digital living’, such as the ‘Technology’ sections in the Sydney Morning Herald ( Fairfax Digital 2008) and the New York Times (New York Times Company 2008), the Internet news in New Zealand (Fairfax New Zealand 2007), and the ‘digital life’ sections in the Daily Telegraph (Telegraph Media Group 2008) and The Age (Fairfax Digital 2007). The place of digital technologies within our lives has been exacerbated by the expectations of extreme marketing which demands us to accumulate the best and the latest.

From a study of 33 university students, Watkins and Bond (2007) found there to be four structures of leisure that are qualitatively different for those that experience them:

- passing time.
- exercising choice.
- escaping pressure.
- Achieving fulfilment.

Each of these four structures of leisure are evident in the lives of many people, young and old, who are engaging with the internet and are interested in interacting more and more with the opportunities for leisure and learning the World Wide Web offers. Through the use of the internet, people are choosing in various ways how they will pass the time. They have complete independence to choose which sites they will peruse and what interests they will pursue. This provides a means to escape pressure and stress and go into another world, which is a valid form of leisure. While still considered by many people to be time wasting, surfing the World Wide Web provides many people with the opportunity to achieve fulfilment in various avenues, such as maintaining personal hobbies or interests, developing social networks and learning about an infinite range of topics. Using the Internet provides qualitatively different experiences for various people to suit their needs, interests and desires. This all occurs in a private and personal space yet, with deliberate settings, this engagement can be made public. Contributions to blogs or wikis, or the sharing of video texts on YouTube™ means that private avenues of leisure, interest and expertise can be made publicly available.
As introduced earlier, I suggested there are three types of users of digital technologies. There are those who are digital insiders (those who have always been exposed to digital technologies and are keen users) and digital newcomers (those that have been introduced to digital media). Those who are disinterested in digital technologies could be considered digital outsiders. It seems possible that some digital newcomers disdain the role of digital technologies and happily position themselves as digital outsiders. Green and Hannon (2007) discussed four types of users that gives further insight into the ways young people use digital technologies. Their four descriptors were:

- digital pioneers [who] were blogging before the phrase had been coined.
- creative producers are building websites, posting movies, photos and music to share with friends, family and beyond.
- everyday communicators are making their lives easier through texting and Msn™.
- information gatherers are Google and Wikipedia addicts, ‘cutting and pasting’ as a way of life (Green and Hannon 2007, 11).

They commented that the sixty children and young people within their study ‘moved through a number of these types and combined them in different ways’ (11). To build on the matrix of how technologies are used, there are many decisions that one has to make when one goes online: what to do with emails in the inbox, which advertisements to view, which hyperlinks to click on, which articles to read, which quizzes or polls to fill in and what games to play, thus continually developing digital literacy whenever online.

When I gained a Facebook account it was entertaining. Now, I spend a fair bit of time each day negotiating the notifications, new status updates and actions that others have undertaken. I try to determine from this information what else I will be involved in, as in which application I will add. Currently, I have three email accounts, and now I am compelled to check this fourth ‘site’ each day. I wonder what I have given up in order to spend more time engaging with computers and the internet. How did I spend my time before the advent of the internet? How much of our daily lives has changed because we have engulfed/enwrapped ourselves in new forms of media? This has meant we either make our day longer or we have to cut out other things that would have taken up this time if this new technology or forum was not available. The change inherent in the take up of digital technologies is notable. It is immediate and widespread. If it is not what we used to do before, there are all sorts of questions surrounding its validity, whether we want to change, whether we like the change that has occurred and whether others approve of the change.

People whose daily online practices involve reading others’ blogs (especially if they have really simple syndication [RSS] subscriptions), searching for new
resources, reading updated websites ... what happens? Their lives have been changed by the ever-increasing amount of information available at their fingertips (or modem). In-depth studies have been completed about the increase of media use in the lives of young people (e.g., Madden 2007; Madden et al. 2007; Rideout, Roberts and Foehr 2005). The forms of leisure they engage in have changed as a result of digital media. What are they missing out on? Are other things going to waste? No, these are merely signs of change of our networked society in this information age (Castells 1996). For many of us, the values, leisure activities and practices of our everyday lives have changed. By utilizing digital forms of communication, we can have virtual relationships with others who are not present in our real, biological lives. Through digital means, we are able to obtain satisfying meaning and social capital of which digital outsiders have limited understanding, and who are exposed to ‘analogue isolation and inequality’ (Brabazon 2008a, 66).

As evidenced throughout chapters 7, 8 and 9, certain activities that may temporarily include an obsession with the internet can actually be a positive practice. Though dominant fields of leisure include sport, music, dance and cultural activity (festivals, religion), the field of home computer use as a sub-field of leisure is establishing itself as an area where learning and expertise can be developed and maintained. In previous times, computer use tended to be associated with work or school. For people of all ages, this home computer use for leisure is outside of work or school and is becoming more and more of a preference for leisure time.

The type of play and leisure that some children and youth engage in is no longer the same as it was fifty years ago. The practice of leisure in the twenty-first century is a site of learning. It can be a place for the development of technological expertise. The diffusion of power within these networks and its transmuted nature (Castells 1996) means that young people who would not be validated in a traditional site, can have their expertise, skills and knowledge recognized.

**Digital Newcomers, Outsiders and Insiders**

A recent tragedy in my life showcased the instantaneity (speed, ease, range of impact) of Facebook, highlighting for me the adaptability, benefit and quality of this medium. The widespread and instant communication of a status update on Facebook meant that the 300 or so friends of my younger brother were able to instantly find out that he had passed away. Across time zones and numerous countries, the cruel tragedy determined by his undetected heart condition meant that tributes flowed onto Scott’s Facebook ‘wall’. Persons located throughout the world were able to share their grief, condolences and memories in a public space made private to those who were his ‘friends’. I was then able to showcase these meaningful tributes as a closing item at my brother’s funeral. For the 300 or so
people who were able to physically attend the service, they received support from these others located throughout the world.

This anecdote obviously has particular relevance and meaning to me given the circumstances. I should note, however, that my family and I personally phoned many of his close friends to inform them about his demise, as I did not think it appropriate to inform close contacts through an email, a ‘wall’ posting or a status update on Facebook. Once this essential contact was made, the medium of Facebook was effectively used for communication. It seems that there are forms of media only suitable for specific means of communication to particular types of audiences. Using only one medium for all purposes is limited in that if we carefully consider the audience for our message, then we are able to choose the best medium to utilize. Sending messages to digital outsiders through digital means may be relatively ineffective. Using mixed media when communicating to digital newcomers may be preferable. Writing letters to digital insiders may be limited in its effectiveness. These types of notions need to be researched in order to further understand the role of media and the impact of its message in our lives.

**Communication and Networks**

The complex pattern of interaction between technology and society has been thoroughly extrapolated by Manuel Castells. The current interest in user-generated content (‘Web 2.0’) is a type of consumption brought about by the demand for capitalist accumulation, an emphasis on self-realization and autonomy, and a blurring of the public and private or personal and professional spheres (Brabazon 2007). Castells (1996, 394) stated, ‘The development of electronic communication and information systems allows for an increasing disassociation between spatial proximity and the performance of everyday life’s functions: work, shopping, entertainment, healthcare, education, public services, governance, and the like’.

The rise of a networked society (Castells 1996) has been shaped by technology, and yet the complex pattern of interaction surrounding the use of digital technologies means that we are dependent on technologies. For many of us, we choose to be dependent on these digital technologies. For some of us, we are compelled or obliged to take up the use of these services that digital media provides. We may be resentful of the invasion of privacy or of the need to protect and secure our online identities and associated personal information. We are obliged to reinforce our firewalls, and memorize multiple and increasingly complicated passwords. We get incensed when our software update suggests we must upgrade to the latest version.

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1 A prime example of this is the fact that two of Scott’s friends who were not on Facebook, and whose email addresses or contact details we did not have, were unable to be informed about Scott’s death until more than six months later.
of a product. Eventually we have little choice, and then we have to learn how the new features of the software operate.

Our time can be consumed with technology. The offers to upgrade our mobile phones are appealing when we find out that our technology is obsolete, or will no longer be offered. We are made to change. Castells (1996, 37, emphasis original) argued:

*Technological innovation is not an isolated instance.* It reflects a given state of knowledge, a particular institutional and industrial environment, a certain availability of skills to define a technical problem and to solve it, an economic mentality to make such application cost-efficient, and a network of producers and users who can communicate their experiences cumulatively, learning by using and by doing: elites learn by doing, thereby modifying the applications of technology, while most people learn by using, thus remaining within the constraints of the packaging of technology.

In this ever-increasing *continued-growth state* (Murphy 1981), the desire for more is positioned as a need. Blurring occurs across our need for existence and our desire for social capital as, for some of us, our focus moves to the notion that ‘we are what we have’. We are made to change but are positioned to believe that change signifies progress and that by accumulating the ‘latest and the best’ that we are somehow improving as people.

**Summary of Internet Addiction**

I am not convinced that internet addiction exists. I am convinced that there are many people who use the Internet in a problematic way. I think that the phrase ‘pathological internet use’ (whether general or specific, Davis 2001) aptly describes overuse of the Internet in people’s lives. There is a propensity for piu to occur in many people’s lives as has been reported in the literature (see Chapter 1).

The term ‘addicted’ is often used in popular discourse. For instance, phrases such as, ‘I am so addicted to my mobile phone’, and ‘That [x] is so addictive’, have been used in reference to inanimate objects, digital technologies, types of foods, television shows and online games. This usage is insufficient and unsatisfactory.

In light of our dependence on digital technologies for work, for leisure and for everyday life, we must remember that dependence does not signify addiction. The element of choice still remains, and what may become a ‘like’ of a technology or activity may become a ‘preference’, but then we can choose to discard it if we wish.
Figure 10.1 suggests a cycle of addiction, whereby a ‘like’ can become a ‘preference’. This ‘preference’ could become a ‘habit’, which may become an ‘obsession’, which could possibly lead to an ‘addiction’. However, each of these patterns of practice can be broken, reverting to the former practice. For example, a ‘preference’ to play a computer game may become a ‘habit’. But habits can be broken or changed. A ‘habit’ can revert to being a ‘preference’. A ‘preference’ can be modified and revert to simply something that is liked. However, a ‘habit’ can become a temporary ‘obsession’ or somewhat of an ongoing obsession. This does not mean the practice is ‘addiction’, ‘addictive-like’ or should be classified as problematic or pathological use. An ongoing obsession may become pathological, but may also be a sign of other problems in our lives. These obsessions can be deferred or broken or stopped. ‘Obsessions’ can return to being ‘habits’ or ‘preferences’ or ‘likes’. Addictions provide little hope of being broken. We should not delude ourselves that in the reference to our likes, preferences, habits or obsessions that they are anything like the serious, destructive addictions that people cannot live without.

It is possible that, in order for anyone to acquire a level of expertise in any field or to do something really well, there is a necessity to be obsessed with that activity. The examples given of athletes and musicians who constantly practice and develop their skill in their chosen field demonstrate how their exertion could be recognized as obsessive, yet when we use the term ‘obsession’ to describe
Reframing our Gaze on Internet Addiction

In my own life, I can give an example of where the notion of addiction could be superficially applied to describe someone’s behaviour. The person I refer to is a family member. In the last few months, Andy (pseudonym) has started playing a free online game with strategic nuances, continual developments and appealing rankings. Andy has occasionally played this game during work, but probably plays it for about five hours a day before and (mostly) after work. He enjoys talking about the game and eagerly reads the discussion forums if he is not playing. His engagement with the game is notable and he jokes about having to check his settings in order to make sure he has not lost his ranking. Andy uses this game as a form of leisure and has made ‘overseas friends’ in this online medium. Whereas previously he would turn on the television (though it still habitually tends to be on), he now turns on his laptop and sits in the living room with the laptop on his knees. Andy is still able to perform his household responsibilities and show commitment to his job. However, his obsession with the game could be wrongly considered to be an addiction. Andy has chosen to play this game as one of his avenues of leisure. If Andy was fully engrossed in reading a book while sitting on the couch, the effect would be the same. If Andy solely watched the television for the same amount of time while sitting on the couch, would that be considered to be a habit, an obsession or an addiction? He has chosen a different medium that is not so well regarded or as socially acceptable in the field of leisure, in comparison to reading, watching television, crafts, and so on. While playing the

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2 To risk the possibility of complicating things further, it also should be noted that as ‘obsession’ is a synonym for ‘addiction’, so is ‘habit’. But if we think of the various habits that we have, there are ones that are negative or destructive such as a ‘drug habit’, but of course it is a good habit to clean and floss our teeth every day.
game, Andy socializes with his online friends who also play the game, so he is not avoiding human contact but is socializing with his virtual friends. This positioning of the internet and/or gaming is what we need to reframe in the way we view this practice.

What is frustrating for Andy’s family members is the notion that ‘this is not what he did before’. Those who do not like change and those who do not approve of his choice of medium for his leisure time could find his practice problematic. However, when anyone becomes obsessive about anything, while it may not be considered addiction, it may simply be considered annoying.

In my workplace, I have some colleagues who are not confident with their use of technology and I have been able to introduce them to Facebook and instant chat within Skype™. Many have commented that these things are a good way to waste time. My response to them is that not only have they increased their technological efficacy with using hardware and software, they have increased or enhanced their ability to communicate with friends, colleagues and family, and they have additionally found another form of leisure. This may exacerbate the blend of the personal and public spheres of leisure and work, but admittedly this is a phenomenon that continues to infiltrate our everyday lives. These technological engagements are not time-wasting enterprises; they are a form of professional development (or perhaps even research).

Concluding Comments

Much computer use is normal and is a sign of the times, especially for digital insiders. For those of us who are digital newcomers or digital outsiders, we question their practice because it is not ‘what we used to do before’. Frequent, daily computer usage indicates a new way of life and supports our everyday, continual, lifelong learning. This everyday practice reflects a level of dependence on technological, digital media that is ‘addictive-like’. High frequency users and those that are dependent on digital technologies should not consequently assume that their practice of leisure constitutes internet addiction. While the advent of the internet and associated technologies has not been an overnight occurrence, it has been revolutionary in nature especially as it constitutes the way some of us go about learning, living, communicating and having fun.

For those that have entered counselling in regard to their internet addiction, or sought treatment for their problematic internet use, it may be that in some cases the internet is a scapegoat for other underlying problems. Avid involvement in leisurely activity on the Internet that carries benefits for learning and expertise should not be disparaged. Being dependent on digital technologies in this day and
age is not a bad thing, though does carry significant connotations for the future. Being addicted to the internet is not a reality for most people.

Digital outsiders (and some digital newcomers) find it unfathomable to understand the preoccupation that digital insiders have with their online lives. Because it is not what they did in times gone by, they find it difficult to understand the value, worth and social capital received by avid users in what appears to be an unhealthy obsession. As I have argued, these practices are not only misrecognized as obsessions or addictions, but they are misunderstood.
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