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Digital Hiatus: Symbolic violence in an online social learning network for master's level students at a UK University

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Abstract

This is a narrative inquiry in which I asked six master's level students at a University in the North of England to reflect on their experience of using social media as the learning platform for part of a taught module. I was motivated by the growing ubiquity of such approaches in higher education and by the need to develop rational, just and sustainable online pedagogies that are alert to both the opportunities and threats of this shift in medium. My research questions, framed from a Bourdieusian perspective were:

- To what extent is symbolic violence evident within a social learning network for master's level students at a UK University?
- What forms does such symbolic violence take and how are these forms affected by the medium?
- What kinds of dispositions, abilities and assets constitute and confer capital in this setting?

In answering these questions, I trace symbolic violence in the online exchanges between participants and in the consequences of those exchanges. I develop an *index of digital capital* to describe the dispositions, abilities and assets that they needed to profit from learning in this way, along with a notion of *digital hiatus* to describe what happened when they lacked such capital. At the same time, I acknowledge the positive impacts of this approach on some of the participants.

I locate this research within the literature on social media use for education and more specifically within the subset of that literature that uses Bourdieu's ideas to explore digital inequality. I also locate it within the institutional context of a post-1992 UK university, the national policy context and the economic context for the growing use of technology in Education. I conclude by reviewing the benefits and limitations of the methodology and theoretical frameworks adopted and by considering the potential uses of my index of digital capital, identifying how this might be explored in future studies.

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Dedications and Acknowledgements

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Introduction: Positioning the research

This thesis takes for its topic the use of social media as a learning platform during a taught Master of Education at a UK University to support a group of six master's level students studying for a Master of Arts in Education at a UK University. Made up of two men and four women, all were mature returners to Higher Education and all were employed within various educational roles. I introduced the use of a social networking tool called Yammer to support them as part of a blended learning programme, using it to host discussions in the interval between and following on from two Day Schools, spaced five weeks apart. Yammer is a Microsoft product designed to support collaboration in business environments. It is a Facebook-like platform with similar affordances that allows users to post, follow, like and share text and multimedia and to create groups but without distracting advertisements. This was a closed group, open only to the students concerned.

The research focuses particularly on some of the challenges of this medium when used for this purpose, employing a Bourdieusian theoretical framework to explore and explain these challenges. The first two research questions addressed are:

- To what extent is symbolic violence evident within a social learning network for master's level students at a UK University?
- What forms does such symbolic violence take and how are these forms affected by the medium?

In answering these research questions, I trace instances of symbolic violence in the language used in online exchanges and through their effects upon participants. The third research question is

- what kinds of dispositions, abilities and assets constitute and confer capital in this setting?

In answering this question, I arrive at *an index of digital capital* (pp. 179-181), which elaborates on the following items: ability to deal with the technical affordances of social media; confidence in and strategies for dealing with ephemeral, divergent and fragmented online interactions; access to time, physical resources and conducive social circumstances; tolerance of the opaque gaze of others; academic confidence; and tolerance of or preference for physical disembodiment. This index offers a way to comprehend more thoroughly the challenges that learners face when assessed or asked to make progress by engaging in online conversation through discussion boards, Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and social media platforms. In this introduction, I contextualise this research topic, beginning with a consideration of some of the powerful vested interests in social media learning and moving on to a

consideration of the current conjuncture in UK Higher Education. I close the introduction with an explanation of the structure of this thesis.

Vested interests

Facebook's question inviting people to contribute is 'What's on your mind?' Figure 1 presents three imagined responses to this question. Each seeks to convey the key concerns and preoccupations of powerful stakeholders at the aggregate level as they might have appeared in 2014. 'Social Media Giant' represents the concerns of the platform providers, 'Profiteer' those of Global Media and Education Groups and 'Policy Maker' those of the UK Government. As well as seeking to provide an insight into the preoccupations that are symptomatic of these powerful influencers, their presentation here as imagined status updates seeks to illustrate how the affordances of social media are changing the ways in which knowledge is promulgated and consumed: as brief, intermingled glimpses into the minds of participants, in a kaleidoscopic medley of content, whose only

9
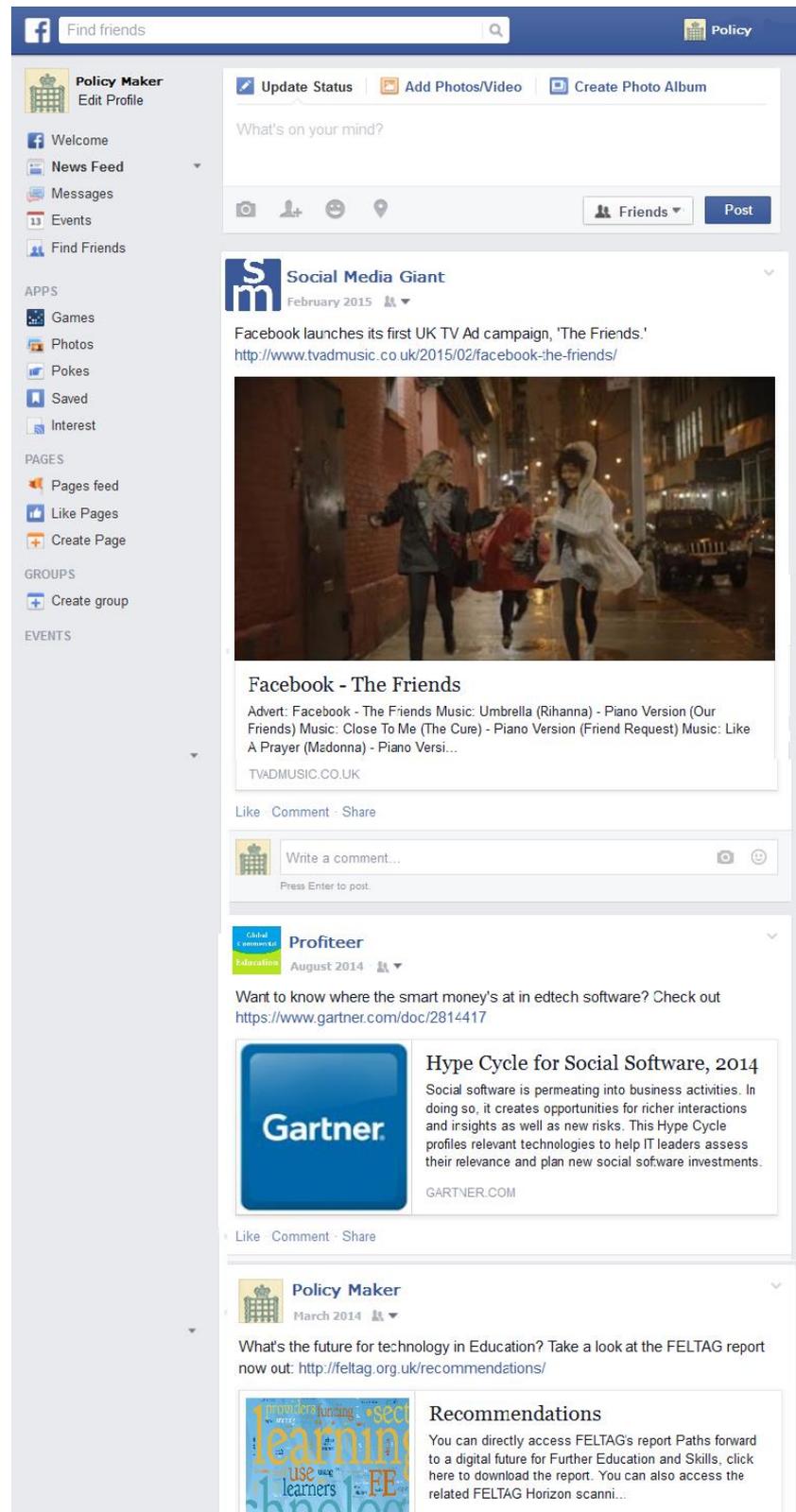
Figure 1: Imagined status updates

point of contact is the individual who follows them all and pulls their ideas into the single stream of their 'news feed.' This pattern of presentation is unusual but appropriate here because it illustrates one of the central arguments that is explored more fully as the thesis unfolds: that the medium affects the message in significant ways.

Social Media Giant

In February 2015, Facebook, already the leading social media provider in the UK, launched its first UK television advertisement campaign. The calm voice of a young woman, over a soulful piano version of Rihanna's *Umbrella* (2007) intones:

> They make our lives a little different; leave us a little bit changed. So we leave behind proof of the time we spent together. Some will show us that we actually like Country Music or help us find our favourite Indian food. They drag us into their lives and make us heroes in their stories. So we let their likes become our likes and the things they share become the things we share. They challenge our point of view; push us out of what's comfortable. And we trust them just enough to follow them. But each changes us, even if just by a little. Each shifts the trajectory of our life, simply by being our friend (Joseph, 2015).

This text is significant because of what it reveals about the ways in which social media is implicated in the manufacture of consent. Facebook is a global platform and as such, can be widely used to encourage and promulgate useful messages or ignore and suppress dissenting voices. Gramsci argued that hegemony as a 'capillary form of indirect pressure' (Morton, 2007, p. 92) bleeds unnoticed into our consciousness, travelling all the more quickly, the more channels of communication we open up. This Facebook advertisement articulates how this process works within a medium that is pierced through and through with such channels; subtly shifting the trajectory of our lives with each message we receive, to more closely align with those of others, especially in our consumer choices.

More recently, as was evident in the Cambridge Analytica scandal (Osborne & Parkinson, 2018), it has been suggested that our political allegiances may be equally susceptible to persuasion through Facebook (James & Reynolds, 2017). The advertisement leaves unsaid the fact that these 'friendships,' 'likes,' 'follows' and 'shares' are harvested as market intelligence on a hitherto unprecedented scale, generating for Facebook and others the 'audience value' that is arguably the real end-goal and purpose of the platform. At the same time, it conveys a benign and benevolent purpose that is centrally motivated by the desire for human connection and love and which many of its users perceive it to be. This is the medium which is considered in this thesis as a potential

platform for education and the thesis seeks to remain cognisant throughout of both the opportunities and threats of so loaded an environment for learning.

Profiteer

Education technology is a global phenomenon, projected to grow by 17% per annum to $252bn by 2020 (EdTechXGlobal, 2016). For-profit educational organisations have enormous financial vested interests in the development of online learning. They graze new technologies, looking for commercial opportunities to stay ahead of the competition. The Gartner Group caters to this demand by providing yearly reports to business on the status and potential of a host of new technologies. Each report employs a model known as the Gartner Hype Cycle (Figure 2), which indicates the maturity of an emerging technology so that businesses can make informed choices about which to deploy next. The Social Software Hype Cycle for 2014, for example, purported to 'profile relevant technologies to help IT leaders assess their relevance and plan new social software investments' (Drakos, 2014). The 83-page report can be purchased online for $1955.00 USD.
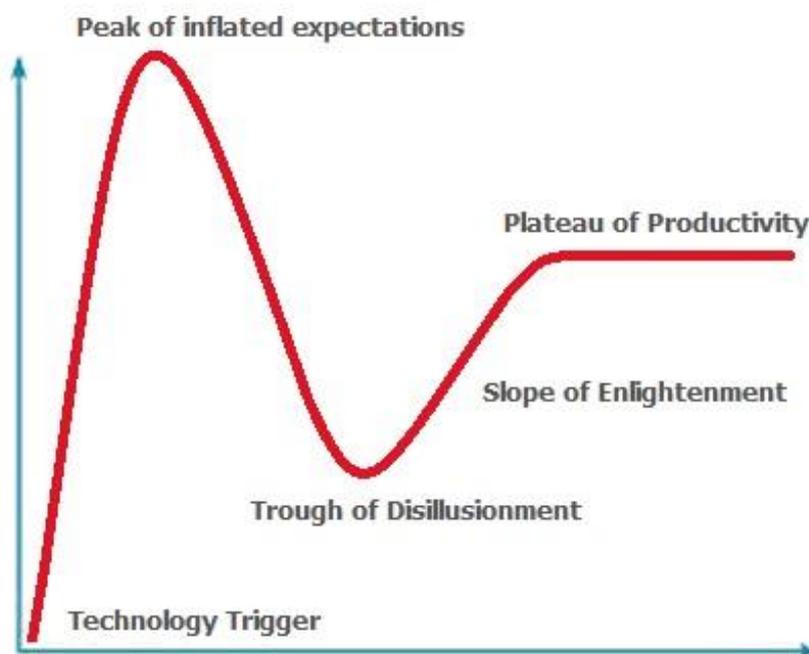
Figure 2: The Gartner Hype Cycle

Each Hype Cycle categorises technologies into one of five key phases: a 'technology trigger' when a new technology emerges, accompanied by early proof-of-concept stories, with significant publicity but unproven viability; a 'peak of inflated expectations' when early adopters report some actual success stories and many failures; a 'trough of disillusionment' where interest wanes and start-ups fail, but survivors improve their product; a 'slope of enlightenment' where the benefits become more widely understood

and more pilots are funded, but conservative enterprises remain cautious; and a 'plateau of productivity' bringing mainstream adoption, honed criteria for viability and broad market applicability (Gartner, 2014).

Social Learning Networks, the subject of this thesis, were classified in the 2014 Gartner Hype Cycle as being at the peak of inflated expectations and about to enter a trough of disillusionment. Even then, however, they were clearly attracting the attention of major players in the commercial education sector:

> Today, Pearson English, a newly formed business unit of the world's largest learning company Pearson, has announced a major partnership with the world's largest social network for language learning, busuu©. The two companies are joining forces to transform the way English learners around the world can measure their language learning (Whittle, 2014).

The focus of multinationals on such technologies and the huge amounts of data that they are able to harvest is symptomatic of how, in,

> the long decline in manufacturing profitability, capitalism has turned to data as one way to maintain economic growth and vitality in the face of a sluggish production sector. In the twenty-first century, because of changes in digital technologies, data have become increasingly central to firms and their relations with workers, customers, and other capitalists. The platform has emerged as a new business model, capable of extracting and controlling immense amounts of data, and with this shift we have seen the rise of large monopolistic firms. Today the capitalism of the high and middle-income economies is increasingly dominated by these firms, and ... the trend is only going to continue. (Srnicek, 2016, p. 9)

Policy Maker

Online education in the Post Compulsory sector is of vital importance to government, both in terms of its educational and its economic significance. The UK Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (FELTAG) report, convened by Matthew Hancock, the then Minister of State for Skills and Enterprise, recommended in March 2014 that education funding mechanisms should,

> mandate the inclusion in every publicly-funded learning programme from 2015/16 of a 10% wholly-online component, with incentives to increase this to 50% by 2017/2018. This should apply to all programmes unless a good case is made for why this is not appropriate to a particular programme (FELTAG, 2014).

The mandated shift to 50% online learning here was bold but when seen in the light of changes elsewhere at that time, perhaps not outlandish. *Changing Course: Ten Years of Tracking Online Education in the United States*, (Allen & Seaman, 2013) reported that the number of American students taking at least one online course had increased between January 2012 and January 2013 by over 570,000 to a new high of 6.7 million and that the proportion of American students taking at least one online course had reached an all-time high of 32.0% in that year. Similarly, it noted that when the report series began in 2002, less than half of all higher education institutions in the USA said that online education was critical to their long term strategy, but that this had risen over the ten year period to nearly 70% (Allen & Seaman, 2013, p. 4).

'Social Media Giant,' 'Profiteer' and 'Policy Maker' show us, therefore, a glimpse into the burgeoning importance of social learning networks at the time this study began and some of the factors likely to influence its form, scale and purposes over time, helping to position this research within the broader social, economic and political context for its inception. However, I was also undoubtedly influenced by the imperatives of working in a post-1992 University in the UK, and in an increasingly digitised sector in an age of austerity. The policy context within UK Higher Education is currently one of marketisation, competition and increased funding pressures. Government austerity measures brought in by the UK Coalition Government of 2010 led to a tripling of tuition fees in 2012, part of an eightfold rise in fees from £1,000 per annum in 1998 to a maximum £9,000 per annum in 2012. This has been concurrent with a long period of decline in public funding to UK Higher Education. A recent analysis of the situation by the European University Association (EUA) found that nineteen higher education systems received less public money in 2016 than they did in 2008. Direct public funding to UK Universities fell by 59.84% between 2009 and 2016 (Pruvot, Esterman, & Kupriyanova, 2017, p. 17), with rising student numbers over the same period, making the UK one of the seven European systems considered by the EUA to be 'in danger' (Pruvot et al., 2017, p. 11). The policy rationale is one of driving up quality through increased competition, with market pressure from alternative providers and increased accountability through inspection frameworks, metrics and league tables, along with the scope for differential fees. Part of an extended body of work that critiques the impact of this rationale (Avis, 2000, 2005; Ball, 2003; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Holmwood, 2014; Olssen & Peters, 2005), a recent narrative study into its impact on academic staff and their work identified six key themes:

efficiency and quantity over effectiveness; autocratic, managerialist ideology over academic democracy and debate; instrumentalism over intellectualism; de-professionalisation and fragmentation of the academy; increased incidence of

performativity, bullying and workplace aggression; and work intensification ... [with] most impact felt by academics (and the nature of their work) in the post-1992 universities (Taberner, 2018, p. 129).

This has been concurrent with challenges to traditional pedagogies and practices of academe on the digital front (Barber, Summers, Donnelly, & Rizvi, 2013). Knowledge provision as the exclusive domain of universities has been eroded, which is evident, for example, in the explosion of MOOCs from 2009 onwards. More broadly, ease and speed of information retrieval via the internet destabilises the authoritative position of academics as the fount of knowledge (King, 1993) and this in conjunction with the performative, managerialist, audit-led culture alluded to by Taberner (2018) and others makes for enormous pressures on the academy to provide a robust and engaging digital estate, digitally literate staff and graduates well-prepared to operate in a digital age (JISC, 2015).

A typical response to this context is provided by Pates and Sumner's recent paper on the 'digital university.'

> This paper serves to illustrate one way in which a British HEI, City University London (City), is facing up to these challenges via an extensive programme of redevelopment, reconfiguration and refreshment of several of its formal learning spaces that has followed on from significant research, experimentation and evaluation around the rethinking of the HE learning space. This programme includes a rebuilding of parts of its estate and a major development of existing digital infrastructure coupled with a strong focus on staff development, including efforts to provide staff with the knowledge and skills to realise the potential of the digitally enhanced classroom. (2016, p. 160)

The Masters course that forms the basis of study for this thesis, then, can be seen as part of a sector-wide shift into digital education, in response to a host of commercial pressures that are particularly pressing for post-1992 universities, as well as in response to genuine aspirations to exploit the potential academic benefits offered by new media (Lupton, Mewburn, & Thomson, 2017). The University in question is no exception. It is situated in a large, northern town and has approximately 1,000 academic staff in 7 academic schools and over 20,000 students, 22% of whom are postgraduate, 20% part time and 84% from the UK. The gender split is 54 to 46% female to male. Graduate employment rates are high, with 94.8% of postgraduate students in work or further study six months after graduating (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015) and a strong emphasis on professional experience as a feature of many of its courses. The University has a long history of providing vocational education and approximately 70% of students gain a professional qualification alongside their academic study. Since 2010,

£80 million has been spent on campus development. In 2018, the University sits in the 601-800th category of Times Higher Education world rankings and in the 151-200th of the Young University Rankings (Times Higher Education, 2018).

Structure of the thesis

The structure of this thesis, then, is that, after positioning the research within this broader social, political and institutional context, a more detailed pedagogical contextualisation is offered in Chapter 1, in order to clarify the nature of the Master of Education studied. I then further locate my study in the literature that explores the uses of social media in education, with a section that focuses on Bourdieusian interpretations thereof. This leads on to a reflexive account of my methodological choices in Chapter 3. So that the narratives that follow can be read in light of the theoretical framework used, Chapter 4 provides a review of the key Bourdieusian concepts through which these narratives are to be considered. Chapter 5 gives an overview of the way in which the social media platform was used by participants, with their broad impressions, their typical patterns of interaction and usage statistics, so that their individual accounts can be set in context. A narrative account for each participant is then provided, each with their own chapter, the first of which is a reflexive account of my own experience of the online interaction. This is offered to encourage interpretations of the narratives that follow in light of my positionality. I use aspects of these narratives to propose an index of digital capital and a notion of digital hiatus in Chapter 13, going on in Chapters 14 and 15 to use these notions to revisit the effects of the medium on symbolic violence for two of my participants, Grace and Ava.

I conclude by explaining the contribution to knowledge of the thesis, including its use of theory and the value of the index of digital capital, revisiting the research questions and providing an overview of how the thesis has answered them. I also revisit the methodology and discuss its value in answering the research questions, as well as reflecting on its limitations and the ethical dilemmas posed by the research process. The thesis closes with plans for future research.

Chapter 1: Context

Introduction

In this chapter I set out the pedagogical thinking underpinning the delivery of the module that forms the subject of this thesis. I explain that this was fundamentally a socially constructivist, situated approach, intended to encourage the kind of confident, scholarly enquiry and autonomy that is required of master's level study. The pedagogy was also informed by the work of Garrison and Anderson (2011) on blended learning as well as seeking to transfer into the online environment productive classroom strategies drawn from the literature on 'evidence based teaching' (Petty, 2009a). I provide some examples of how these approaches played out in practice to illustrate to what degree they were successful, to provide a livelier contextualisation and to highlight ways in which some of my intentions were frustrated by the medium. I also outline how I adapted my more general approaches to meet the needs of individual participants, using ideas drawn from critical pedagogy (Freire, 1996); again providing an example to illustrate how these principles were applied. I close the chapter with a reflection on my own purposes in constructing this account of my pedagogy and pick up and develop those reflections in Chapter 6. The intention of this is to provide a more thoroughly reflexive account of my own perspective and motivations. I begin by providing a short introduction to the history of the module and an explanation of its target cohort and entry requirements.

Background

This thesis, then, explores the experience of six learners studying on a 12-week, 30 credit module as part of a 180-credit part-time Master of Education at a post-1992 UK University. Requiring an honours degree at 2:2 or above, it can be taken as either a three or a two-year course. It is aimed at professionals working within education who aspire to a higher degree or promotion into leadership roles. The course is taught predominantly through Saturday Day Schools, of which there are typically two per module. Support for studies outside those Day Schools usually takes the form of personal tutorials, email communication with the module tutor and materials available through the institution's virtual learning environment (VLE). There is a 60-credit dissertation module and all the other modules are 30 credit electives, covering a range of education-related issues, with an emphasis on completing assignments that are situated within professional, educational contexts. Table 1 summarises some basic characteristics of the participants, drawn from a questionnaire, to be expanded upon in Chapter 5.

Table 1: Basic characteristics of participants

	Gender	Age	Professional role	Participants' own descriptions of their online persona
Ava	Female	50-59	Lecturer in English as a Second or Other Language and Information and communications Technology	Questionnaire not returned
Cheryl	Female	40-49	Lecturer (tutor of this module and author of this thesis)	Welcoming, supportive and challenging
Grace	Female	40-49	Senior Training Officer	Quiet, lurking reader
Hadeel	Male	30-39	Teacher	Helpful
Jack	Male	20-29	Teacher	Encouraging, questioning and curious
Molly	Female	40-49	Lecturer and Teacher Educator	'Gobby!' Friendly, supportive and helpful
Rachel	Female	40-49	College Centre Manager	Hopeful, encouraging, friendly, supportive & attempting to be humorous

The title of the module that they were studying and that provided the focus for this thesis was *Theory and evaluation of elearning*. It was aimed at helping students to use relevant theories to critique and improve elearning resources and approaches. The module was first created in the late nineteen-nineties and in its first iterations had an emphasis on computer-mediated learning and interactive CD-ROM packages. Over the succeeding years its emphasis shifted with the changing face of educational technology, progressing first to a consideration of web-based interactive learning packages, then moving on to Virtual Learning Environments and Web 2.0 technologies such as wikis and blogs. In its current form, its focus is on a consideration of how people learn (or do not learn) within MOOCs and social media environments. Students were encouraged to explore these questions through the lens of various sociological concepts, as well as ideas drawn from the educational technology literature. The module sought to provide students with practical experience of learning within such an environment. They were tasked with producing a theorised portfolio of reflections on this experience, which they submitted for formative and summative assessment.

Pedagogy

I adopted a socially constructivist pedagogy, premised on the notion that people learn through interaction with a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985). My previous teaching on the module using discussion boards within a Blackboard© VLE revealed that in the five-week period between the two Saturday Day Schools, interaction was limited, both in terms of the overall number of interactions and in terms of the depth of discussion. Moreover, the Day Schools themselves, though including some student-led and student-centred activities where possible, inevitably included a substantial amount of exposition by the teacher(s). This was thought necessary to inform students about the nature of the assessment activities and to give them a basic grounding in some of the key theories for the module. Though we sought to make these Day Schools as interactive as possible, they generally, therefore, included a significant proportion of predominantly didactic phases.

This limited interaction both online and at the Day School, along with a desire to update the currency of the technologies discussed, motivated me to shift to using social media to encourage people to converse with each other between Day Schools. I was inspired by the socially constructivist notion that unfamiliar theories, nuanced concepts and conflicting viewpoints can best be grasped when people are given the opportunity to use those ideas in conversation, acquiring the language of the discipline in ways that support their increasingly confident and competent participation in a 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 2012; Shotter, 2012). My use of Yammer also sought to enable 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave & Wenger, 2012, p. 25), with the aim of helping people progress towards a more secure and informed status within the community of scholars, myself included, who made up the module. This was centrally about helping students to develop the ability to talk and write confidently about theories of interactive media. My experience of teaching the module over the previous seven years had revealed that students were often able to *cite* relevant theories in a kind of 'he said, she said' account of the literature (Kamler & Thomson, 2006, p. 76), but they were less able to *use* or *apply* the theory in productive ways in order to interrogate particular educational technologies and online pedagogies or to critically evaluate those theories. This iteration of the module, then, sought to overcome this challenge by providing frequent, low stakes and engaging opportunities to contribute to a theorised, applied and critical conversation.

The idea of professional practice was also important here, because all the students on the module were educational professionals, working in contexts that to varying degrees drew them into the use of educational technologies with their own learners. The approach adopted, therefore, was also quite deliberately 'situated' (McLellan, 1996). The

module was about theories of interactive media and their application within education, which in the current conjuncture, sometimes entails the use of social media. We were, therefore, trying to learn *within* a social media environment as a way of thinking and theorising *about* social media learning. In this sense there was a uniquely self-conscious character to the discussion since we were interrogating the very thing that was enabling us to conduct that interrogation. This made the discussions highly reflexive and cast a spotlight on what people were saying and doing to an unusual degree, the effects of which I will comment upon more fully later in this thesis.

The work of Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2002) on blended learning also informed the pedagogy for the module. They argue persuasively that online 'communities of inquiry' require *social*, *cognitive* and *teaching* presence. *Social* presence enables participants to identify with the community, to project their personalities and to form relationships by communicating with each other. *Cognitive* presence enables the co-construction of meaning via this communication. *Teaching* presence regulates and mediates the whole process so that the intended outcomes and the needs of the learners are met (Garrison et al., 2002). Yammer, with its Facebook-like social affordances was selected to support the vital social presence, without which, Garrison et al. argue, the cognitive and teaching functions cannot wholly succeed. For this reason, I selected a platform that my previous studies suggested would encourage learners to interact socially (Reynolds, Wormald, & Bailey, 2013). This was in preference to the discussion boards, blogs and wikis within the institution's VLE, which my experience suggested would fail to engage people sufficiently in this regard.

Further, Garrison and Anderson (2011) provide a useful breakdown of strategies for developing each kind of presence. I used this breakdown to inform my actions within the online environment in the following ways:

- Social presence was encouraged through;
    o affective expression (expressing emotions, using humour and self-disclosure),
    o open communication (recognising and encouraging reflective and reflexive participation),
    o group cohesion (use of salutations, inclusive pronouns such as *we* and *our* and use of participants' preferred names or nicknames)
- Cognitive presence was promoted through;
    o introducing triggering events, often a problem or dilemma,
    o encouraging exploration of these triggers and their implications,

- o integrating disparate ideas and providing focus and structure where needed,
- o resolving or helping to resolve ideas into a meaningful framework or specific solution
- Teaching presence was promoted through;
  - o designing and organising the macro-level structure of the learning experience,
  - o facilitating discussion to maintain students' interest, motivation and engagement,
  - o giving direct instruction by diagnosing misconceptions, introducing knowledge from diverse sources and summarising the discussion where necessary.

I also encouraged others to engage in all of these strategies, with the opportunity to practise and develop the role of 'teacher.' This related to the course aim of helping education professionals to develop their expertise as providers of elearning to their own students. Also, because this was a second-year master's module with students for whom doctoral study would be a logical next step, I held that it was important to encourage a growing level of autonomy and increasing confidence to synthesise and evaluate ideas from a range of sources, depending upon their own intellectual and scholarly interests. I wanted people to be stimulated by the ideas that I introduced but not circumscribed by these and to bring in disparate theoretical perspectives if they wanted to. For this reason, I scaffolded tasks more extensively at the beginning of the five-week online period but gradually withdrew my controlling influence as the module progressed, joining in instead with discussions initiated by the students and encouraging them to pursue their own independent lines of enquiry. Centrally, then, I saw my role in the first instance as presenting a range of theories in a knowledgeable and engaging way, diminishing this kind of activity as the weeks unfolded. Though I certainly retained throughout something of an 'expert' status in my role as tutor, with a bank of theories drawn from sociological and educational technology literature at my disposal, I made clear to learners at the first Day School that it was not my intention to prescribe exactly which theories had to be covered. Rather I wished to prompt discussion but at the same time to leave the door open for others to bring in any theorists and ideas drawn from their own former studies or independent reading that they thought relevant to the debate.

Contextualising examples and the challenges of the medium

Whilst the ephemeral and responsive character of the network supported this aim of widening the debate and also encouraged social and cognitive presence extremely well,

it undoubtedly made it more difficult to resolve the numerous and disparate discussions that took place into meaningful frameworks or specific solutions. In other words, Garrison and Anderson's (2011) teacher presence was the most difficult to enact within a social media environment like Yammer. Proprietary platforms such as *FutureLearn* offer a potential solution to this difficulty, calling it 'visible learning':

> One way to enhance learning is to make the process visible, so that you know what is coming next, where you are in the course and how far you have come. The To Do list gives you an overview of the course, showing the activities for each week, and keeping a record of what you've completed. The profile page provides a summary of your own activity, including your courses and any comments you have made. (FutureLearn, 2017, online)

This more structured, 'visible' approach is a feature of much of the growing MOOC content offered by FutureLearn and other similar platforms such as Edex and Coursera. However, against the backdrop of tracked progress through the material presented by the course designers, the 'rolling maul' of online conversation in course discussion boards remains a significant and potentially unsettling cognitive demand for participants. At the same time, Ross and Collier (2016) note the emergence of initiatives that 'encourage faculty to leave behind learning management systems that constrain where, how and for how long learners participate,' (2016, p. 21) pointing to Cormier's notion of 'rhizomatic learning' in which 'the community *is* the curriculum' (Cormier, 2014a, online).

The open-ended, responsive and reflexive approach to delivery that I adopted is aligned with this freer, more community-oriented approach to curriculum. Note the similarities of the pedagogical approach that I adopted for this module with this description of Cormier's *Rhizo14* (Cormier, 2014b) online course:

> The community of learning was both the object of study and the process of learning. Cormier (2014) did not set narrow learning outcomes for the participants as he expected learners to create their own maps for what and how they would learn. He provided structure to the course by posting challenging questions related to the topics (Ross & Collier, 2016, p. 21).

I also regularly posted challenging questions and saw the community as both the object and the means for learning. Where my approach differed from Cormier's was that there *were* prescribed and assessed learning outcomes to which participants were directed and I did endeavour to provide them with periodic signposts, summaries or maps of what had been discussed in relation to these outcomes.

However, the affordances of this medium made it difficult for any of us to organise at the macro-level. Predicting that this might be the case, I had provided a bank of relatively static content on the University's Blackboard VLE, but this was visited extremely rarely by participants. Leaving aside logins for the purposes of submitting assignments, the module tracking on the VLE showed an average of only 3 logins by participants over the ten-week period studied. At the same time, the content posted on Yammer was constantly shifting in response to the input of participants. The most recent interaction was always presented at the top of the page and older posts were quickly 'buried' by new. Opportunities to present static content that remained in the same place, to which learners could reliably return, were limited as was support in tracking how much of the content they had covered and how much they had not.

One opportunity to organise posts by theme is that Yammer allows users to tag posts with keywords and these become clickable links that aggregate everything that has the same tag onto one screen. This gave some scope for organising and filtering content, but attempts to encourage tagging had limited impact and it was inconsistently done. I periodically attempted to synthesise the debate by systematically tagging my own and others' posts and by mind-mapping discussions. I posted these maps to the network, but their foregrounding quickly disappeared under new posts and I could never be sure that everybody had seen them. Moreover, the fundamentally student-centred pedagogy that I had adopted, albeit with the benign intent of encouraging scholarly autonomy and independent enquiry, undoubtedly left some of the participants feeling somewhat adrift and disconcerted. Comments in some of their reflective portfolios bemoaned the lack of teacher presence and called for more 'teacherly' control over content and over frequency and style of interaction than I was able to perform. This was both an opportunity and a threat to learning. The disorientation that learners experienced led sometimes to productive learning opportunities and sometimes to the withdrawal of learners from participation.

As an example of this kind of divergent, double-edged interaction, Molly initiated a discussion that asked about the role of MOOCs in the context of neoliberalism. This led on to a lively exchange in which Rachel and Jack also participated, with Jack arguing that MOOCs contributed strongly to a neoliberal agenda and Rachel and Molly seeking clarification of what he meant. Both Rachel and Molly presented counter-arguments that MOOCs widened access to education and promoted personal freedom and educational choice. I saw an opportunity to theorise the discussion and introduced a short video explaining a Marxist explanation of labour relations. This led on to further exchanges before I endeavoured to round off the discussion and highlight links to the assessed task as follows:

Jack's argument, I think, is that MOOCs might contribute to what Marx would call 'the industrial reserve army of the unemployed,' making a huge reserve of flexible knowledge workers for the global economy who can then be exploited by those who own the means of production. Molly's point, I think, is that MOOCs offer choice and, therefore, freedom and self-determination to individuals. This is a classic opposition of standpoints; structure versus agency; Marxist versus neoliberal. It is a really useful exchange as it illustrates beautifully how we might question the role of TECHNOLOGY within our broader socio-cultural and economic context; just the sort of question to wrangle with in your portfolio. Off to a flying start!

This illustrates how I responded to the thread where I saw opportunities to link from the themes raised to other relevant theories whilst taking care not to swamp the discussion with my own input. I wanted to allow space for the students to contribute and respond to one another (Salmon, 2003), but also to lead them on to use socio-economic theories to question educational technologies more deeply and critically. My reference to their assessed portfolio sought to assist them in seeing the relevance of the task to the module outcomes and to motivate them to continue to contribute in a like vein. All of this was good and productive. However, three of the participants, Ava, Grace and Hadeel played no apparent part in this discussion. In a classroom environment, I would at best have sought to include them and at worst at least have been conscious of whether they were a party to the discussion or not and how attentive they were. In the online environment, I did not know whether they had seen or heard any of this content and I did not invite their comment. This was typical of my behaviour online. Though I considered doing so, asking for the views of 'absent' participants when I could not see them to gauge their level of interest or participation felt intrusive and clumsy.

However, in this instance and in others, I attended carefully to any instances of students introducing a new idea or way of thinking about a theme and if nobody else picked up on it or was pursuing the line of conversation, I would try to move that conversation forward, commenting on what I thought was interesting about the post and asking a further question to lead people into discussion. In this, I sought to make use of a technique akin to 'assertive questioning' (Petty, 2009a, p. 269), whereby the classroom teacher encourages learners to explore an issue from multiple points of view by eliciting as many responses as are useful from the whole group before drawing the discussion to a close by providing an overview of all that has been said. In some senses, this was easier in Yammer than in face-to-face situations; since I had more time to read back over contributions and to carefully formulate a response and I could also provide hyperlinks to relevant supporting or extension material where appropriate. However, in other ways, it was much more difficult to manage this kind of assertive questioning

online. In the classroom, I typically use this approach to draw in less vocal students, asking them what they think of the question or of answers offered by others. However, I felt inhibited from nominating specific people to respond in the online environment.

Individual responses

Though I sought to consistently apply the broad, pedagogic principles outlined above (social constructivism, situated cognition, blended learning, assertive questioning and communities of practice), I certainly responded differently to different people. I was keen to be supportive of everyone and to welcome them and make them all feel equally comfortable in contributing to discussion. I sought to adapt myself to their register and ways of speaking online, to some extent mirroring their behaviours to demonstrate that their contributions were of the 'right' kind and were an acceptable basis on which to communicate. Nonetheless I wanted to induct them into and build their capacity to engage in an increasingly theorised and scholarly exchange. This set of strategies was inspired by ideas drawn from the field of critical education and, in particular, the work of Paulo Freire:

> It is necessary in being a democratic and tolerant teacher ... first, to make clear to the kids or the adults that their way of speaking is *as beautiful* as our way of speaking. Second, that they have the right to speak like this. Third, nevertheless, they need to learn the so-called dominant syntax (Freire, 2009, online).

I was also inspired by sociological theories that deal with issues of social justice in education and that seek to ameliorate the reproduction of inequality. In particular, I used Bourdieu's notion of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2013, p. 300) of the kind that occurs where people see a patent contrast between their own ways of speaking and those of an authority figure. There is an important contrast between the ways in which Freire and Bourdieu see the so-called dominant syntax. Freire holds that to learn this syntax is a vital step in the process of conscientization and empowerment whereas Bourdieu emphasises its use as a means for distinction that reinforces an exclusionary doxa. These are not mutually exclusive positions and in my online teaching, I sought to provide access to the dominant syntax whilst at the same time, avoiding the reinforcement of distinction: a difficult balancing act to achieve. I discuss this distinction in more detail in my exploration of Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence in Chapter 4, making use of Michael Young's notion of powerful knowledge (1971).

As an example of this balancing act, Jack had a particular way of using the social network that was unfamiliar to me and to others. Though he remained a prolific contributor in the public forum on Yammer, he was also far more likely than anybody else to use the direct messaging function to send a private message to one person or to

a restricted group of people rather than to the whole network. Typically, he would open this kind of exchange with a short message such as, 'I have a question for you,' or even with a single word, such as 'Hi!' Because others were not used to this form of interaction, this initially came across as curt and this was commented upon by both Rachel and by Molly in interview. However, over time, it became clear that Jack was using this strategy to regularly check how receptive others might be to engage in a conversation. In Facebook parlance, this would be termed a 'poke' meaning to reach out and virtually 'touch' someone, usually to remind them of your existence, or that you are waiting for a reply from them or simply to check whether they are still 'there.' Initially nonplussed by this, using the principles of mirroring outlined above, I learned to respond in kind, simply saying 'Hi' in return to signal that I was present and ready to talk.

Jack's behaviour here may be related to the fact that as the youngest member of the group, he was more likely to display the kind of confident disregard for formality that was fostered through the rise of instant messaging services amongst young people during the nineteen-nineties (Nardi, Whittaker, & Bradner, 2000; Tagliamonte & Denis, 2008). Molly and Rachel described in interview how, after some initial confusion, they too learnt to adapt to this kind of quick-fire exchange and to value the exchanges which it elicited. Our joint ability to adjust to and accommodate such exchanges enabled Jack to continue to use his preferred register and modes of communication within the network in ways that kept it open to him and to others and that generated social interaction and learning conversations.

Similarly, Hadeel's contributions tended to be brief and pragmatic, sharing resources that he had found through his own independent research or giving a very brief and supportive reply to a peer. His developing use of English meant that he sometimes made grammatical errors and had a less extensive vocabulary than others and in common with others in the network I chose my words carefully to try to keep my meaning clear and unequivocal. I explained novel terms in as lucid a way as possible to help Hadeel to feel at home. There were also instances in which Hadeel's English was publicly corrected by peers in Yammer. This was a risky strategy with potential for both productive and problematic outcomes. It will, therefore, be considered in more detail in Chapter 11, which focuses on Hadeel's experiences.

Conclusion

The above account seeks to clearly establish my benign and supportive intentions as the tutor of the module and to shed light on ways in which my approach was founded in theory and in a socially just pedagogy. However, as well as the *prima facie* aim of 'telling the truth about what happened' clearly, I have a purpose in constructing this account,

which is to portray a scholarly approach to my work and to my research, and I deploy this account here in support of my pursuit of doctoral status. Cognisance of this broad aim prompts me to acknowledge ways in which the story constructed above to some extent selects events and online exchanges that show skilful and well-informed tutoring that fulfilled my original intentions of a socially constructivist, socially just pedagogy. This kind of account tends to gloss over the less successful and more arbitrary or ill thought through instances of my own practice. For this reason, I also provide an extended account in Chapters 14 and 15 on allodoxia of where I think I stumbled in my approaches and how this adversely affected some participants. In further exploring my own positionality, in Chapter 6, I provide a reflexive account of my own dispositions towards learning and online participation, following the same structure as the narrative accounts of each of my participants, so that the reader can make a more informed judgement of the verisimilitude of and the context for the pedagogy portrayed above.

Chapter 2: Review of literature on educational uses of social networks

This review asks the following questions of the literature on social media use in education:

- What benefits and caveats of social media use in education are recognised in the literature?
- Is the literature adequate to enable a well-theorised, critically aware and balanced judgment to be made about the desirable extent and manner of such uses?
- What are the gaps in the literature and how have they arisen?
- How has more recent literature on Bourdieu and the digital endeavoured to address these gaps?
- What contribution can be made to this literature?

In answering these questions, the chapter provides both a context and a mandate for this thesis. To establish a clear basis for the discussion, however, it begins with a brief definition of social media, as it is frequently understood in the field of educational technology.

Definitions of social media

Social media is frequently defined in terms of its technical affordances. A basic definition, cited over 13,000 times in the literature, is that it is,

> web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211)

Thus, the public profile forms the point of departure for uni-directional *'following'* or mutual *'friending'* connections with other participants, who are similarly represented through their online artefacts. Users respond to these artefacts with text comments, embedded multimedia or single-click emoticons. Photographs can be tagged to link them to specific profiles. Privacy settings allow users to control who can access profiles and posts. Social media platforms often also come with a host of additional features, depending on the platform; such as inbuilt blogging (online diarising) and wiki (collaboratively editable webpage) functionality, instant messaging, image and video sharing, 'fan' page and group functionality, mobile clients, social games, advertising and a myriad of optional third party 'applications.'

However, this thesis requires a broader conception of social media that moves beyond its technical affordances and grapples with the contested ground of its social implications and meanings, particularly regarding education; not merely what social media can *do* but also what it is *for* and what it *means* to its users and to society. For example, an alternative, more critically aware definition of social media platforms is as harvesters of 'big data' about user behaviour, political allegiances and consumer preferences, used to benefit the interests of global capital. Early commentators point towards this kind of wider, sociologically aware conception when they acknowledge that the user profile is a public representation of self, through which one can 'type oneself into being' (boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211; Sundén, 2003, p. 3). Recent research such as that currently underway at University College London (UCL), builds on these early conceptions of the social significance of social media by taking a more anthropological approach. In a series of comparative, 15-month ethnographies based in Turkey, Italy, Chile, Trinidad, China, Brazil and England and entitled *Why we post* (Miller et al., 2016), the UCL project aims to shed light on the diverse, nuanced and contested meanings of social media within the lived experience of different cultures. It defines social media as 'the colonisation of the space between traditional broadcast and private dyadic communication ... that we have termed scaleable sociality' (Miller et al., 2016, p. 9).

Sociality is the degree to which individuals tend to associate in social groups. Miller et al. (2016) argue that the key defining characteristic of social media is that it scales up the potential for these social groups in human populations. In adopting this definition, the researchers at UCL are building on a body of work that makes use of sociological theory to interrogate and explain new media, citing amongst their antecedents the well-theorised and critically informed work of Christian Fuchs (2014). In his *Social media: a critical introduction*, Fuchs 'introduces Durkheim's, Weber's, Marx's and Tönnies' concepts of sociality and applies them to providing an explanation of the social media concept' (2014, p. 31). It is to this critically aware and sociologically informed literature that this thesis endeavours to contribute, adding to a developing body of work that employs a Bourdieusian approach to the digital. This contribution will be outlined more fully in the final section of this chapter. First, however, a review of the broader extant literature is provided below.

What benefits and caveats of social media use within education are recognised in the literature?

The eruption in popularity of social media over the last 30 years has been mirrored by a rising tide of scholarship that explores its use within education. Figure 3 shows that for the period from 1990 to the time of writing in mid-2017, nearly 130,000 *Google Scholar*

results were returned when using the search terms "social network" + "internet" + "education." Using these Boolean search terms ensures that only articles that contain all three of these phrases are shown. The term "internet" is used to narrow search results to those not concerned with face-to-face social networks. Only 293 of these internet-focused sources about social networks in education were published between 1990 and 1995, whereas over 75,000 have appeared since 2010 and of those, 25,000 appeared in 2016 alone. Whilst this search throws up some spurious as well as pertinent results and a more focused review of directly relevant literature is provided later in this chapter, I provide these search statistics here to illustrate that this thesis is located within a field that has been growing, rapidly, if not exponentially over the last 30 years.

Date range	Number of results
1990-1995	293
1995-2000	2340
2000-2005	11,400
2005-2010	38,900
2010-2017	76,400
Total	129,333
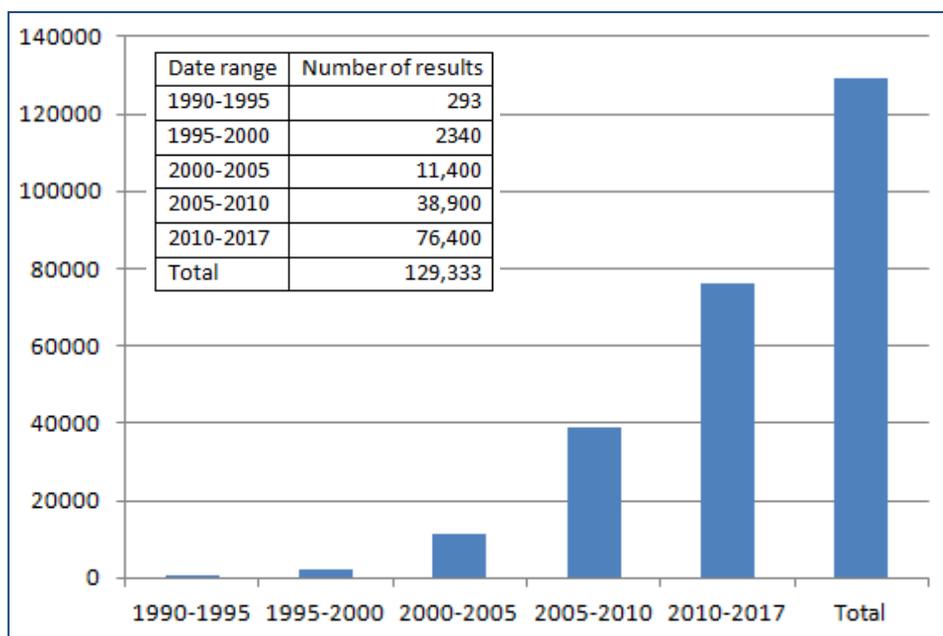
Figure 3: Total number of Google Scholar returns for social network + internet + education

This rapid growth, whilst indicating an enormous amount of potentially productive scholarly interest in the subject, results problems for the literature that are explored in the section on blank spots that appears later in this chapter. It also presents problems in sifting and filtering the research for the purposes of a literature review. I used Google Scholar only to illustrate the numbers involved and researched this review using library search terms within my University's library services, but the figures are indicative of the scale of the challenge. The strategy I have adopted for dealing with this extensive literature here is to sample some of its most frequently cited works that are representative of the broad trends and common tropes to be found. This is in order to set this thesis in context, illustrating that the research conducted here is done in light of

what other commentators have said about the potential benefits and caveats of social media use in education.

Such studies tend variously to focus on and sometimes to overstate either the benefits or dangers of social learning networks. A prolific body of work argues for the productive potential of social media for community formation, collaboration and resource and information sharing (for example, Asterhan & Bouton, 2017; Bosch, 2009; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Lampe, Wohn, Vitak, Ellison, & Wash, 2011; Lipsett, n.d.; Mazman & Usluel, 2010; Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009; Wang, Woo, Quek, Yang, & Liu, 2012). Some portray social media as acting as an essential back-channel or arena for the performance of identity politics (Selwyn, 2009; Veletsianos, 2012; Weller, 2013) or as a means to promote social justice through a more engaging and democratic learning experience (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kidd & Morris, 2017; Shirky, 2011). However, the engaging aspects of social media use outside the academy are noted as not necessarily transferable to academic contexts. The presence of the lecturer and the imperatives presented by learning outcomes have sometimes been documented as giving rise to tension and 'digital dissonance,' in which learners exhibit quite contradictory responses to technologies within and outside the academy (Clark, Logan, Luckin, Mee, & Oliver, 2009; Hewitt & Forte, 2006; Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009; Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2009).

Despite these concerns, many researchers have reported that, where an appropriate pedagogy has been adopted, there is real potential for social networks to be used by academics in productive ways as transformational sites for learning, (Agazio & Buckley, 2009; Baird & Fisher, 2005; Graham, Faix, & Hartman, 2009; Green & Hope, 2010; Leonardi, 2017; Loving & Ochoa, 2011; Mazman & Usluel, 2010; Schmitt & Lilly, 2012). The promise of social media in facilitating various forms of rhizomatic, networked and informal learning that accommodate complexity has also been widely noted (Cormier, 2014b; Gleason, 2016; Greenhow & Lewin, 2016; Öztürk, 2015; Ross & Collier, 2016).

Yet others express anxiety over the disruptive, potentially destructive power of social media sites, characterising them as lawless frontier-lands, where groups jockey for supremacy and where taunting and bullying is extended beyond the educational context and into students' home lives (Bugeja, 2006; Cox, Marczak, Teoh, & Hassard, 2017; Kwan & Skoric, 2013; Selwyn, 2007; Ziegler, 2007). A number of studies highlight the anxieties of teachers in this regard, along with their efforts to suppress and control social media use in the classroom as a means to minimise its distracting influence (Lin, Hoffman, & Borengasser, 2013; McCoy, 2013; Spyer, 2017). Further, some studies show a negative impact of social networking on academic performance (Kirschner & Karpinski,

2010). Alongside this more resistant trope runs a persistent rhetoric that if only teachers could overcome their reservations, 'embrace' the potential of social media and play to its strengths, all would be well (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012). The implications of social media for professionalism and the contested need for policies and codes of practice have also been the subject of intense debate (Cain, 2011; J. Williams, Feild, & James, 2011).

A useful and balanced survey of these conflicting positions was provided by Tess in his 2013 paper on the role of social media in higher education, noting some of the shortcomings of the research methodologies typically employed:

> Many scholars argue for the purposeful integration of social media as an educational tool. Empirical evidence, however, has lagged in supporting the claim. Most of the existing research on the utility and effectiveness of social media in the higher education class is limited to self-reported data (e.g., surveys, questionnaires) and content analyses (Tess, 2013, p. 60).

Nevertheless, polarised debates based on limited empirical evidence have continued to accumulate since that date.

The disparate views expressed in this small sample of papers are symptomatic of what can be found more widely in the literature. Miller et al. have argued recently that 'one area that stands out as the exemplary case of extremely high quality and effective research that could be a model for how such research might develop in the future... is the work on how social media impacts on education' (2016, p. 19). However, Selwyn (2013) and more recently Ross and Collier (2016), amongst others have argued convincingly that the polarisation of the literature is an inherent problem:

> Utopian and dystopian narratives of technology are widespread in discussions of online education, often manifested in a technologically determinist position, and in a rhetoric that invokes the "technological imperative": "because a particular technology means that we *can* do something (it is technically possible) then this action either *ought* to (as a moral imperative), *must* (as an operational requirement) or inevitably *will* (in time) be taken" (Chandler, 2002) (Ross & Collier, 2016).

This thesis questions that technological imperative and contributes to the literature that considers whether we *ought* to use social media in education, and if we decide to do so, of what important caveats ought we to be aware?

Weaknesses in the literature and how they have arisen

That scholars are struggling to agree upon a universal definition of social networking and what it means for education is, in part, a consequence of its rapid and pervasive onset and our consequently limited readiness to cope with its opportunities and implications. The percentage of American teens using social networking sites rose from 55% in November 2006, to 65% in February 2008 and thence to 73% in February 2010 (Lenhart, Purcell, & Zickhur, 2010). The time spent by American adults on social media as a percentage of the total spent on all forms of media rose by 36% in 2015-2016. The first online social network was not created until the late nineteen-nineties and the current market leader, Facebook became a platform open to all only as recently as 2007. Since then, however, it has continued to grow at an incredible rate:

> In 2012, we connected over a billion people and became a mobile company. We enter 2013 with good momentum and will continue to invest to achieve our mission and become a stronger, more valuable company. (Facebook, 2012, p. 1)

This is Facebook's Chief Executive Officer, Mark Zuckerberg's opening quotation from the Facebook Fourth Quarter and Full Year 2012 Results. He was referring to the reported 1.06 billion monthly active users and 680 million mobile users of the social networking site, worldwide at that time. By September 2016, there were 178.2 million unique users of Facebook in America alone (Nielsen, 2016, p. 7). Clearly the medium has enormous 'pull' and many of our conversations and interactions, including those about education and training are happening within it. This widespread and growing use is also part of the mandate for this research, which endeavours to interrogate what the shift into online interactions might mean for individuals and in educational settings.

As alluded to earlier in this chapter, this explosion in social media use and the accompanying flood of scholarship that explores its educational implications has problematic consequences for the field and arguably leads to weaknesses in the literature. Such weaknesses across disciplines have been commented upon by a number of authors who problematise the impact of the digitisation of scholarship (Kosmopoulos & Pumain, 2007; Shenk, 2014; Vaidhyanathan, 2012) because they 'work to skew impact factors of journals, artificially favoring those that rank more highly in Google Scholar' (Vine, 2006, online) and noting that whilst 'searching online is more efficient and following hyperlinks quickly puts researchers in touch with prevailing opinion ... this may accelerate consensus and narrow the range of findings and ideas built upon' (Evans, 2008, p. 395). In the case of research into social media use in education, even when discounting all but peer-reviewed articles, the sheer number of publications makes it impossible to keep abreast of all potentially relevant publications. The size of the body of

work also mandates internet and digital searching as the only practicable way to locate and filter content and this makes search algorithms and alt-metrics influential in determining which sources are routinely accessed and cited. There is scope for an effect similar to the 'slashdot' or 'flash crowd' effect in popular culture, in which an influential source links to a relatively unknown one and a flood of traffic ensues. This does not mean that there is anything inherently superior about the newly discovered source, only that internet traffic effects have elevated its popularity. Similarly, the 'right' metadata and provenance of articles makes them more likely to be picked up and cited by the educational technology community; citations breed citations in a kind of online echo chamber and search algorithms are increasingly relied upon as valid proxies for research quality. This trust in the algorithms of our search engines to 'tell us the truth' about the literature amounts to what some commentators have called a 'secular divinity' (Hartman, 2011) in which we look to search engines for answers as to a god. The size and the scope of the educational technology literature, its rapid growth and the technological proclivities of the typical educational technology researcher, make it, I argue, particularly susceptible to these kinds of influences.

The following are offered as examples that are typical of the consequent unevenness in quality and methodological rigour that characterises the field. Though not key texts of central relevance to this thesis, all are part of what might be thought of as the collective library of articles on social media in education to which this thesis contributes. All citation rates are drawn from *Google Scholar* search results at the time of writing in the autumn of 2017.

Pempek et al. (2009) on *College students' social networking experiences on Facebook* has nearly 2,000 citations. Their study was based on a survey of students' informal, non-academic use of social networks and without empirical evidence of the benefits of educational uses, it concludes with a call for academics to exploit the medium more fully. A random sample of 5% of the citations of this paper reveals that of those surveyed, 62% cite this call to academic action, without acknowledging that the call is based on speculative rather than proven benefits. Madge et al. (2009), another popular article with over 1,000 citations makes similar claims and recommendations, this time based on a small scale, single institution study that looks at informal learning via Facebook. It does, however, cite interesting qualitative data about what students say of their academic and non-academic uses of the medium. The problem is not so much that these two papers over-generalise, are localised and have a small sample size, but that citations of their work typically deploy them to make sweeping claims for widespread adoption of their methods in educational settings. Extending on this pattern and despite

tentative findings based on a small-scale study, in concluding their paper, Roblyer et al. begin to stray into the realms of the polemic, asserting that,

> unless ... faculty perceive Facebook and its sister technologies, both current and those to come, as additional opportunities for educational communication and mentoring, social networking sites may become yet another technology that had great potential for improving the higher education experience but failed to be adopted enough to have any real impact (2010, p. 138).

This paper too has been cited in over 1,000 subsequent papers many of whom present the findings as generalisable in unproblematic ways as part of the mantra to 'embrace the opportunities' and to 'go digital.' Mazer et al., (2009), again with over 1,000 citations, conclude that academics who reveal more about themselves within online social networks are more likely to be trusted by students and this is used as an argument to encourage the academy to enter the online world. However, the study asked student participants to make superficial judgements based on fictitious tutor profiles and does not, by its own admission, account for the potential influence of gender.

All these papers arguably have some merit that makes them worthy of citation. The weakness in the literature that I highlight here is the tendency for these papers to be co-opted into the project of digitising education without questioning how generalisable the findings might be and without exploring the broader social consequences, both for individual participants whose learning shifts online and for education more generally. By contrast, Selwyn's paper on *Faceworking* (2009) is part of the body of work that seeks to address this tendency in the literature, adopting a strong focus on sociological explanations and implications. It has the added weight conferred by a larger sample size, a sound methodology, thorough reflexivity and a convincing ethical statement. Despite these strengths it is less influential than the papers cited above, with just over 800 citations in subsequent papers.

The conclusion, then, is that Selwyn's call, echoed by a growing number of other academics (Fuchs, 2014; Ross & Collier, 2016) to look beyond technological determinism, to aspire to greater things than efficiency and effectiveness, to rise above naked analytics and the marriage of mind and machine and to broaden horizons beyond the simple fulfilment of learning outcomes, has been ignored by a significant and influential body of work. Though much has been written that is rigorous, insightful and enlightening, many educational technology accounts 'remain disappointingly a-political and a-social, finding little common ground with critical educational studies and/or the

sociology of education' (Selwyn, 2014, p. 156). Despite intermittent calls to broaden our critical approach (Jonassen, 2004, pp. 113–143; Selwyn, 2010; Selwyn, 2006; Young, 1984) much of the research continues to look predominantly at the pervasive, ubiquitous, transformative, disruptive and multi-faceted phenomena of technology in education from polarised positions. An exploration of the factors that drive such weaknesses in the literature is developed below.

Factors that drive weakness in the literature

An awareness of the possible drivers behind these weaknesses in the literature is also part of the mandate for this thesis, since the deliberately critical and sociological approach adopted is an attempt to avoid the traps into which much of the literature has fallen. An understanding of how those traps might operate is, therefore, useful. This section endeavours, therefore, to explore how the weaknesses noted above have arisen.

As commented upon earlier, in such a rapidly growing and extensive field of research, search algorithms and alt-metrics have become powerful shapers of which papers are cited and which remain obscure. Whilst academic judgement and peer review of research quality will always play a central role in academic debate, an implicit trust in the complete impartiality of these algorithms is dangerous, resulting in what might be termed *click reification,* whereby knowledge is legitimated or 'made real' by virtue of the number of times it is 'visited' digitally. This is problematic in a field in which educational technology practitioners seeking justification for innovative practice typically use search terms that throw up supportive research findings.

An assumption of algorithm and search term impartiality is made even more problematic by the huge profits to be made from the industry. The stakes are incredibly high. In 2016, the EdTechXGlobal report estimated that global education expenditure was over five trillion dollars, eight times the size of the global software market and three times the size of the media and entertainment industry. In the same report, it was noted that education is, however, only '2% digitised' and that 'Education technology is becoming a global phenomenon, and as distribution and platforms scale internationally, the market is projected to grow at 17.0% per annum, to $252bn by 2020' (EdTechXGlobal, 2016 online). This is an already significant market with huge potential for growth.

The impact of this high-stakes context can arguably be traced in the inflated nature of the claims that surround educational technology both in the press and in marketing materials. Drawing from a range of news publications including Forbes, the BBC, The Economist, eCampus News, University World News and Information Week, Ross and Collier note the following polarised journalistic rhetoric around MOOCs, which will,

revolutionize corporate learning and development (Meister, 2013); create divisions in society (Montague, 2014); kill university degrees (Stokey, 2013); deprofessionalise higher education (Carter, 2014); help democratize higher education (McGregor, 2013); and massively disrupt higher education (Booker, 2013) (cited in Ross & Collier, 2016, p. 13).

This kind of technological determinism is common in popular views of educational technology, arguably assuming the proportions of Stanley Cohen's 'folk devils and moral panics' (1972). Cohen's influential analysis of the role of media in shaping popular ideas explains that 'moral panics' unfold when the media identifies a 'folk devil' which threatens societal values and norms, the evils of which are distorted and exaggerated by 'moral entrepreneurs,' such as politicians, big business and media interests, all of whom have self-interested ends in sight. In a similar fashion, the media whips up blind faith in or indignation about educational technology and engineers concerns that neither reflect the level of threat or benefit, nor correctly identify the sources of such threats and benefits. The function of such moral panics, in Cohen's conception, is to deflect attention from the real issues at hand; in this instance, a cloaking of the concerns of vested interests that enables those interests to continue to exploit technology for profit, whether or not it is to the greater educational good.

The influence of such interests is also evident in the marketing hype that surrounds educational technology. Ross and Collier also note that 'advertising for educational technology is saturated with promises of speed, simplicity, and efficiency ... [that] will sell products to institutions and teachers' (2016, p. 13) as is evident in this anonymised sample of ambitious claims made by a range of educational technology providers:

- Offers robust solutions to power school operations, drive student growth and unify the classroom experience.
- Teaches students how government works by having them experience it directly.
- Improves access to quality education for everyone.
- Gives complete control over your digital classroom.
- The world is your classroom.

This hype fuels the moral panic surrounding what constitutes a good education in the 21st Century. Adding further fuel to the fire, this context is one in which 'teachers' labour is characterised by underemployment and over-qualification, precariousness and the prevalence of "rotten jobs." In this context educational workers are subject to high levels of surveillance rooted in regimes of performativity and institutional risk aversion' (Avis & Reynolds, 2017, online). In such a highly pressured context, technologies that

promise both ease and impact are seductive. The 'terrors of performativity' (Ball, 2003) exacerbated by reduced funding (Lucas & Crowther, 2016) make teachers and researchers of educational technology particularly susceptible to manipulation in ways that might affect the impartiality and quality of their research and I argue that this is a key driver of weaknesses in the educational technology research highlighted in this literature review.

One way in which to explore the mechanics of the link between this high-stakes context and the educational technology research literature is to 'think in a Gramscian way' (Hall, 1988; Morton, 2007, p. 18) about it, endeavouring to trace what Gramsci characterised as the all-pervasive influence of the state; 'everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 261). The state and its interests are to be thought of as present in and influential of every social action, including the factors that influence educational technology researchers; their epistemological, philosophical and methodological choices and the ideas they produce. For Gramsci, these ideas 'can assume the fanatical granite compactness of popular beliefs, which assume the same energy as material forces' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 404; Morton, 2007, p. 106); in other words, though abstract rather than concrete, an *idea* can be deployed in the interests of global capital, just as well as any material force such as real-estate, labour, collateral or equipment. When looked at in this way, the ideas that arise out of and are promulgated by the research community,

> are not mere epiphenomena. They are anything but arbitrary; they are real historical facts which must be combated and their nature as instruments of domination exposed (Gramsci, 1995, p. 395; Morton, 2007, p. 92).

This means that a literature review like this one has a responsibility not merely to repeat the prevalent ideas in a body of work, or to interrogate them in terms of their methodological rigour but also to critique them at a much more fundamental level and to pay attention to the 'material structure of ideology' (Morton, 2007, p. 92) contained therein.

For Gramsci, this material structure of ideology is a battleground where social forces vie for hegemonic influence in the political sphere. Hegemony is the dominance exerted by the state, whose key task is to shape popular beliefs without giving the impression of coercion. This is difficult since the state has to confer broad appeal on a narrow solidarity of economically privileged interests. To succeed requires a powerful yet cryptic means by which to propagate the hegemonic position so that an intellectual and moral unity can be created on a universal plane. Economic sacrifices may be required. Power will need to be camouflaged. The state must manufacture consent through protectionism and privilege

without this being widely detected and an alternative justification must be ready to hand. Moral panics and folk devils provide a distraction from this project and allow it to progress apace. To this end, the media and to some extent also the research community, must be co-opted as 'agents within the economic, political, social, and cultural fields, acting as constructors, organisers, and *permanent persuaders* in forming or contesting hegemony' (Morton, 2007, pp. 91–92). To be vulnerable to this kind of exploitation, agents cannot be allowed to perceive that they have been co-opted and must believe that their motivation is impartial.

In order to achieve this subterfuge, hegemony must remain a 'diffused and capillary form of indirect pressure' which in order to reinforce hegemonic class relations must pass unnoticed through 'intellectual *meatuses*' (Morton, 2007, p. 92). The word meatus is an interesting one to explore in more detail in the context of educational technology. Generally used in a biological sense to mean a channel, conduit or hole in the body, it is commandeered here by Gramsci to convey the evocative notion that hegemony seeps through society like bodily fluids through an organism but that, rather than being pumped like blood, this occurs by a kind of osmosis, capillarity or indirect muscular pressure, like lymph. Gramsci traces societal meatuses or conduits of hegemony in the structures and practices of institutions, architectures, workplaces, art galleries, theatres, newspapers, libraries, museums, churches, families, universities and funding bodies, in short the 'ideological state apparatuses' (Althusser, 2014), which all have a part to play in the struggle over hegemony. Through these institutions, ideas seep unnoticed into our consciousness and shape our thinking about what we should research and how that research should be conducted. This idea is particularly pertinent to the critique of educational technology research because the raison d'être of the Internet and of social networks in particular, is to create a multitude of meatuses; the multiple and constantly updated potential points of social contact where the consciousness of users might be influenced. This proliferation of points of contact that characterise social media are what enables the 'scaleable sociality' that Miller et al. (2016) identify as the defining characteristic of social networks. It is what they are for. This makes them ideal sites through which to influence hegemonic discourse.

What we have, then, is a body of research that is about networking that occurs in a networked world and that is shaped by that world at the same time as it exerts a shaping influence over it. Intimately entwined with the digital universe it purports to explain and describe, this makes it particularly susceptible to hegemony. What is proposed here is that the circumstances of educational technology research make it disproportionately vulnerable to the influence of a narrow and fiercely motivated coterie of economically powerful concerns, whose interests lie in encouraging and promulgating

useful messages and ignoring or suppressing dissenting voices. The mechanics of the discipline, based as they are upon the affordances of a networked, interdisciplinary, fast paced and ephemeral world, provide the ideal medium in which such hegemonic influences can hold sway. Messages reverberate in an online echo-chamber that picks up and amplifies dominant ideas and majority views. The risk is that technology contributes to a terrible illusion of knowledge, where users equate access with possession and consensus with truth.

To ameliorate this risk, Selwyn (2013) argues convincingly that what is needed is a renewed focus on democracy and social justice, a recognition of the intense struggle to negotiate the imperatives set for us by others, and an exploration of the workings of power, control, conflict and resistance. Technology does not exist in a vacuum but is socially constructed, uneven, contested, contradictory, participatory and deeply entwined with everyday life. It is intensely political. It is defined by complex interactions between social actors and their context in its broadest sense: at the micro level of individuals and in classrooms; at the meso level of the institutions and regions within which they are based and at the macro level of global economies and nation states. Awakening to a consciousness of these influences requires an unremitting reflexivity, an acceptance of alternative viewpoints and a tolerance of ambiguity and complexity. We need to ask awkward and challenging questions, about what is taking place, why it is like that and what the consequences might be, both good and bad.

The contribution of this thesis

My response to this contested, vexed, partial field of research is to adopt a sociologically-informed theoretical framework in my use of Bourdieu to look at the minutiae of online interaction. The use of Bourdieu to interrogate the digital has a growing provenance within the extant literature, though I deploy his ideas here in novel ways. I, therefore, offer below a summary of this body of work to provide a more detailed context for this thesis, identifying how my approach differs from that adopted by others within this subsection of educational technology research. In doing so, I assume some background knowledge of Bourdieu's social science though I return to these ideas in more detail in Chapter 4.

An important aspect of this thesis is the role of status and social class in my participants' experiences of learning online and it is for this reason that Bourdieu was selected as the key theoretical framework. Prominent for his work in the fields of education and cultural stratification, Bourdieu emphasised that money is not the only way to acquire status and that some people are also able to routinely use their deportment, manners, habits, networks and so on to get more of what they want. This idea of trading on one's social

and cultural 'capital' raises the question of how people are 'valued' differently, allowing researchers to question the justice and equity of educational experiences, which sometimes make arbitrary distinctions between people, based on their accent, attire, demeanour, gender, race and so on. Furthermore, his approach allows us to conceptualise 'social action as occurring within a social space made up of intersecting fields, conditioning and constraining the behavior of individuals and shaping their ... motivational apparatus' (Ignatow & Robinson, 2017, p. 951). I see the social learning network studied for this thesis as just such a set of intersecting fields and my study explores how these fields have conditioned and constrained participants' behaviours. Hence, one of my key interests is how online learning operates upon distinctions between participants to influence their experiences and outcomes.

The key way in which Bourdieu conceptualises such distinctions is through his notion of *habitus*, from the Greek word 'to have.' What we *have* is made up not just of material possessions, but also of our manners, accent, deportment, attitudes, values, dispositions and social connections. Such 'havings' constitute our habitus and are laid down in us over the course of our lifetime through our interactions with others. Thus, we develop a habitus fit for the fields that we typically inhabit and we are set at a disadvantage in fields that are alien to us. We experience this disadvantage as symbolic violence; symbolic because it is not physical, but violence nonetheless, because it is vexatious and damaging to our sense of belonging and to our life chances.

My study applies these ideas to online learning in a social media environment. This kind of application of Bourdieu is a growing area of interest for researchers. Noting the potential for his ideas to be deployed in an exploration of the digital, Bourdieu himself in his later works began to make overtures towards theorising technology. For example, he defined what he called 'technological capital' as 'the portfolio of scientific resources (research potential) or technical resources (procedures, aptitudes, routines and unique and coherent know-how, capable of reducing expenditure in labour or capital or increasing its yield) that can be designed in the manufacture of products' (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 194). In like vein, subsequent writers have noted the potential in Bourdieu for a 'digital sociology' contending that,

> three interconnected features of Bourdieu's approach have enabled his approach to flourish even as other social and sociological theories have struggled to demonstrate their relevance in the digital age: (1) his theories' inseparability from the practice of empirical research; (2) his ontological stance combining realism and social constructionism; and (3) his familiarity with concepts developed in other disciplines

and participation in interdisciplinary collaborative projects (Ignatow & Robinson, 2017, p. 951).

I concur that these aspects of his work help to give Bourdieu a broad appeal, applicable to a diverse range of sociological studies of the digital. However, I also argue that Bourdieu travels so well in digital contexts because of the 'sfumato' of his definitions of field and habitus and the endlessly adaptable interplay between the two. Sfumato is an art term, used to describe the technique of allowing tones and colours to shade gradually into one another, producing softened outlines or hazy forms. What some viewers perceive as the Mona Lisa's flickering smile is due to this haziness around the corners of her eyes and mouth. Bourdieu in the original is similarly enigmatic; some might say impenetrable. Here he is, for example, on the relationship between field and habitus:

> If it is true that the statistical relationships between the properties attached to agents and their practices are only fully defined in the relationship between the dispositions of a habitus and a particular field, then the limits within which the relations observed retain their validity - an apparent restriction which is the pre-condition for full generalization - cannot be defined until one questions the relationship within which these relationships have been established (Bourdieu & Nice, 1984, pp. 94–95).

Here he cites three sets of relationships: that between an agent's properties and their practices; that between their habitus and the field; and the 'relationship' within which these relationships have been established. A simplified interpretation is that Bourdieu is arguing that we must question the origins of our expectations of what counts as a valid relation, between a person and their practices and between a person's habitus and their field; expectations about who gets to legitimately say and do what, where and with whom. This is what he calls 'the cultural arbitrary' since he argues it has been arbitrarily arrived at through cultural relations. However, his repeated use of 'relationship' in subtly different ways throughout this passage means that, as is often the case with Bourdieu, there is scope for the reader in deciding precisely what he does mean. What precisely does he mean, for example, by 'the dispositions of a habitus?' This might mean both the deployment of aspects of our habitus as a social gambit, as if it were a hand of cards. Equally it might mean the 'attitude' of a habitus towards a field, which might be confident or deferential, hostile or amicable and so on.

Commenting upon this elusive characteristic of his own work, Bourdieu asserts that 'linguistic and stylistic complexity is necessary in order to protect what is said from the misunderstandings that result from the reader's tendency to project onto the text "his or her prejudices, unreflective opinions and fantasies"' (Jenkins, 2015, p. 170). By making

his concepts complex and his explanations nuanced, he sets for us an ongoing challenge to understand, reinterpret and apply them, frustrating attempts to simplify the complexity of the social world he seeks to describe. Whilst this presents Bourdieu scholars with particular difficulties, it also pays them the compliment of assuming the capacity to constantly reinvent and nuance his ideas and to apply them in novel ways in order to exploit their malleability. This is what I have attempted to do, for example, in developing the idea of digital hiatus discussed later in this thesis.

The above sets out broadly, then, why Bourdieu was selected as the framework for the research. In what follows, I move on to present a brief review of closely related literature that also makes use of Bourdieu. In doing so, I focus on the subset of sources that make use of his concepts to study *digital inequality*. This is a central concern of this thesis, aligning it with the body of work that recognises that mere access to the Internet is not always enough and that there is a 'second-level digital divide' (Hargittai, 2001, p. 1) that prohibits productive and constructive participation for some people (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008; Mossberger, Tolbert, & Stansbury, 2003; van Dijk, 2005; Warschauer, 2003). In particular, the focus of Hargittai and Jennrich's (2016) paper on the 'extent participatory activities are equally distributed across different types of people ... what types of people are most likely to contribute, and... whose voices are least likely to be represented online' (2016, p. 199) is closely related to my aims in this research to explore symbolic violence and its potential impact on learners. Further, the body of work that explores relative levels of online autonomy (Hassani, 2006; Robinson, 2009) and the likelihood that individuals will share opinions online (Blank, 2013; Correa, 2010; Hargittai & Walejko, 2008; Schradie, 2014) is related to my exploration of participant behaviours in this study.

Developing over the last 15 years, the use of Bourdieu to explore digital inequality exploits the fact that the digital offers; 'an entirely new realm for the application of the Bourdieusian framework, a realm which in many ways is tailor-made for concepts such as capital, field, and habitus' (Ignatow & Robinson, 2017, p. 961). Arising from about 2005, a number of studies used Bourdieu to focus on ways in which offline inequalities persist in or are carried over into online participation or the lack thereof (Kvasny, 2005; Lewis, Kaufman, Gonzalez, Wimmer, & Christakis, 2008). These studies frequently make links between digital divides and social and cultural capital (McConnell & Straubhaar, 2015; Witte & Mannon, 2010). In doing so, they supersede early concerns about whether people have the devices, skills and infrastructure to access the Internet with new concerns about *how online behaviour is nuanced* by offline inequalities once the individual is connected; a concern which is central to my own research. The significance of race, gender (Ono & Zavodny, 2007), socio-economic disadvantage, class (Hale,

Goldner, Stern, Drentea, & Cotten, 2014; Stern, Adams, & Elsasser, 2009) disability (Seale, Georgeson, Mamas, & Swain, 2015) and combinations of a range of these factors (Lewis et al., 2008) are variously explored.

A range of papers also explore how life course and habitus shape online behaviours (Cotten & Gupta, 2004; Huang & Russell, 2006; Mesch, 2006; Micheli, 2015; Park, 2017; Robinson & Schulz, 2013) and this sub-set of the literature is closely related to my own concern with schooling and familial attitudes to education and how these impact on my participants' habitus and associated dispositions to learning online. This interest in the influence of life course on online participation has also influenced my choice of a narrative methodology, which emphasises the role of individual stories in shaping and explaining participants' online attitudes and behaviours.

In particular, Robinson's (2009) notion of a 'taste for the necessary' is applicable to my thesis. She argues convincingly that disadvantaged participants develop 'a task oriented information habitus ... in which waste avoidance is their primary role,' (2009, p. 492) contrasting this with their more advantaged peers who are unencumbered by the same spatial-temporal urgencies and are, therefore, more inclined to reap the benefits of a more playful, open and explorative disposition towards online participation. This is a fundamentally Bourdieusian interpretation, particularly relevant in the field of education, where Bourdieu highlights reflective and disputational time as an indispensable resource. Both he, and Robinson after him, call this time *skholè*, a kind of 'time to play' with ideas. Without it, scholars are unable to engage in the main aim of the scholarly game; which is the naming and framing of knowledge.

Extending from this work on how *broader social inequalities* influence online participation is a body of work that focuses more particularly on the *digital inequalities* themselves and how they are manifested online in the different behaviours that participants adopt. This includes studies in a range of national settings, including Israel, Europe, the USA and Australia (Arie & Mesch, 2015; Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008; Muschert, 2015; Park, 2017). Such studies note that those with greater 'digital capital' transition more easily between different online fields and use media in differentiated ways to engage in concerted cultivation of capital and capital-enhancing activities (Lareau, 2014; Levina & Arriaga, 2014; van Deursen & Helsper, 2015; Witte & Mannon, 2010). My own research sits within and is closely related to this body of work, since I also explore how capital might be deployed and accumulated online. Moreover, my exploration of the metaphors that participants use to describe their online experiences is congruent with work in the field by Gabriel Ignatow (2003), who makes the persuasive argument that metaphor is a

highly parsimonious means for expressing complex emotional operations when they are abstracted from the embodied world and into virtual environments.

Several researchers have sought to establish definitions of 'digital capital' and, along with its antecedents, this remains a contested term. This subsection of the literature is of particular interest to this study since it bears close relation to the *index of digital capital* which I develop as part of my findings. Hamelink's *The ethics of cyberspace* (2000) offered the earliest description of 'information capital,' a term which was later nuanced by Van Dijk to encompass 'the financial resources to pay for computers and networks along with technical skills, evaluation abilities, information-seeking motivation, and the capacity for implementation' (2005, pp. 72–73), and in his later work as an issue of spatial, political and institutional participation (Van Dijk, 2012). In a similar vein, Gilbert defines technological capital as 'the actual or potential collective resources related to access to, use of and knowledge related to ICTs' (2010, p. 1005). More recently, digital capital has been defined as the 'reach, scale, and sophistication of ... online behavior' (Ignatow & Robinson, 2017, p. 952).

The index of digital capital in this thesis does not seek to offer an overarching definition of digital capital as do those offered above, though it is congruent with all of them. Instead, it offers an index of specific ways in which such capital is manifested within social media, especially when used for educational purposes. For this reason, it anatomises in greater detail aspects of the attitudes, participation, uses, knowledge and patterns of social relations to which these earlier authors allude. It does this by drawing on the idiosyncratic experiences of participants who *can* access the learning environment in terms of infrastructure, affordability, and devices but who nonetheless struggle. This places it in a similar tradition to Seale et al.'s (2015) framework for examining the digital capital of disabled students as set out below:

Digital cultural capital
- technological know-how
- Informally investing time in self-improvement of technology skills and competencies
- Formally investing time in improvement of technology skills and competencies
- Influence of family and institution attended prior to higher education in offering early and sustained access and encouragement to use technology

Digital social capital
- networks of face-to-face technological contacts
- networks of online technological contacts (Seale et al., 2015, p. 121)

My index of digital capital differs in that it explores individualised patterns of engagement and disengagement in a more fine-grained way through narrative accounts, as well as focussing particularly on social media rather than on technology more generally. I also seek to take more account of factors such as self-assurance and scholarliness that, whilst conferring benefits when transposed into a digital sphere, are not solely technical skills but have a wider applicability and influence. Similarly, my index can be mapped against some of the user-profiling tools proposed by others. Selwyn, Gorard and Furlong (2005), for example, offered four categories of user; broad frequent, narrow frequent, occasional and non-users, whilst Dutton and Blank (2013) proposed six categories; e-Mersives, techno-pragmatists, cyber-savvy, cyber-moderates and adigitals. However, it differs from these tools in the sense that it does not assign people to a finite list of categories but offers a typology of dispositions, abilities and assets that they may deploy in complex combinations and in ways that shift over time. As such, it is more congruent with Bourdieu's approach to class, which replaces a finite set of class categories with a universe of continuities made up of a plethora of class loci depending on the relative amounts of different types of capital they possess.

More recently still, Sora Park's ambitious book *Digital Capital*, published just prior to the completion of this thesis, sets out 'to describe and understand the many factors that influence a person's behaviour towards digital technologies,' (2017, p. 3) and to 'review existing attempts to bridge the digital divide, investigate what has and hasn't been effective, and suggest how small, local solutions may be the answer to big, global problem,' (*sic*) (2017, p. 5). She uses the notion of digital capital, 'to emphasise the positive outcomes of digital engagement' (2017, p. 9) seeing it as 'an investment issue' (2017, p. 80), rather than as means to create and perpetuate distinction. She defines digital capital as 'an individual user's digital ecosystem' (2017, p. 1). This definition is problematic because it fails to mention the influence of the *non*-digital on digital capital and this contrasts with my own position, that digital capital is a *form* of cultural capital adapted for and enacted in a digital medium, (pp. 77-78).

More importantly, the definition begs the question of how an ecosystem can *belong* to an individual as capital. People inhabit, form part of and interact with ecosystems but do not accumulate or possess them as tradable assets.   Also puzzling is the way in which Park includes digital capital as a *component* in a diagram of a digital ecosystem (2017, p. 8) rather than *being* a digital ecosystem as her definition asserts.

The combination of the term 'ecosystem' with the notion of capital is also problematic. Like aspects of field and habitus, 'ecosystem' connotes an environment, with patterns of

engagement, temporal, physical and spatial parameters and an intimate interdependence between the individual and the sphere they inhabit. However, it also connotes natural rather than socially constructed laws and innate as well as learned behaviours for survival. Park does not explore how these ideas, drawn from natural science, relate to Bourdieu, nor offer a rationale for why she largely sets aside doxa, field and habitus as thinking tools, relying almost entirely for her analysis on notions of capital. Moreover, rather than seeing digital capital as merely cultural capital redeployed in a digital medium as I do, Park sees digital capital as capable of 'embracing all components of economic, cultural and social capital in one concept' (2017, p. 80). For these reasons, Park's use of Bourdieusian terms is not aligned and sometimes at odds with their use in this thesis.

Important in any notion of capital is its exchange value. Some studies make a distinction between components that are readily convertible into economic capital in the job market, such as programming skill and others that are not so readily convertible, such as use of social media. This division between more and less easily tradable types of capital underpins, for example, Villanueva et al.'s (2015) distinction between digital capital that is merely used for 'social gratification' and digital capital that is deliberately taught in educational institutions to help promote careers and improve life chances. By contrast, the index of digital capital assumes that seemingly frivolous or inconsequential online behaviours have significant social and cultural exchange value, which pays dividends within an educational field. In this sense, this thesis is more closely related to Hofer and Aubert's (2013) work on the bridging and bonding social capital to be gained through participation in Twitter and Facebook. It is also congruent with Paino and Renzulli's (2013) suggestion that though 'students who possess knowledge of computers and other digital devices may gain actual skills ... more importantly, they are constituting and representing themselves as culturally competent members of our information-age society' (Ignatow & Robinson, 2017, p. 957). They suggest that those who can do this more effectively are more likely to succeed educationally and part of my focus has been to explore the extent to which this was true for my participants. More recently, Nissenbaum and Shifman (2017) have emphasised the ephemeral doxa of the 'edgy' online world of 4chan in which memes become the site for constant conflict around what counts as 'correct' use. The consequences of ephemerality and uncertainty in online worlds links to my conclusions around the unsettling, chaotic and fragmented online experiences of online learning for some of my participants, which are discussed more fully in Chapters 15 and 16.

Finally, a range of studies use a Bourdeusian framework to focus primarily on the potential consequences of online inequalities for users' offline chances of success.

Dimaggio and Bonikowski (2008) noted the personal and professional advantages that accrue to 'wired' individuals, who have the requisite skills to make effective use of the Internet. Similarly, Witte and Mannon (2010) explore how online behaviours can augment offline inequalities and van Deursen and Helsper (2015) 'demonstrate that those with greater digital capital derive greater benefits from Internet usage in highly wired societies like Denmark.' Laura Robinson's (2011) work on 'a taste for the necessary' mentioned above, also extends to a consideration of how adolescents 'internalize stances toward appropriate information gathering for vocational and educational planning based on what they believe to be the perceived costs and payoffs of each information channel' (Ignatow & Robinson, 2017, p. 955). Those aspects of my study that allude to the educational advantages of certain online behaviours, which display or confer digital capital, sit within this body of work.

This thesis grapples with these complexities, exploring the potential drawbacks as well as the benefits of the use of social media as a site for learning and the ways in which it is entangled with participants' lives both on and offline. The index of digital capital is offered as a way to explore these complexities, diagnosing some of the behaviours that make for successful strategies in online learning. It sits within the broader context of the work of others on digital capital and is congruent with that work, though operating at a finer level of detail. This literature review, therefore, concludes that a range of benefits and caveats of social media use in education are recognised within the literature. It also notes, however, that the circumstances and affordances of this field of research; technical, cultural and economic, make it particularly susceptible to hegemonic influences and this results in significant weaknesses in the literature. These weaknesses mandate a more balanced, critical and sociologically informed approach, increasingly represented by the more recent literature on Bourdieu and the digital, to which this thesis contributes in the form of a more nuanced exploration of digital capital and how it operates in educational settings.

Chapter 3: "Losing my religion"

Introduction

This chapter identifies the motivations and reasoning that influenced my decisions on methodology and subsequent data handling. Broadly, it is a story of losing my 'religion' as the positivist graduate of a science discipline turning increasingly towards interpretivist, sociological research. Epistemological doubts and dilemmas are resolved into a reflexive account, reasoning that the shift I describe reveals my unfolding methodological thinking and developing commitments and that this helps to provide a clear rationale and justification for the final approach adopted.

Whilst more cognitive and less spiritual, epistemological allegiance has some similarities with a religious commitment, in that both entail a view of the world and how best to explain and understand it and both have practices or methods that are exclusive to or sometimes shared between them. The religious practice of fasting, for example, is common to both Islam and Catholicism, arising variously from notions of self-discipline, empathy with the poor and self-sacrifice. In the same way, the research practice of interviewing might be deployed as part of a range of differing methodological approaches from case study, to action research, to ethnomethodology. Though generally placing a premium on personal, qualitative accounts, the way in which the interview data is collected and handled can be congruent with a range of differing epistemologies and methodologies. The usefulness of this analogy is that it makes clear the difference between a method and the underlying commitment to a way of seeing, in other words the methodology, out of which it grows. It also conveys some of the difficulty and challenge inherent in relinquishing a deeply held set of ideas about research that are intimately entwined with the researcher's scholarly identity, replacing them with an entirely new point of view.

In this chapter, therefore, a reflexive account of shifting assumptions is resolved into a clear statement of the epistemological basis for the thesis, making clear how this relates to the main research questions. This leads on to a justification for the chosen methodology. The selection and design of methods that were congruent with this methodology is then explored, avoiding the temptation to gloss into a straightforward account what was, in fact, a complex and evolving process. 'Shuttling' between data collection and data analysis, redesigning each in light of the other more faithfully represents what actually happened. This unfolding of an approach over time, whilst more challenging to describe, results in a more authentic, complete and trustworthy account.

Reflexive account of research decisions

My academic background before moving into teacher education was as a scientist and my first degree was a BSc Single Honours in Biology. My final year dissertation for this degree was a classically positivist experimental study, counting through microscopic observation the frequency of 'abnormal' sperm morphologies to investigate the likelihood that these abnormal sperm might confer some evolutionary, selective advantage (Baker & Bellis, 1995). This was wholly unproblematic for me, epistemologically. The cells were either normal or abnormal and these types were clearly discernible from one another down the microscope. Random sampling, accurate equipment and diligent observation and recording of data were sufficient grounds to argue that the data generated was valid and reliable and statistical significance of results, once the appropriate tests had been applied, could be firmly established. A high enough frequency of abnormal cells provided clear evidence in support of the hypothesis that these cells had persisted in a greater proportion than could be explained by chance alone, so that a clear conclusion about the likelihood of evolutionary advantage could confidently be drawn. Broadly, then, my epistemology at this time was congruent with the project of modernity and its general belief in universalism, generalisability and the certainty of the scientific method.

Whilst my career in teacher education and my Master of Education qualification meant that my studies took a decidedly sociological turn, based on these early experiences of research, I continued to carry at a fundamental level the idea that objective measurement and statistically significant patterns were the stuff of legitimate research. My master's dissertation was a case study that looked at the responses of degree level students to the use of podcasting as a learning activity. I was no longer counting abnormal cells; however, I was still endeavouring to 'measure' something, albeit the rather more elusive 'amount of learning' achieved by participants. Attempting to teach a topic on Marxism, I carried out a pre- and post-test of students' knowledge and set up a 'control' group of students who received written rather than podcast materials. I used 'matched pairs' to try to establish equivalence between the control and the experimental group and ignored my doubts over whether this matching was sufficiently close to ensure comparability between the two. I also glossed over my growing doubts that something as elusive as 'learning about Marxism' could be objectively measured in the same way that cells seen down a microscope can be categorised. I also set aside doubts about causality and the impossibility of ensuring that factors other than the podcast, such as independent study, tutorials and peer-conversations would undoubtedly have an impact on student learning. Though doubtful of the validity of my experimental approach and my instruments of measurement, I was still confident that what I needed to find were patterns, themes, frequency and replicability of results. This 'realist' approach was

based on the epistemological assumption that there was an objective, external and measurable reality to which my dissertation could point, if only my research design could be made rigorous enough. However, this research experience increasingly called into question the adequacy of straightforward, scientific, experimental approaches to describe the nuanced, ambiguous, ephemeral and contingent social world of human interaction.

As I embarked on my doctoral studies, these doubts manifested as 'troublesome knowledge — knowledge that was "alien," or counter-intuitive or even intellectually absurd at face value' (Meyer & Land, 2003, pp. 1–2). Brookfield colourfully characterises the consequences of such knowledge as 'roadrunner syndrome.' He suggests that Wile E. Coyote's recurrent disasters in the Roadrunner cartoons have,

> the same emotional quality as a particular moment in the incremental rhythm of student learning. It is the moment when students realize that the old ways of thinking and acting no longer make sense for them, but that new ones have not yet formed to take their place. This state of limbo - similar to the coyote's suspension several hundred feet above the canyon floor - is frighteningly uncertain. (Brookfield, 1990, p. 102)

The precise nature of this uncertainty for me lay in my conception of the things to which my research endeavoured to point. As a scientist, my research had been directed at uncovering a real, measurable, observable reality with an independent external existence. As a sociologist, my own research activities into human situations led me towards the conclusion that, whilst some things in the social realm seemed similarly measurable and 'real' others seemed more like artefacts of consciousness or of interaction between individuals, called into being only by virtue of their social function and having no external, objective existence beyond that socially constructed form. The idea of measuring so slippery a parameter as 'learning about Marxism' is a prime example of this, since this learning manifested and was deployed by participants in divergent and contradictory ways that confounded my attempts to define and quantify it. I found a mirror for this practical experience of sociological research in the ideas of postmodernist thinkers and their notion that in the social realm, *representation* constitutes or constructs reality, a reality that consequently has no independent, external, objective existence.

This postmodern notion that everything in the social world can be reified but that nothing is 'real' precipitated me into a deeply uncertain moment in my research, bereft of 'the solid ground of ... old ways of thinking and acting [when] enthusiasm sometimes turns to terror' (Brookfield, 1990, p. 102). If nothing is real and everything is contingent,

ephemeral and constructed, what hope has the researcher of ever finding out anything with any certainty? In a sophisticated response to this dilemma, Patty Lather argues that,

> to operate from a premise of the impossibility of satisfactory solutions means to not assume to resolve but instead, to be prepared to meet the obduracy of the problems and obstacles as the very way toward producing different knowledge and producing knowledge differently. Foucault (1991) termed this "the absolute optimism" of "a thousand things to do" (p. 174) where our constant task is to struggle against the very rules of reason and practice inscribed in the effects of power of the social sciences (Lather, 2004, pp. 27–28).

Lather's suggestion here encouraged me to question the assumptions that had informed my earlier, scientific studies as they applied (or did not apply) to the social sciences. It became apparent to me that the rules of reason and practice that I had hitherto relied upon as absolutes were not just tools to be deployed but social practices in and of themselves that would act back upon me as a researcher to shape my modes of thought and my conclusions. This led to significant uncertainty about my choice of methodology.

The resolution of this uncertainty required me to reconcile some disparate points of view, positivist and constructivist. I rehearsed using both of these viewpoints to explain some of my early findings and found that there was mileage in each. Some parameters, such as frequency of participation in online social learning networks, response rates and number of 'likes' given and received were unproblematic to quantify and were conducive to a realist methodology and interpretation. However, others were far less susceptible to a positivist approach, not least the way in which each participant appeared to give very disparate, sometimes shifting explanations of ostensibly the 'same' online events; explanations that appeared to be contingent on a complex web of personal dispositions and circumstances. My solution to these different types of finding and to my epistemological struggle to reconcile positivist and constructivist conceptions was to reject neither but instead to adopt a *social realist* approach. In this way, I aimed to maintain the *truthfulness* that concedes the often socially constructed nature of knowledge but also to retain a focus on the *truth* at which this truthfulness aims; 'to see through appearances to the real structures that lie behind them but acknowledge that these structures are more than the [mere] play of social power and vested interests' (Maton & Moore, 2010, p. 4). This is not an *either/or* approach: either positivism or constructivism. Instead, it is *both/and*, where 'rational objectivity in knowledge is acknowledged as itself a fact (we do actually have knowledge), but it is also recognized as a social phenomenon (it is something that people do in socio-historical contexts)'

(Maton & Moore, 2010, p. 2). Hence, knowledge is not absolute. Neither is it merely relative. Rather it is *fallible.* As Lather convincingly argues, it is sometimes manipulated by the powerful for social ends and is deployed as the *knowledge of the powerful* and used to reproduce inequality. However, sometimes it allows us access to important truths and influential modes of action and discourse; as the *powerful knowledge* persuasively posited by Michael Young and others (Wheelahan, 2010; Young, 1971).

The socially constructed nature of knowledge makes the processes through which it is produced a legitimate matter for research. However, the social constructions or edifices that arise out of these processes are also of legitimate concern as social phenomena in their own right. This high-wire balancing act between the socially constructed and the real led, in this thesis, to a decision to capture as much as possible of the 'factual' parameters of the online world in which my participants were engaged but also to focus on how those participants perceived and constructed their understandings of this world and what those understandings ultimately looked like. In this way, my 'roadrunner' (Brookfield, 1995, p. 65) moment, metaphorically suspended between the apparent extremes of positivism and constructivism, was resolved into a new conception of the nature of the social world to which my research endeavoured to point. This conception was shaped and influenced by constructivism but did not wholly relinquish my positivist 'religion' that some things in the social world are measurable in straightforward ways. It is an epistemology that is also congruent with that adopted by Bourdieu in his endeavours to explain the way in which *'real'* money and possessions also act as *symbols* in the socially imagined world of class distinctions. They are at one and the same time, material objects *and* arbitrary signs of social status:

> While refusing to grant that differences exist only because agents believe or make others believe that they exist, we must admit that objective differences, inscribed in material properties and in the differential profits these provide, are converted into *recognized distinctions* in and through the representations that agents form and perform of them (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2013, p. 297).

Adopting social realism as the epistemological basis for this thesis is, therefore, congruent with my use of Bourdieu as its key theoretical framework.

Developing the methods

Having settled upon a broadly critical, social realist framework, methods of data collection and analysis that were congruent with these frameworks were selected. To some extent, these methods were also shaped by the characteristics of the research field, its affordances, its imperatives and the nature of my involvement within it. In other words, methods that suited the epistemological, methodological and critical frameworks

for the study, as well as the context in which it was situated were adopted. The selection and design of these methods necessarily entailed some 'shuttling' between data collection and data analysis to develop and hone the approach. In summary, this process unfolded as follows.

The context for the study was a single, taught module on a Master of Education course at a UK University, in which the researcher was also acting as the tutor for the module. The module was delivered via two face-to-face Saturday Day Schools spaced five weeks apart, with use of the social network platform, Yammer, as a bridge between the two events and as a follow-up to the latter. Based on three prior iterations of the module in a similar format and some informal, reflective and reflexive review of these iterations, the module for the year studied was devised and delivered, becoming the primary subject for the research for this thesis. Since I was both researcher and tutor, the underlying method might appropriately be described as participant observation. The form that this observation took developed over time. It began with some informal observation of the utterances and actions of participants within the social learning network. In light of these observations, a questionnaire was devised to gather some relatively technical information about the nature of participants' interactions in the network, in a kind of 'time and motion' study, exploring when, where, how and for how long participants were using the network and for what purposes. The online contributions of the participants continued to yield important insights throughout and ultimately formed an important part of the data for analysis, though their primary function was to develop a learning conversation for the module studied. The advantage of this naturally occurring data was that it offered a representation of an ever-changing present over the time course studied, something akin to the diary data described by Alaszewski (2006); 'Such stories form part of a person's everyday life and are not structured or prompted by the researcher … they are not artificially assembled but just happen in situ. They tell it as it is: with such voices there is a natural fidelity to the world as the life story tellers find it' (2006, p. 67).   This was particularly the case given that some of the online interactions explicitly discussed or reflected upon the online experience itself.

Nonetheless, to develop greater depth and nuance to the findings and to prompt fuller reflexive accounts from the participants, a semi-structured interview schedule was devised and implemented, interviewing each of the six participants in the network after the module was over. I was also interviewed by a fellow researcher, suitably briefed and using the same interview schedule. The interviews were all approximately one hour in length and took place in a variety of locations including my office at the University, a classroom at the participant's place of work and, where the participant was no longer in the UK, through a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) connection. By prior arrangement

with the interviewee, all of these were quiet environments, with reasonably good acoustics, in which private one-to-one interviews could be conducted without disturbance. Though there were some audio issues with Hadeel's interview, discussed in Chapter 11, all were audio recorded satisfactorily on a password-protected tablet device, transferred to a secure, password protected digital account as soon as possible and deleted from the tablet device at that point.

The way the interviews were conducted was influenced by the pragmatic and cogent advice that skilful interviewers need to be attentive, sensitive to the needs of the informant, non-judgemental, able to tolerate silences, and adept at using prompts, probes and checks, (Denscombe, 2010, p. 184). Prompts, used when necessary, included remaining silent to allow thinking time, repeating the question, repeating the last few words spoken by the interviewee and offering examples. Probes included asking for examples, clarification or further details. Checks were through summarizing what had been said using phrases such as 'So if I understand correctly...' (Denscombe, 2010, p. 184). Seating was away from a desk to promote a sense of a more equal discussion. Time to say hello and for an informal discussion was factored in at the start of the interview to settle the interviewee and the opening question was a general one about memories of school. The information sheet and consent form, which had been sent prior to the interview was then checked to ensure that full informed consent was in place and that the participant remained cognisant of the right not to participate and the right to withdraw as well as the procedures for doing so (see also ethics section on pp. 65-67). The recording equipment was checked to ensure it was working and that there was enough charge on the tablet device for the duration of the interview and it was then placed unobtrusively to one side but close enough to capture audio effectively.

Rather than aiming for a consciously formal dynamic in the interview, I sought to maintain the collegiate and informal tenor of the relationship which we had established throughout the module, concurring with Fontana and Frey's notion that, 'interviewers can show their human side and answer questions and express feelings. Methodologically, this new approach provides a greater spectrum of responses and greater insights into the lives of respondents,' (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 658 cited in Etherington, 2004, p. 38). This approach is congruent with feminist conceptions of a pedagogy of empowerment (Weiler, 1991) and of research as, 'a process which occurs through the medium of a person — the researcher is always and inevitably present in the research. This exists whether openly stated or not; and feminist research ought to make this an open presence' (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p. 175).

However, as Duckworth acknowledges, 'there was and remains an awareness of a dichotomy between feeling simultaneously, both the "same" and "different"' to one's participants ... [so that a] ... recognition of one's changing position is vital to positioning oneself in relation to the study and offering validity to the research process' (2014, p. 56). This led me to adopt an approach to the interview that sought to balance an empathetic response with a strong cognitive and rational engagement with what was being said or implied. During the interview and when listening to recordings, for example, I sought to identify the main points and priorities expressed by the interviewee, whilst also remaining alert to implicit messages, inconsistencies and the potential effects of my own positionality as both researcher and tutor, albeit of a module that was at this stage complete. Where I felt this kind of influence was at work, it informed my later interpretation of the findings, for example in my consideration of Ava's, Jack's and Hadeel's potential motivations for some of their answers.

In summary, then, my approach to interviewing my participants was congruent with the 'strong objectivity' persuasively posited by Sandra Harding, (2016). A reaction to the idea of a dispassionate and scientifically 'objective' point of view, 'strong objectivity does not start from an abstract idea of what would make perfect science' (Harding, 2016, p. 30) but recognises instead how research is actually practiced in real world scenarios. It rejects a single, fixed meaning for 'objectivity', taking this to be a historically contested concept, which has been susceptible to the agendas of the powerful in proclaiming what does and does not count as legitimate knowledge.   As such, it has been used to exclude the perspectives of the oppressed - an '"elevator word" intended to improve the scientific status of whatever is at issue' (Harding, 2016, p. 32). This is congruent, too, with Ann Oakley's argument, drawing on her experience of interviewing women, that, 'admonitions about objectivity and the need to view the interview purely as a tool of data-collection suggested a masculinist mechanistic attitude which treated the interview's character as an inconvenient obstacle to the generation of "facts"' (2016, p. 196).

At this stage, then, the study was moving from the positivist, realist tenor that was apparent particularly in the questionnaire towards the more interpretivist, social constructivist approach deemed necessary to uncover some of the more nuanced findings that were emerging as the study progressed. The design of the interview questions was influenced by a number of critical and theoretical perspectives, particularly those which emphasise the importance of habitus, life history and narratives in shaping and describing experience (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Brookfield, 2005; Clandinin, 2006; Colley, 2010; Duckworth, 2015; Polkinghorne, 1995) but also those that describe and explain the post-modern condition (Harvey, 1990; Jameson, 1998;

Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 2006). These prompted me to ask about the participants' formative experiences in education and about the extent to which their online learning constituted a clear narrative with a beginning, middle and end.

For further insight into these influences, please see *Appendix One: Field notes explaining the composition of interview questions*. However, it is important to note that Appendix One provides a snapshot of the questions as they appeared at pilot stage, during which the questions were adapted, influenced by two main factors. First, early findings suggested the pertinence of particular theoretical perspectives, which were then applied to adapting the questions to further explore the applicability of those perspectives to the research field. Second, preliminary data analysis illustrated further ways in which the questions could usefully be adapted, so that there was some moving to and fro between data collection and data analysis. Concurrent with this process and acting as a trigger for it, early, abortive attempts at thematic analysis of the interview data were superseded by narrative analysis. The reasons for this are explained in more detail below.

Early attempts at data analysis or 'Eating the Elephant'

This section provides a reflexive account of the reasons for the approaches to data handling that were adopted for this thesis.
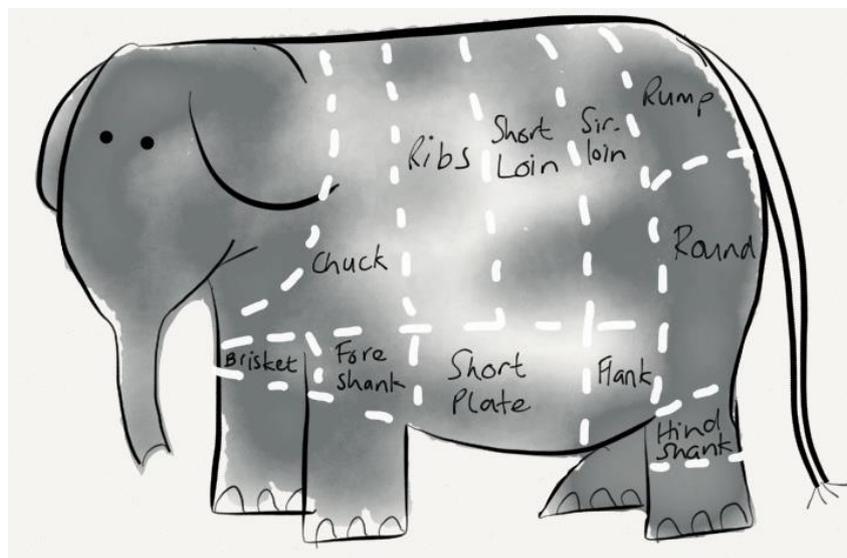
Figure 4: 'One bite at a time'

Just at the point when I was beginning to analyse my data, I attended a seminar given by Professor Helen Colley in which she recommended 'eating the elephant one bite at time,' by which she meant breaking down a large data set and sampling analytical approaches in small chunks (Figure 4). Through this metaphor she was sharing with us her own doctoral experience (Colley, 2010), in which she had worked diligently and

exhaustively at coding all of her large data set, only to find that her codes did not yield a useful basis on which to write up her findings. To avoid this wasted effort, Colley's pragmatic recommendation was to code, thematise and write about a small amount of data as a test-run. I did this using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase approach to thematic analysis and the data from three of the interviews. I made good progress, arriving at a set of what I took to be representative codes and themes. I then endeavoured to write a section of my findings chapter, using these themes, as if for the final thesis.

As I wrote, I became increasingly frustrated with the account. Below is an excerpt from this attempt. The theme out of which this excerpt grew was 'disorientation' which was a feature of all three interviews that made up the sample for this pilot:

> Three participants spoke about the sometimes-disorientating experience of Yammer, pointing out the way in which new content constantly 'buried' or obscured the old, with different ideas appearing every time they visited. Ava found that this made her 'learning journey' difficult to trace and left her feeling frustrated at her inability to 'get a handle' on what had been covered. Conversely, Jack found the challenges associated with the ephemeral nature of the content stimulating and enjoyable. Grace, on the other hand, felt 'paralysed' by the changeability of the content to the point of feeling unable or unwilling to even look at Yammer. This aspect of her response chimes with her earlier educational experiences where she had found it difficult to participate.

I found this excerpt and others like it, unsatisfactory in conveying what I took to be key features of my data. Each time I began to write about a theme, the account began to decay into the different ways in which it applied to or played out for each of the participants. I was constantly drawn away from the similarities implied by the theme and drawn towards setting each of their differing responses within the broader explanatory context of their individual dispositions, preferences, strengths, anxieties, aims and circumstances. Deconstructing their responses and reassembling them by theme, rather than by person, lost what those features meant in relation to the person's other features, within their own individual story. This threatened to defeat a key aim of my research, which was to find strategies for online learning that would take account of these individual dispositions. This bite of the elephant, then, had served its purpose. Though it was not a success in and of itself, it helped me avoid much wasted effort in coding data to no good purpose and it clarified exactly what it was that I valued and wanted to bring out of my data. Consequently, I turned back to Colley's work to find out more about the alternative, narrative approaches which had provided her with a solution

to her similar dilemma (2010). In re-reading, I found striking parallels with my experience of a false start with thematic data analysis and this gave me the impetus and confidence to explore in more detail the use of individual narratives to transform my own approach.

In making this choice, however, I had to reassess the commitments to validity and reliability in research that had arisen as part of my scientific training that sought for consistent, replicable and statistically significant results. If one looks for and finds not patterns but only single, unique instances, what is the point of the research and wherein lies its validity and reliability? Within positivist paradigms, frequency and replicability is often taken to be a measure of significance and generalisability. Within the holistic, individualised story, we have little or no repetition. However, it is arguable that looking for patterns across such a small-scale study with so few participants in order to establish generalisability is a nonsense in any case and that what is valuable and important is the depth of insight one gains into each person; a point convincingly made by Colley (2010) in her discussion of the relative merits of narrative and paradigmatic approaches.

In adopting this position, I acknowledge the contestable status of my representations of each participant within this account. These are *my* perceptions, interpretations and understandings of those individuals, acting as the tutor for these students, the coaxer of their stories and the formulator of their utterances, into the findings of this thesis. Whilst I endeavoured throughout to resist bias and to look for explanations that complicated or confuted my developing ideas about the research, inevitably the accounts are influenced by my own positionality and its associated hopes and expectations. I present these findings, then, not as incontrovertible truths about my participants but as my own sincere conclusions, drawn as their tutor and the researcher into their experiences of social learning networks. As the reader of these accounts, you are invited to question them and to draw your own, perhaps differing, conclusions about what quotations or utterances might reveal about the participants and their experiences.

Further this thesis acknowledges that it serves a social purpose. Readers who look for contradictions or shifts in explanations over time and for underlying motives in this account, adopt a disposition towards this thesis which echoes my own disposition towards the data itself and, I think, have more in terms of a richer and more nuanced understanding to gain. The primary underlying social purpose of this thesis of which I am myself aware is the desire to write an articulate, intelligent, well informed and insightful account that will engage the reader and be of use and value to them in shaping their own ideas about and approaches to teaching through new media. I am interested in the

implications of such approaches, with a sincere desire to make a productive contribution to the literature around the subject in ways that make social media use in education more rational, sustainable and just for participants. Related to this is my desire to build through this work a convincing doctoral identity, deserving of a PhD. This is, of course, part of a wider project to construct myself as a scholar worthy of my place in the academy and of the rewards that accrue to that role. I also seek to portray my professional self as I hope I am in reality; a technically competent, skilled and sensitive tutor, reflexive about the successes and failures of my practice and with a sincere desire to improve and to promote and support the progress of all my students. I acknowledge, however, that some of my motives are undoubtedly subliminal and as such I remain unaware of them on any conscious level and so I invite the reader to speculate about those motives too.

All of this may appear to be an invitation for unchecked subjectivity and a limitless proliferation of alternative readings of this text that almost completely sets aside the account itself. The influential literary theorist Stanley Fish, in his work *Is there a text in this class?* (1980) would argue, however, that whilst each reader participates in the making of a text, they do so not as isolated individuals but as part of a *community of readers* and that this community with its prevailing conceptions and norms predisposes us to arrive at a finite number of interpretations that are 'allowed' by the text in this context. 'Indeed,' he writes, 'it is interpretive communities, rather than either the text or the reader, that produce meanings' (1980, p. 14). Moreover, the way in which those interpretive communities respond to a text may shift over time: 'Social scientific writing, like all other forms of writing, is a socio-historical construction, and, therefore, mutable' (L. Richardson, 2000, p. 6). In keeping with the social realist epistemology that underpins this thesis, then, I acknowledge the mutability of this social construct but also take a realist's responsibility for the text and for the range of interpretations which it allows. The invitation inherent in this approach is to play your interpretive part within the community of readers and to arrive at your own conception of the meaning of the stories that are presented here, cognisant that you are part of a larger work of co-construction. In inviting this stance, this thesis endeavours to be part of a project to,

> move beyond what Sparkes (1995) termed persuasive fictions, a stripped down, abstracted, detached form of language, an impersonal voice, a conclusion of propositions, or formulae involving a realist or externalizing technique that objectify through depersonalized and supposedly inert representations of the disengaged analyst (Silk & Andrews, 2011, p. 18)

Arguing instead that,

our work needs more self-conscious texts that struggle with a whole set of claims related to authorship, truth, validity and reliability, and that bring to the fore some of the complex political/ideological agendas hidden in our writing. (Silk & Andrews, 2011, p. 19)

The use of holistic narrative analysis here, then, is premised on the notion that the search for this kind of complex, co-constructed truth is more important than 'what actually happened,' that this co-construction is in fact more relevant to the research questions of what the online interactions meant for the people involved and how this experience could be used by them for social ends. This dismisses criteria for validity that are based on 'realist' assumptions. Instead, it recognises the impossibility of representing the 'truth,' and focuses instead on a notion of trustworthiness arising out of the narrative accounts:

An analysis should not claim to be any more 'truthful' than another but rather render transparent the process by which the interpretation of the narrative and stories has been reached. Then we can argue that there is a high degree of trustworthiness in the analysis and any conclusions drawn from it (Reissman cited in Earthy & Cronin, 2015, p. 478).

A trustworthy account that does not claim to be the whole truth but endeavours to relate the findings from a standpoint that is made clear to the reader credits that reader with the ability to make their own, nuanced assessment of the meaning of what is related.

Narrative methodology

Having settled on using narrative as an approach to my data, I moved on to consider the extent to which it might constitute my whole methodological approach. Having reviewed a range of theorists in the field (Clandinin, 2007; Colley, 2010; Plummer, 1995; Polkinghorne, 1995; van Rooden, 2012) and using aspects of each, I have drawn most extensively on the lucid, accessible and comprehensive work of Jean Clandinin in mapping the field and its history (2007). She argues that in the late nineteen-nineties, this history featured 'a narrative revolution that was made possible by the decline of an exclusively positivist paradigm for social science research' (2006, p. 44), echoed by my own shifting methodological allegiances outlined earlier in this chapter. Though this revolution gave rise to various strands of narrative inquiry, Clandinin argues convincingly that the unifying characteristic of all narrative approaches is that they give us a methodology for studying people's experiences. My fundamental interest in the individual experiences of my participants also made this a wholly appropriate choice. With its roots in the ancient practice of story-telling, this approach to research is premised on the notion that we are 'storied' beings who live in and through narratives as a mode of

existence and this, too, chimed with my constructivist conceptions of the social world I was studying. Moreover, proponents of narrative inquiry argue persuasively that it gives us a way of 'slowing down lives' (Clandinin, 2006, p. 51) so that we can pause and look more closely at them and at what they mean. The purpose of this slowing down is to develop insights that help us to see and think differently in productive ways:

> In a fractured age, when cynicism is god, here is a possible heresy: we live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are living the stories we planted – knowingly or unknowingly – in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives. (King, 2003, p. 153 cited in Clandinin, 2006, p. 51)

This led me to an interest in prompting participants to reflect on their developing dispositions towards educational experiences, seeing their current online work as part of their wider story of progress through the system, allowing for the possibility of understanding how the personal and social are entwined over time in people's lives.

My conception of 'narrative inquiry'

The narrative character of this kind of approach operates on several levels and I summarise my own conception of these levels in Figure 5 below.
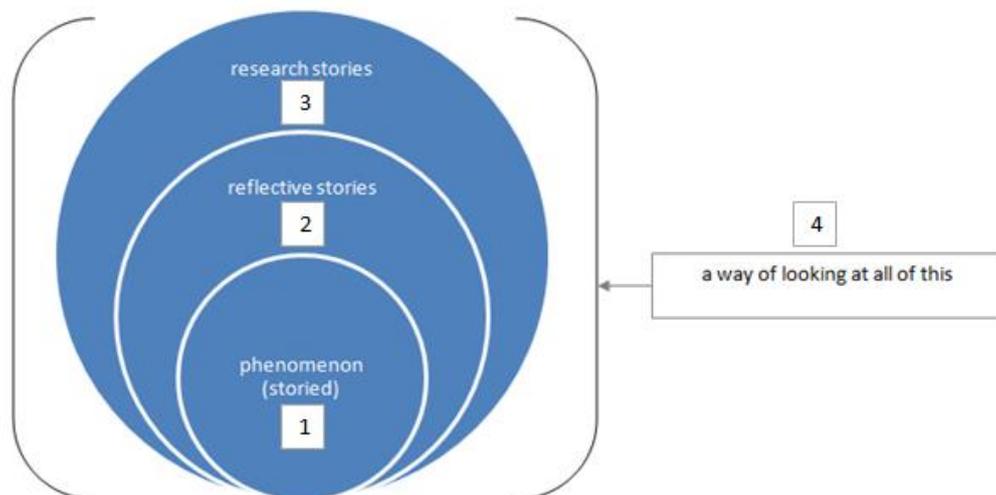
Figure 5: Narrative layers

The phenomenon of social media learning that I explored is seen as a fundamentally 'storied' and narrative experience (Level 1); my participants lived in and through these stories at first hand. When I interviewed them, I encouraged them to construct reflective, secondhand narratives (Level 2). My account in this thesis transforms that data into a 'research story' (Level 3). However, Levels 1 and 2 remain implicit in this third-hand account, which distills and interprets them. My stories contain stories about

stories and narrative inquiry is seen simultaneously as a way of being or *phenomenon*, a way of doing or *method* and a way of knowing or *methodology* (Level 4). Clandinin draws attention to the tensions that emerge when we transition to a research text and, from the outset, this compelled me to reflect continuously on my own role in each level of the story and its making, giving rise to the reflexive nature of much of this account. I recognise that narrative inquirers both shape and are shaped by the landscape they inhabit, living in stories whilst telling those stories. I also hold that stories are central to the process of curriculum making, providing a way to describe, interpret and develop on an ongoing basis; life in the stories continues to unfold even as the telling begins, and I was not merely a maker and researcher of the curriculum studied but also a part of it. It was in this spirit that I approached both the research and the teaching of the module.

This fundamental proposition that the phenomenon of experience is a storied affair is common to all narrative inquirers. However, a range of theorists propound different conceptions of what constitutes such experience. In arriving at my own conception of experience, I drew on Dewey's pragmatic criteria of *interaction*, *continuity* and *situation*. Experience has to entail *interaction* between the personal and social, it has to have some sense of *continuity* between past, present and future and it has to be *situated* in a particular place or places (Clandinin, 2006). I was able to relate these criteria to my approach to data collection. *Interaction*, for example, was explored through a focus on the nature, number and frequency of online contributions. This was done through looking at a combination of usage statistics, questionnaire responses and online utterances of participants. *Continuity* was explored through interview questions that sought to set this online participation within the participants' progress through the module and more broadly through the educational system. *Situation* was addressed through exploring the influence of the various sites for this progress and, in particular, the online, virtual site provided by Yammer, using both participant observation and interview questions. Furthermore, in later chapters, this thesis draws on Bourdieu's conception of social class, which sees class not as a set of occupational categories of the type generated from national statistical archives but as a multitude of possible loci within a universe of continuities. A methodology that is centrally concerned with the lived experience of class as revealed by close consideration of individual experiences is more congruent with such a conception (Skeggs, 2015, p. 207).

However, whilst I was centrally concerned with the *petites récits* of my participants, I did not want to lose sight of the grand narratives of which these individual stories might be a part. I retained throughout a broadly Marxist notion of experience as being vulnerable to distortion by ideology and its consequences (Clandinin, 2007, p. 38) and I, therefore, drew on a range of theoretical frameworks that loosely lie within or grow out of the

critical tradition of Marxism, notably Bourdieu (1990). Narrative approaches are particularly suited to any consideration that makes use of Bourdieu's notion of habitus as 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them' (Wacquant, 2005 cited in Beckert & Zafirovski, 2013, p. 316). This, too, influenced my formulation of interview questions, which sought to shed light on some of these dispositions. I tried, however, not to take an overly determinist position that saw these dispositions as monolithic and intractable, since such a conception denies the possibility for the individuals concerned to employ or develop their own agency or to achieve transformative learning. This reflects Bourdieu's own stance on structuralism:

> Bourdieu is "structuralist" inasmuch as he looks to use "the analysis of symbolic systems (particularly language and myth) so as to arrive at the basic principle behind the efficacy of symbols, that is the structured structure which confers upon symbolic systems their structuring power" (1971b). However, he is at pains to argue that "structure" in the structuralist sense of the word is simply too rigid and lacking in dynamism. It is not that society unfolds in terms of semi-permanent deep objective structures but that structures themselves are always in flux, and are created and realized as immanent in human activity. (Grenfell, 2012, p. 51)

Further, the apparent struggles of my participants to wrestle their later online learning experiences into a coherent narrative, alerted me to the ways in which a shift to online learning might constitute a socially significant transition, susceptible to analysis using critical perspectives. These perspectives, therefore, informed the final formulation of my research in Bourdieusian terms and my interview questions in ways that are highlighted in Appendix One. They also provided a lens through which I interpret my data in Chapters 14 and 15.

How many narratives is enough?

Given the epistemological and methodological approach outlined above, I needed to decide on how many narratives were enough to provide an answer to my research questions, 'is symbolic violence evident within a social learning network for master's level students at a UK University?' and 'if so, what forms did it take and how were these forms affected by the medium?' Howard Becker reasons that a single interview is sufficient to establish whether something is possible (Baker, Edwards, & Doidge, 2012, p. 5); I might feasibly establish that symbolic violence was evident from only a single instance. However, exploring the forms it might take and the influence of the medium on these forms required more. I did not seek to describe all possible forms of online

symbolic violence nor did I hope to discover all of the ways the medium might influence these forms. Rather I sought to establish what kinds of symbolic violence occurred for *this group* of six, key participants and the role the medium played in these occurrences. I concluded that one narrative account for each member of the cohort of six students on the module plus a reflexive narrative was sufficient to allow me to answer my research questions. This had the important advantage of providing a complete picture of all the players in the online community and the interplay between them. The data, therefore, is drawn from interviews and questionnaires of this cohort and from sustained participant observation over a ten-week period. All the online conversations generated in this time were used as an important source of data, as were the usage statistics that accrued and the reflective commentaries written by participants.

Structure of the narrative accounts

Each narrative takes a similar form, loosely provided by the chronology of events and by the semi-structured protocol of the interview questions. These questions also followed a loose chronology, beginning with a query about the participants' own experience of primary and secondary schooling and their willingness and likelihood to engage in classroom discussions at that time. The purpose of this question was to begin to establish whether there were any nascent signs of cultural capital apparent or gained at school that might prefigure their later disposition towards and behaviour within educational settings. In particular, it sought to establish whether there were early signs of developing confidence or resistance that would enable them to contribute more freely or conversely, whether there were any past instances of symbolic violence within educational settings which might continue to manifest as limiting assumptions or attenuated participation in online discussion, as part of this module. Each narrative begins, then, with a brief pen portrait of the participant, leading on to these experiences of schooling, highlighting any similarities, differences and possible salience of what the participants say, to the frequency and nature of their online contributions for the module that forms a focus for this study.

There follows a more detailed consideration of their online participation, what they say about it and what this reveals about the nature of the experience. Interwoven with this account, wherever pertinent, are observations about what social ends the participants might be attempting to achieve by telling their stories in the ways in which they do. Further, in this section of the narrative, attention is given to the metaphor that each participant offers, when prompted, for their online experience. The purpose of this prompt was to shed light on the tenor or essential character of that experience from each participant's viewpoint and to give a point of comparison between each of the narratives. In summary, then, the sections of each narrative are as follows:

- Introduction to the participant
- Schooling and disposition towards classroom discussion
- Experiences of the module

Transcription conventions

In transcribing what my participants say in interview, I have used the following conventions:

- <u>Underlining</u> indicates that the speaker placed a strong emphasis on the word(s)
- [*SQUARE BRACKETS ENCLOSING UPPER CASE, ITALICISED WORDS*] indicate non-spoken behaviours of participants, such as laughter or extended pauses
- An ellipsis with no space between the preceding word and the first full stop, like this... indicates that the participant takes a slight pause, or changes tack part way through an utterance or tails off without finishing their sentence.

I have not endeavoured to correct the grammar of what was said but have transcribed it verbatim. However, I have not adopted an extensive or rigorous transcription of all non-spoken behaviours, merely indicating those aspects that were most apparent or obvious. These conventions are not to be confused with those employed elsewhere in the thesis, i.e.

- [Square brackets enclosing lower case words] within quotations to indicate words added to make curtailed quotations grammatically correct
- An ellipsis preceded by a space like this ... to indicate words left out from the middle of a quotation.

I have not used 'sic' to indicate textual errors in written, online contributions of participants because, in some cases, there are so many that it interrupts the flow of what was said. Instead, I have copied and pasted them exactly. Any spelling, syntactical or grammatical errors in these quotations, therefore, are the participants' own. Note that in places, instead of transcribing online conversations, I have taken screenshots of what they looked like in Yammer, anonymising all participants except myself. I have chosen to do this because I think it more authentically evokes what the conversations were like and how they appeared to those taking part, in terms of font style, colours, interactions and layouts.

Ethics

The study was conducted in line with the relevant guidelines for educational research (BERA, 2011). All participants were provided with an information sheet that explained the nature of the research and its purposes as well as how all the data would be

collected and kept secure. Having read this information sheet, each signed a participant consent form, which assured them that their contributions would be anonymised and of the right to withdraw without the need to provide an explanation for this withdrawal and without repercussions of any kind. They were provided with contact details for the researcher and the research supervisor should they have any questions. All names have been changed within the thesis and the precise year of study withheld to minimise the chance of identification by surmise. Audio recordings of interviews have been securely stored on a password-protected repository. Transcripts of interviews and records of questionnaires have been anonymised and are securely stored. Since the cohort was small and the institution identifiable from the researcher's public profile, some details that have minimal significance to the research findings may have been changed. This is to further support efforts to preserve anonymity, which is of particular importance in this study since the research uses narrative accounts of their early experiences of school. As such it explores aspects of their history and dispositions more thoroughly than a simple consideration of a short educational intervention.

I decided, however, not to present the participants with the narrative accounts prior to their inclusion in this thesis. In doing so, I was influenced by Goldblatt et al.'s (2011) conclusion that applying member-check is frequently vexed; 'Although this strategy has good intentions, it is not necessarily the best method for achieving credibility. Harm can be caused to participants and researchers' (2011). Instead, I saw the interview data in the light described by Limerick et al. 'They suggest that researchers need to accept as a gift "of time, of text and of understanding" material provided by the researched'   out of which we make 'our story of their story' (Limerick et al., 1996, p. 458 cited in Oakley, 2016, p. 208). This attitude sees the interviewees' agency as residing, 'at least partly in their ability to choose to answer researchers' questions and donate research material' (Oakley, 2016, p. 208); a similar impulse, as Oakley insightfully comments, to that which motivates blood donors. As she goes on to point out, ' the notion of the gift is helpful here, since giving is generally not conditional on the uses that the receiver makes of the gift' (Oakley, 2016, p. 208). I acknowledge that my analysis of this gift of data, whilst it seeks to be as reflexive, authentic, insightful and sincere as possible, is ultimately fallible and might portray participants in a light with which they would not, themselves, concur. The research, therefore, is presented with the caveat that it is the interpretation of the researcher. Recommendations as to how this interpretation should be read are provided earlier in this chapter.

Finally, particular ethical issues arise from the fact that the researcher was the tutor of this group of students and the arbiter of their formal assignments and grades. It was vital, therefore, to ensure that all grades were fair and consistent with the assessment

criteria and to this end, they were subject to the full second marking, moderation and external examining process at the University concerned. Interviews were all conducted outside the marking process, which removed any risk or perception of duress through which participants might seek to conform to the expectations of the tutor/ researcher or to answer in particular ways to influence module marks or any perception that their marks were contingent on participation.

Chapter 4: Digital hiatus: Suffering and Symbolic violence in Social Learning Networks

This chapter provides a more detailed explanation of the key theoretical framework for this thesis, already outlined to some extent in Chapters 2 and 3. It is a Bourdieusian approach with a focus on symbolic violence that endeavours to adhere closely to Bourdieu's own complex explanation of this term, as set out in what follows. Alertness to the sources of such violence in online education is important in the effort to offer socially just educational experiences in a persistently unequal but increasingly digitised world. This chapter is a consideration of the particular character of symbolic violence within online social learning networks, arguing that, despite being played out in a novel environment with novel affordances, such violence is part of a long history of systems manipulation by the powerful. Though the precise nature of this manipulation is influenced by the affordances of online environments in ways that I will discuss in my later findings, it is important to recognise that it has a familial resemblance to the way that all such structures are rigged in favour of particular groups of people.

I begin the chapter by offering a general explanation of some of Bourdieu's key terms and concepts to shed light on how symbolic violence contributes to such rigging, before moving on to a consideration of how this might operate differently in online environments. Bourdieu's conceptualisations are seen here as 'thinking tools ... visible through the results they yield' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 50), which means they can be used in a somewhat fluid manner, as something *with which to think*. It also means that, rather than being simplistically defined, they can be applied to a variety of ambiguous and complex situations. This chapter's exploration of these notions, then, is offered as a lens through which to explore aspects of the narrative accounts provided in Chapters 6 to 12, shedding light on some of the likely ramifications of different kinds of participation in the context of online education. Whilst the narrative accounts themselves include some theorising, they are largely descriptive accounts, leaving the bulk of the analysis to Chapters 13 to 15, where I draw upon some illustrative examples of online exchanges using the ideas that are set out in the current chapter.

Key concepts from Bourdieu

I begin this section with an explanation of Bourdieu's broadly Marxist conception of capital as amassed labour, stored up in material things and embodied in people. Appropriating the labour of others as capital allows one to amass more, and this can be used to work in one's favour in social situations. The force to achieve such work has

shifted *from* the labourer *into* the things made; it becomes *inbuilt* in the material objects acquired. However, it is also inbuilt in socially agreed *principles*. For Bourdieu, one such principle is the charade that capital only exists in economic form; that superiority of other kinds, such as social acceptance in elite circles and the cultural competence to thrive there, are somehow natural or preordained. This charade and *misrecognition* of social and cultural capital, as Bourdieu describes it, cloaks the processes by which it has been acquired, concealing that it springs from appropriated labour. Misrecognition protects such privilege from challenge, allowing it to become more thoroughly inscribed in the social world. It is a pretence which feeds itself and, in this way, just like economic capital, social and cultural capital can be used to generate further profit. Thus, capital of all kinds has a certain inertia; a tendency to remain and accumulate in the hands of the already-wealthy, becoming the virtual monopoly of the dominant class.

Crucially, capital can be converted from one form to another, sometimes readily as in the purchase of a work of art and sometimes with more difficulty, as in the acquisition of a fine arts degree. Not just a financial transaction, the latter takes years of one's own work and the navigation of an ostensibly meritocratic educational system. However, accumulated capital consistently weighs in favour of the students who possess it. They carry it not just in their pockets but also in themselves; in their manners, dispositions, attire, deportment, accents and connections as well as in their first-hand knowledge and sometimes possession of expensive cultural artefacts. Nevertheless, they must deploy a great deal of time and effort to cash in on their advantage. This kind of difficulty is necessary because it cloaks the inherently unfair mechanisms that underpin such a system. It amounts to 'a whole labour of dissimulation or, more precisely, *euphemization* that must endeavour ... [to remain undetected, whilst grasping] capital and profit in all their forms' (Bourdieu in Richardson, 1986, p. 257). In this way, Bourdieu provides us with a persuasive explanation for the persistently unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from different social classes. The privileged can deny buying privilege and can simultaneously lay claim to the 'natural' aptitude needed for academic success in an 'equitable' system.

How, then, is appropriated labour converted into the manners, dispositions, deportment, connections and so on that are needed for academic and other kinds of success? Bourdieu argues that these are laid down in a long period of inculcation from early childhood and that this inculcation depends for its success on the family's already accumulated economic, social and cultural resources; on all that they have, both material and embodied. For this reason, he terms it the *habitus* of the family, from the Greek word 'to have.' The factors that Bourdieu cites as determining this habitus within the specific field of education, summarised later in Figure 6, include:

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1. **residence** (including proximity to the intelligentsia and their educational and cultural facilities, favourable neighbourhoods and peer groups);

2. **other class-related demographics** (including gender, sibling order and family size);

3. **conditions of existence** (including security of employment, income and income prospects, leisure time, environment and working conditions);

4. **ethos** (including dispositions towards school and culture, subjective expectations of access and advancement by means of school and relation to language and culture, for example, in the form of manners);

5. **social and cultural capital** (including linguistic capital, previous knowledge, understanding of how the education system works, social connections and prestige in the form, for example, of testimonials).

These can be translated into:

6. **position in the economic and social hierarchy** (including average income at the beginning and the end of a career, speed of promotion and proximity to positions of power in the various fields of legitimacy);

7. **class habitus** (including the relation to class origin and education, the academic record and eventual class membership) and

8. **mature cultural and social capital** (including a strong academic record and membership of the old boy network.) (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 259)

Few of these factors can be 'transmitted instantaneously (unlike money, property rights, or even titles of nobility) by gift or behest, purchase or exchange ... [Instead, the process of transmission] implies a labour of assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally' (Bourdieu in Richardson, 1986, p. 259). The families of the bourgeoisie have more resources of all kinds to invest and can begin this investment earlier in the life of the child, and sustain it longer, more frequently and more thoroughly. It is not just that they have more of everything. Crucially, they have more *time* to make use of what they have. This wealth of habitus cannot be accrued in the absence of appropriated labour. Thus, we trace cultural capital and habitus to their source in the labour of others.

Having traced the source, we ought to be able, perhaps, to describe, account for and quantify the family's and the individual's 'havings' in this broadest sense of the word.

However, the deliberate dissimulation and euphemization outlined above makes this difficult, so that invariably, though we can point to some of its outcomes, habitus is resistant of definition and proves persistently elusive. Nonetheless, Bourdieu offers a logic for the influence of habitus through the educational system, as represented in Figure 6 below.

This illustrates how early advantage continues to exert an inexorable influence throughout an individual's schooling and education, in ways that colour their destination. Bourdieu argues that this process relies on principles arbitrarily set in place by the powerful, which he, therefore, terms the cultural arbitrary. This will continually favour a bourgeois habitus, illustrated in Figure 6 by circles A to A3, each of which represents a facet of an overall 'system of determinations' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 259). These determinations, which are inextricably linked to class membership, are retranslated in each stage of education and the system reasserts itself, according to the opportunities and imperatives presented by the new stage.   I argue that there is a similar retranslation of determinations when participants go online, so that they merely redeploy their habitus to try to succeed in this novel arena, according to its opportunities and imperatives. Digital capital, then, is merely an amalgamation of forms of cultural, social and economic capital retranslated to suit the affordances, opportunities and imperatives of digital environments, as illustrated in Figure 7. In this way, social energy from appropriated labour flows into and augments the objective probability (OP) of success at every turn, including the digital, albeit attenuating in proportion to the growing need to cloak unfair influence and present the credentials of merit and natural aptitude the higher up the academy we progress. This conception of digital capital as an expression of Bourdieu's existing three categories, suitably redeployed for a digital medium, underpins the index of digital capital that I present as my key finding.

All of this, of course, is in addition to the way in which gains along the way in the form of qualifications, skills, knowledge and understanding feed into the chances of success at the next stage, as illustrated by the 'OP' boxes shown in Figure 6. The objective probability of success in educational social media environments is similarly influenced. Further, the pencilled arrows suggest that subjective expectations of good outcomes that become embodied in students as they progress feed into and improve their objective chances of success. This is a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, not unlike the way in which Harry Potter's adventures in time travel give him the self-belief to perform a difficult incantation, by dint of having witnessed his own future triumph.
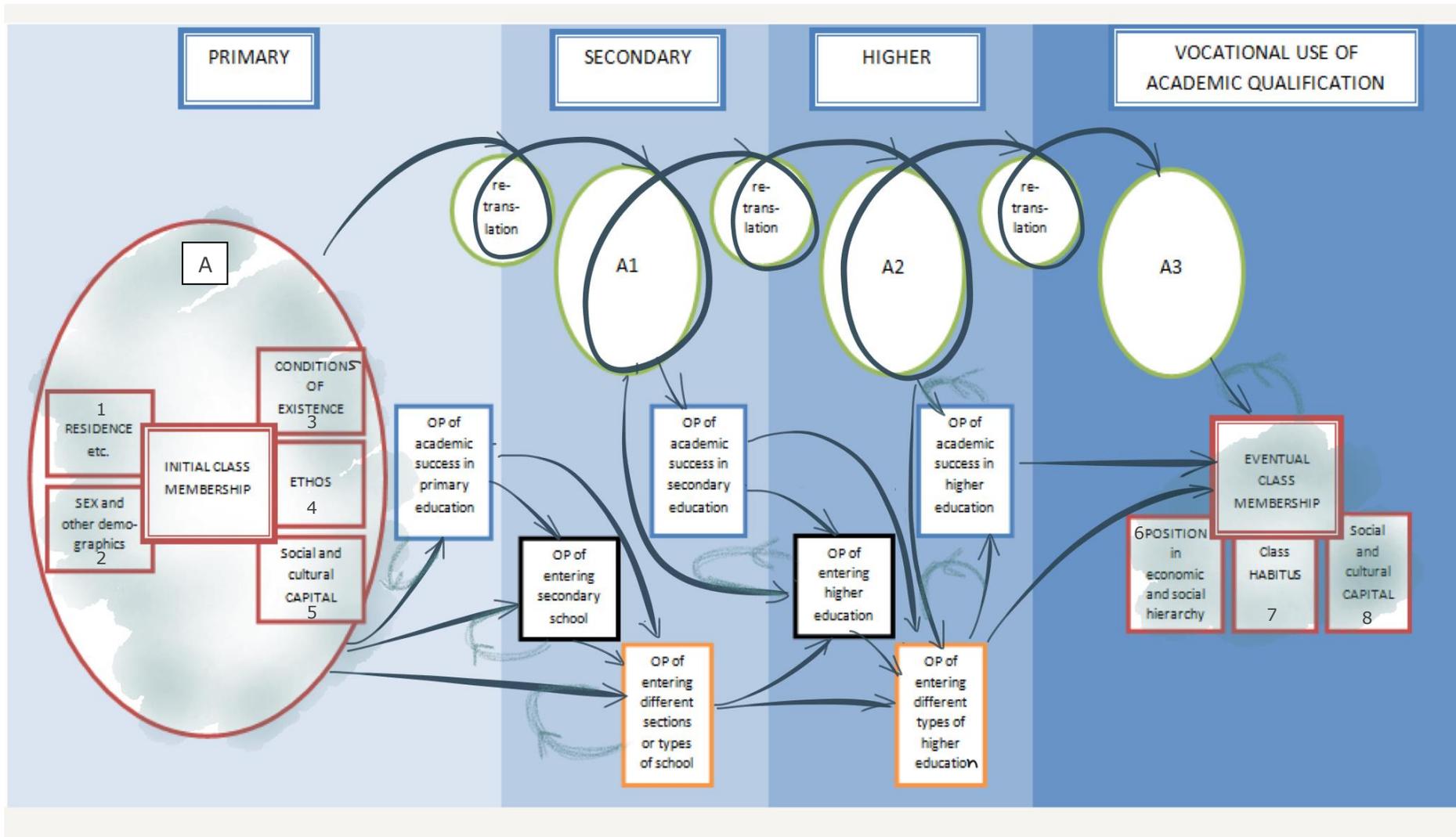
Figure 6: The educational career and its systems of determinations (adapted from Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, pp. 256–258)
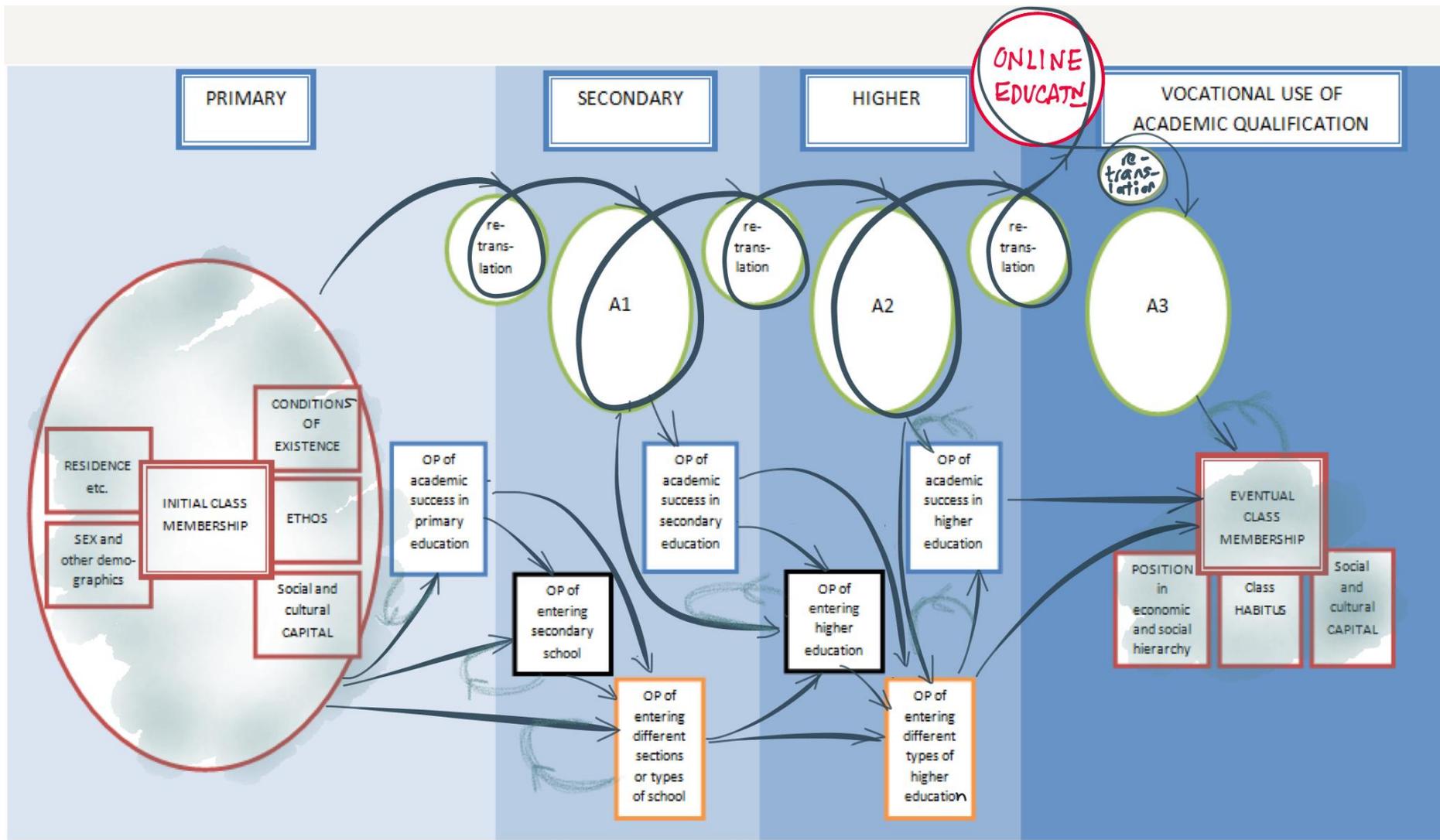
Figure 7 - The educational career and its systems of determinations adapted to include online systems

Harry realises in the nick of time that his victory over the Dementors is performed not by his father as he had at first thought, but by a slightly older self;

You think the dead we loved ever truly leave us? You think that we don't recall them more clearly than ever in times of great trouble? Your father is alive in you, Harry, and shows himself most plainly when you have need of him. How else could you produce that *particular* Patronus? ... You found him inside yourself. (Rowling, 2000, pp. 428–429)

This is also a neat evocation of the way in which familial habitus can become embodied in individuals to their benefit, acting as an enduring source of self-assurance and belief throughout their education. Conversely, those without such resources are persistently and cumulatively disadvantaged. As Baroness Helena Kennedy wrote in her Education white paper in 1997, 'If at first you don't succeed ... you don't succeed' (1997, p. 21).

As for the process by which cultural capital is converted into other forms, like any other transaction, this is governed by laws of exchange, albeit in this instance, symbolic. How much is a handshake worth? What price an assured nod of the head, or a passing of the port on the 'correct' side? These are worth nothing unless by common agreement over what is *acceptable*. Hence, Bourdieu calls this common agreement the *doxa* from the Greek 'to accept.' However, what is considered acceptable is a cultural arbitrary and varies from one social situation or *field* to another. In the field of academe, for example the communications of the teacher are privileged, bolstered by concealed power relations that give them their symbolic force and allow them to impose and inculcate the cultural arbitrary. Each is also able to add their own symbolic force to the communication, by virtue of their embodiment of power, with which the student is compelled to comply, (Figure 8).
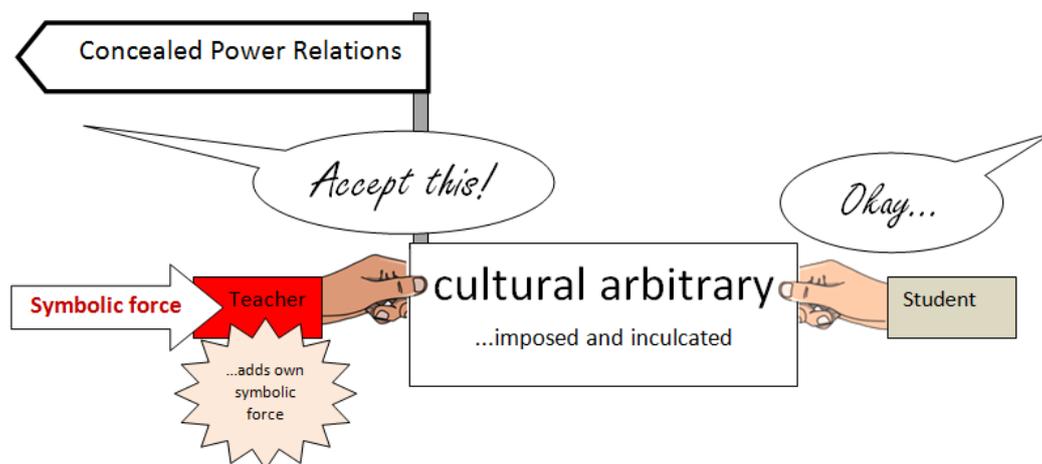
Figure 8 Pedagogic communication

Symbolic violence

As with the physical violence that is displayed in instances of corporal punishment or police crowd control, symbolic violence might be characterised as forcing compliance. Both are enabled and legitimated by the powerful. In place of physical pain, symbolic violence inflicts psychological suffering or the threat thereof, through fear of being ostracised or humiliated. The desired behaviour, however, is a 'cultural arbitrary' with nothing inherently good about it except that it is endorsed by the powerful. As an example, in functional terms, it matters not which knife and fork to use at a dinner party. They all work. However, there is a cultural arbitrary that says that one must generally start on the outside and move inwards with each course. Who has decided that this should be so and how has the power to make this decision been acquired? Bourdieu would argue that the decision about which fork to use was, in the first instance, an arbitrary one and the power to make this decision arbitrarily acquired. Further, the smirks, whispers, comments or blanking, in other words the means by which the violence operates are arbitrary too. In summary, symbolic violence is the legitimated means by which people are arbitrarily called to comply with a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power.

However, there is a further level of subtlety in symbolic violence around the notion of compliance, because if complete compliance were to be achieved, uniformity of behaviour would result and the cultural arbitrary would lose its symbolic power. In the final analysis, symbolic violence is about *distinction*; a means by which the powerful recognise one another and marginalise others. The cultural arbitrary must be hidden in plain view, not completely inaccessible but difficult for the powerless to acquire or even to recognise. This importance of arbitrariness is emphasised throughout Bourdieu's most extensive treatment of symbolic violence in *Reproduction* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). It raises the possibility of *non-arbitrary* learning, though this is never explicitly stated in Bourdieu. For example, a child may learn not to run with scissors through fear of being ostracised by a more powerful other, but the knowledge is objectively helpful and not a cultural arbitrary. This then is, perhaps, not symbolic violence in Bourdieu's conception, because it is not part of a mechanism for achieving distinction, merely a way of keeping small children safe and free from physical harm.

The difficulty for those using the notion of symbolic violence to describe the social world, is that not all distinctions are as clear cut as that between running with scissors and using the right fork. If as a University tutor, one fails a student on a module, is that an instance of symbolic violence or not? For Bourdieu, this might depend on the reasons why the student has failed: 'All pedagogic action is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power' (Bourdieu & Passeron,

1990, p. 5). The implication of this statement is that if it is not about the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power, it is not symbolic violence. Michael Young's distinction between *powerful knowledge* and *the knowledge of the powerful* is, perhaps, helpful here (Young, 1971). The knowledge of the powerful is a cultural arbitrary with nothing inherently powerful about it. Its main point is to reinforce distinction and reproduce inequality. Powerful knowledge on the other hand is powerful in and of itself, giving people access to objectively useful ideas and ways of seeing and talking about the world that enable them to help shape it. I have sought to use this distinction in helping to identify instances of symbolic violence in this study. However, I want to acknowledge that the boundary between powerful knowledge and the knowledge of the powerful is nebulous and that a conversation about what constitutes each in the context of digital participation is a challenging but productive line of enquiry thrown up by this study. For example, if a learner is unable to articulate some aspect of what Michael Young would call disciplinary, objectively powerful knowledge to pass a module, we might argue that it is not symbolic violence to fail the student on that module. However, the reason the student is unable to articulate his learning might lie in some instance of symbolic violence from his past that is activated by the mode in which he is being asked to present his learning. Furthermore, a deficit in powerful knowledge can act as a marker of low cultural capital just as well as a deficit in the knowledge of the powerful and can, therefore, trigger experiences of symbolic violence that seem identical from the point of view of the sufferer:

> Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e. every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations (Grenfell, 2012, p. 102)

The index of digital capital that I describe in my later chapter seeks to delineate favoured behaviours in online learning and I argue that these behaviours lie on this nebulous boundary between powerful knowledge and the knowledge of the powerful, between a cultural arbitrary and non-arbitrary learning. This is the hazy hinterland that symbolic violence must inhabit in order to remain hidden in plain view.

One way in which I explore this hinterland is through a focus on the character and effects of symbolic violence regarding the *language* that participants deploy, both online and in interview. In this sense, I make use of Bourdieu and Passeron's ideas around 'linguistic capital,' which they see as not merely,

> a means of communication but as a provider of a "system of categories"; that is, ways to think ... [such that] drop-out rate increases as one moves away from social

groups whose inherent language already matches the style and culture of scholarly language and the function of education is to select, or rather "to select out," the children from working class backgrounds. (Grenfell, 2012, pp. 104–105)

To thoroughly contextualise this analysis, in the latter parts of this chapter, I locate Bourdieu's ideas on language amongst other possible theoretical perspectives. Central to this analysis is my use of Bourdieu's notion of a 'gap' or 'hiatus' effect that facilitates symbolic violence, from which I derive the notion of a *digital hiatus.* In lay terms, the phrase 'digital hiatus' is commonly used to describe a break from using social media, such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, often with the implication of spending more time 'in the real world,' in touch with nature and in face-to-face encounters with family and friends. However, in this thesis, I am using the term differently; to describe the gap between field and habitus (see below) that makes some students more easily objectified and vulnerable to symbolic violence when they are operating in the highly visible, disembodied online world.

Systems Manipulation by the Powerful

Symbolic domination as characterised by Bourdieu is not a consciously deliberate set of actions. Rather, it 'is something you absorb like air, something you don't feel pressured by; it is everywhere and nowhere, and to escape from it is very difficult' (Grenfell, 2012, p. 192). The system is legitimated and internalised, such that the powerful 'need only let the system they dominate take its own course in order to exercise their dominations' (Bourdieu & Nice, 2015, p. 190). This makes symbolic domination an altogether insidious yet effective means of oppression, more difficult to escape because it is unperceived on any conscious level.

In the field of academe, as in other professional fields, this system works to improve or impede; to make or break academic careers; 'the university field is, like any other field, the locus of a struggle to determine the conditions and the criteria of legitimate membership and legitimate hierarchy' (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 11). Moreover, this field of the university is contiguous with and builds upon ways in which schools socialise students. Bourdieu and others have argued persuasively for the importance of this early, school-based socialisation in nuancing the habitus and with it, the later symbolic practices of individuals and of groups:

The habitus is ... both structured by conditions of existence and generates practices, beliefs, perceptions, feelings and so forth in accordance with its own structure ... Formally, Bourdieu (1986c: 101) summarizes this relation using the following equation:

$$[(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice \text{ (Grenfell, 2012, p. 50)},$$

where capital is comprised of economic, social and cultural components represented by the material assets, friendships, social connections, dispositions, attitudes, manners and so on of the individual.

The narratives in this thesis reveal some of the ways in which participants continue to deploy educational discourse practices that have been shaped by their school lives. Even though each participant said in interview that the online environment and its pedagogy was markedly different from their schooling, most recognised ways in which their practices within Yammer were influenced by or related to their previous educational experiences and familial attitudes to education, in other words, their habitus. Though Ava, Jack and I spoke in ways that revealed resistance to the symbolic domination that they experienced in school, Molly and Rachel acknowledged that whilst they resisted, they were heavily influenced there by the pressures to conform and Grace and Hadeel were effectively silenced. All acknowledged ways in which their online interactions, or lack thereof, showed persistent evidence of those earlier dispositions; my participants, then, can be seen to carry their habitus within so that it becomes subject to the contemporaneous influences of the wider field of academe, of which this module formed a part. As is illustrated in Figure 7 on p. 73, there is a retranslation of the cultural arbitrary when participants go online. They merely redeploy aspects of their capital within this novel field. 'The system of determinations attached to class membership (Circle A) acts throughout an educational career, restructuring itself ... at the different stages of the passage through education' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 259).

How might this reconfiguration be displayed? Bourdieu noted the way in which the *language* of academe shapes symbolic exchanges, through characterisations of students that teachers and peers typically use, such as *bright*, *gifted, hard working*, *diligent* and so on, pointing out that these adjectives carry a particular cultural heft within the academy and work to reinforce distinction in a kind of 'euphemized version of social classification, a social classification that has become natural and absolute' (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 178). In so loaded a system, particularly where online participation is linked, as here, to both formative and summative assessment, word and register choice becomes part of a game of status and it is hardly surprising, therefore, that participants strive to adopt the 'right' register as well as falling back upon hard-won strategies of the past, or that they feel some anxiety and reticence about contributing at all. Actors have a vested interest in speaking and writing in ways that cite the very systems of symbolic domination that work upon them and sometimes oppress them and by doing so, they unwittingly reinforce them.

According to Bourdieu, the link between symbolic domination and language arises because, historically, the doxa of the academy has been overwhelmingly shaped by upper and middle class social mores. Over time, these fractions of society have retained the authority to define what kind of cultural capital is needed, with the consequence that their own members enter the academy with the 'proper' cultural and linguistic potential to succeed. I argue in this chapter that this notion of a 'proper' capital persists in online environments and that the inequality that results is at odds with the way in which the medium is frequently characterised as fundamentally democratic, merely because it is entirely 'open' to contributions from all (Keating, 2016; Prescott & IGI Global, 2016). This characterisation is problematic because it is blind to the persistence of inequality across media, making individuals to blame if they do not participate and succeed. Education is more open to students in that they can technically access it online but at the same time, closed to students because they do not have the 'proper' cultural capital to do well or to 'survive' there.

> The lack of fit between lower- and working-class habitus and the educational field, and the blaming of the individuals involved for their poor performance is a form of symbolic violence through which social class hierarchy is reproduced (Grenfell, 2012, p. 185).

Further, the novel effects of the online medium and the extent to which it is unfamiliar to participants can potentially amplify this inequality, as I go on to explore in the next section.

The hiatus effect

Bourdieu's 'hiatus effect' occurs when temporal or spatial ruptures impose changes in ways of knowing about or being in the world. He first used the term in the context of nineteen-sixties France to describe 'how a once stable relationship between the education field and the middle class was disrupted [when] lower-class fractions entered the field and "devalued" particular subject areas' (*Bourdieu 1990a* in Myles, 2010, p. 40). When this happened, the forces standardising spoken and written language worked to maintain distinction between the incumbent middle classes and working class 'interlopers.' Here and more generally, incumbents are better placed to shape social mores and to exploit the inevitable confusion and disorientation that interlopers experience. An example of this is the way in which standards of appropriate language within education are largely set by middle class norms, spelling, for example, being predominantly based on the phonetics of the dominant idiolect. Working class students can only learn the 'standard' language through setting aside, at least in some fields, their own ways of speaking to acquire those of another class.

Responses to the hiatus effect commonly fall into two main categories. First, participants may fall silent in a kind of resigned passivity. Second, they may exhibit *allodoxia*. This term comes from the Greek *allo* meaning 'other' and *doxa* meaning 'common belief' or 'popular opinion,' implying a belief or opinion at odds with those that prevail. It was Bourdieu's term for the mistakes people make when they try hard but fail to 'fit in.' By misapprehending or misinterpreting the dominant culture, they imperfectly mimic or hypermimic it and, thereby, reveal themselves to be out of their depth: 'the overall message is clear: foreigners get it wrong ... they are specially prone to *allodoxia*, or false recognition' (Conti & Gourley, 2014, p. 207). In the context of this research, 'foreigners' can be read as those who do not feel at home in the online world, leading to resigned passivity and allodoxia. Bourdieu documents both resigned passivity and allodoxia in the context of the French invasion of Algeria when 'different conditions of existence were imposed that provided different definitions of the impossible, the possible and the probable,' (Grenfell, 2012, p. 182), disorientating most those who had the least power to shape the new. This produces 'a disorganization of conduct, which it would be a mistake to see as innovation in the conventional sense' (Grenfell, 2012, p. 182). Innovation, typically characterised as a force for positive change in education, becomes identified as a productive site of struggle to establish a new doxa that will maintain and reinforce distinction.

I argue that a similar process of disorganisation of conduct occurs with the innovative shift from face-to-face to online education. Such a shift is always attended by temporal and spatial ruptures of the kind described by Bourdieu in his Algerian and French education examples above. When education moves online, gone are the synchronous, scheduled classes, starting and ending at set times and taking place in a very specific local context in a University in the North of England, within a particular room in the institution, with people regularly sitting in the same seats and next to the same people. Bourdieu notes the significance of these formalities in the following:

> Students sometimes call for a subversion of this professorial space in favour of round-table exchanges, open dialogue, or 'non-directive' teaching. However, in many of their most deeply held attitudes they remain firmly wedded to the traditional teaching situation. For this also protects *them*, and it is one of the few models of scholastic behaviour open to them' (Bourdieu, Passeron, & Saint-Martin, 1994, p. 11).

Though formality has undoubtedly broadly declined since this was written in 1994, classroom conventions nonetheless persist and, in the shift online, they are replaced by asynchronous, unscheduled discussions that can be accessed at any time of the day or night, taking place in a virtual space which people access from diverse settings, through

a range of different devices, often when they are in company with family or friends or strangers instead of with classmates. All these effects are apparent in the data that is presented in this thesis, illustrating how the trend towards digitisation disrupts the once stable relationship between the student and the learning environment, devaluing particular educational practices and privileging others. New conditions of existence are imposed on students, making some of their old practices impossible and presenting them with new possibilities. Those already in power in academic settings are best placed to shape the new norms that arise and they often do so, either consciously or unconsciously, in ways that reinforce distinction. This, too, is evident in the findings for this thesis, an example of which is explored in detail in Chapters 14 and 15 on allodoxia.

The shift into online education is not, then, a straightforward 'innovation' or neutral shift, whereby learning practices are merely transposed from one medium to another. Instead, it is a site of struggle where participants try to figure out and shape the doxa of this novel site and to respond to and obey it to gain status in the field. Just as the French middle class of the nineteen-sixties sought for new ways to differentiate themselves from working-class encroachment into full-time education, participants in online environments might be expected to jockey for status and to endeavour to distinguish themselves from others. The ways in which this occurs are explored through the narrative accounts provided and in Chapters 13 to 15.

Bourdieu on language

I acknowledge above the importance of hierarchical field structures such as class conditions in determining experiences and return to and make use of these ideas in a close analysis of online exchanges in Chapter 13. However, unlike most Bourdieusian analyses, which tend to focus solely on such field structures (Myles, 2010), I also trace the effects of symbolic domination through an analysis of the patterns of interaction and the language that participants use, arguing that this reveals evidence of symbolic violence and its attendant suffering. Therefore, I provide here an explanation of Bourdieu's position on language relative to other perspectives. It is important to note, however, that my analysis of examples of the kind of language exchanges that occurred in this online environment is not intended to be an exercise in formal Conversational Analysis and concerns itself only with a broad consideration of the extent to which the habitus might shape language choices, the connection of those choices with the doxa and what this might reveal about cultural systems and relationships.

This leaves us with Bourdieu's position on language, which can be thrown into relief by comparing it with sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology and postmodern perspectives. There are important differences in how language is perceived from each of these points

of view. Unlike sociolinguists for whom the *language itself* plays the most decisive role in shaping actors' thoughts, ideas and behaviours, Bourdieu's approach gives precedence to the way that *social structures* affect actors and their language choices. His is a structuralist conception that sees social classifications and hierarchies as the primary shapers of social reality. This also contrasts with postmodern ideas that grant a premium to the *'naming'* power of language in the reification of the social world; a world, it is argued, that would otherwise have no objective, external existence. By further contrast, ethnomethodologists look to the grand influence of the 'natural' rules of social interaction. Bourdieu argues persuasively that all these alternative approaches miss the way in which class habitus variously enables or prevents the deployment of particular language in particular situations. It is his approach to language that is adopted in the discussion that follows, seeing language as an indicator or index for social structures that lie behind it, whilst also acknowledging that these structures are not fixed and immutable but always in a state of flux.

This is not to suppose with the postmodernists that language *is* the social reality, or that there is a direct determining relationship between social forces and discourse. Rather the linguistic field lies in 'a semiautonomous, intervening structure ... between social and political structures,' shaped by and shaping both. Like the habitus of which it forms an important part, it is a 'structured structure predisposed to function as a structuring structure,' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). A good analogy for this rather convoluted way of seeing language is to liken it to a robot. A robot is a built thing. We structure it, just as we structure our language, to serve our ends. However, robots are also able to build things according to their programming. Robots, like language, are a structured and structuring structure. It is entirely possible for robots, if designed correctly by humans, to build their own components, just as it is possible for a language to shape itself through the agency of its speakers.

> Correlations between realms of linguistic differentiation and social differentiation are not wholly arbitrary. They bear some relationship to a cultural system of ideas about social relationships, including ideas about history of persons and groups. I do not mean linguistic variation is simply a diagram of some aspect of social differentiation ... but that there is a dialectic relationship mediated by a culture of language (and of society). (Irvine, 1989, p. 253)

It follows then that an exploration of the language that my participants used when conversing online might yield some insights into the nature of that cultural system of ideas and that dialectic relationship and it is this which I set out to explore in the following accounts of online participation.

Chapter 5: How Yammer was used

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a largely quantitative overview of patterns of use and some general attitudes towards Yammer over the ten-week period from the start of the module to its completion. It is based on data harvested from the Yammer site itself and from a questionnaire (Appendix 2) that was sent electronically to all participants after the module was completed and prior to the interviews being conducted. The questionnaire was formulated in light of Wolcott's advice to ask questions that gather 'some systematic observation, particularly in terms of time distributions,' counselling that 'you don't have to do a great deal of it in order to have some interesting material to report ... and someday you will be glad you did' (1994, p. 127). He was right. Whilst it was not possible for me to observe my participants directly whilst they accessed Yammer, I could at least ask them some pragmatic questions about how, where and for how long they accessed the network and what they typically did when they were logged in. This is congruent with the social realist conception of research outlined in my methodology and is aimed at harvesting data that tends towards the more straightforward, factual and 'real' end of that spectrum. However, I also included some broad questions about how participants felt about Yammer and its impact on them. In doing so, I gathered some early impressions that then informed the formulation of my interview questions. Moreover, all this data was elicited in the hope that it would provide some triangulation with participants' responses at interview and inform and add detail to the more qualitative interview data in practical ways.

This account, then, is provided as a scene-setting exercise prior to the narrative accounts which follow it, so that those accounts can be read in light of a broad impression of how much interaction occurred, which users were most prolific in their online contributions, how and where they accessed the Yammer platform and so on. Consequently, this chapter is a largely descriptive account, though some preliminary theorisation is provided where it is thought useful to prefigure fuller discussion later in the thesis.

Table 2: Introduction to participants

	Gender	Age	Participants' own descriptions of their online persona
Ava	Female	50-59	Questionnaire not returned
Cheryl	Female	40-49	Welcoming, supportive and challenging
Grace	Female	40-49	Quiet, lurking reader
Hadeel	Male	30-39	Helpful
Jack	Male	20-29	Encouraging, questioning and curious
Molly	Female	40-49	'Gobby!' Friendly, supportive and helpful
Rachel	Female	40-49	Hopeful, encouraging, friendly, supportive & attempting to be humorous

The online personas listed in Table 2 above are drawn from participants' questionnaire responses to the question of 'Can you think of three or more words to describe your online persona within the module's Yammer network?' They serve here as a shorthand way for you to begin to 'get to know' these participants. The data that follows expands upon that shorthand, by building a picture of how they behaved and interacted online. For reasons that will become clear in her narrative account, Ava returned no response to the questionnaire so is commented upon in this chapter only when data drawn either from Yammer itself or from her interview can shed light on what her responses might have been.

Table 3: Yammer contribution statistics over a ten-week period

Participant	Posts		Replies		Likes	
	Number	% of all posts in network	Number received	% chance of a reply	Number received	% chance of a 'like'
Ava	1	<1	7	700	2	200
Cheryl	335	36	210	63	255	76
Grace	16	2	1	6	33	206
Hadeel	36	4	33	92	37	103
Jack	302	32	153	51	199	66
Molly	131	14	59	45	99	76
Rachel	122	13	59	48	118	97

Table 3 shows data drawn directly from the Yammer site. It illustrates the wide disparity between participants in site usage, even within so small a cohort. There was an average of approximately ten posts per day over a ten-week period. Of the total 943 posts, Jack and I contributed approximately a third each, with Molly and Rachel the next most prolific posters on 13 and 14 % respectively. Hadeel and Grace contribute only 6% of the posts between them and Ava made a single contribution, constituting a fraction of a

percent to the overall discussion. Of course, silence does not preclude engagement and a number of studies have explored 'lurking' as legitimate peripheral participation or learning behaviour. (Cranefield, Yoong, & Huff, 2015; Dennen, 2008; Schneider, von Krogh, & Jäger, 2013). That being said, the wide variation in number of posts represented in Table 3 implies a widely divergent educational experience for the participants, which is echoed by their reflections on that experience, discussed at interview and presented in the narrative accounts that follow this chapter. It is also further reflected by participants' self-reporting of Yammer usage shown in Table 4 below, which was gathered through their responses to the questionnaire; Grace and Hadeel say they 'rarely' contribute to conversations, whilst Jack, Molly, Rachel and I all attest to being 'frequent' contributors.

Table 4: Type of Yammer usage according to questionnaire responses

	Average duration of visit (minutes)	How often do you contribute?	Of the available options on Yammer which did you use?
Ava	No response to questionnaire		
Cheryl	15 to 30	Frequently	Clicked on 'like'
			Sent direct (private) messages to other participants
			Initiated a conversation on the main network page
			Contributed to an existing thread on the main network page
			Took part in conversations within a sub-group of the network
			Tagged posts with topics
			Used the search function
			Edited a shared note
Grace	5 to 15	Rarely	Clicked on 'like'
			Sent direct (private) messages to other participants
			Contributed to an existing thread on the main network page
Hadeel	5 to 15	Rarely	Clicked on 'like'
			Sent direct (private) messages to other participants
			Contributed to an existing thread on the main network page
			Used the search function
Jack	5 to 15	Frequently	Clicked on 'like'
			Sent direct (private) messages to other participants
			Initiated a conversation on the main network page
			Contributed to an existing thread on the main network page
			Took part in conversations within a sub-group of the network
			Tagged posts with topics

			Used the Search function
			Edited a shared note
Molly	15 to 30	Frequently	Clicked on 'like'
			Sent direct (private) messages to other participants
			Initiated a conversation on the main network page
			Contributed to an existing thread on the main network page
			Took part in conversations within a sub-group of the network
			Tagged posts with topics
			Used the search function
Rachel	15 to 30	Frequently	Clicked on 'like'
			Edited a shared note
			Sent direct (private) messages other participants
			Initiated a conversation on the main network page
			Contributed to an existing thread on the main network page
			Took part in conversations within a sub-group of the network
			Used the search function

The chance of receiving a reply shown in Table 2 above also varies widely. Ava made only one post with 7 replies, so that her reply rate of 700% cannot be taken to be representative of what she might have received had she been more prolific. Hadeel, though slightly more prolific than Grace with 36 posts to her 16, was far more likely to receive a reply; 96% of his posts were replied to, as opposed to only 6% of Grace's. Replies to Hadeel were often offers of help or advice and in response to questions. Grace's posts tended to be more in the nature of links to useful resources and though these garnered likes, they were less likely to receive an answer because they didn't explicitly call for one. Again, because the total number of Hadeel and Grace's posts are relatively small, the response rate is a less valid indicator than it would have been had they posted more. Jack, Molly and Rachel were far more frequent posters so these response rates are likely to be a more valid indication of a typical reply rate to their posts. They all had similar reply rates on approximately half of their posts. Two thirds of my posts were answered. That I had a higher response rate than the other most prolific posters might be because I systematically framed my contributions as questions to stimulate debate as explained in Chapter 1 and, perhaps, also in deference to my role as the module tutor.

The option to 'like' appears as a 'thumbs up' button below every post and is activated with a single click. The 'likes' data in Table 2 shows that this was a much-used feature of the network, with the chance of receiving a like ranging from a low of two thirds for Jack

to a high of an average of two likes per post for Hadeel and Ava. Again, the low number of posts from Hadeel, Ava and Grace make these figures a less valid indicator of what they might have received had they posted more. However, it may indicate a pattern of use in which group members were seeking to encourage the quieter members by rewarding their contributions with likes. The chance of Molly and me receiving a 'like' was around three quarters, whilst Rachel had an almost 100% hit rate. Rachel had a very pragmatic and down-to-earth style and would more frequently and directly question posts from which more reticent participants shied away. This was of real use and value to the whole group because it cleared up misconceptions that might otherwise have remained unexplored and gave voice to those who were puzzled by some of the debate. Jack, as the most prolific student, also adopted a very direct style but in ways that would challenge the thinking and statements of others. Whilst interview data suggests that this was highly valued by some in the network and was productive in terms of learning, several participants spoke in interview about how they sometimes found this daunting and this may explain his somewhat lower 'like' count. There was also a real sense reported at interview that Jack was a confident and articulate participant, who may not have been perceived to need likes to the same degree as the less vocal, less apparently confident participants.

Table 5 shows that duration of visit reported is similar across participants, with Grace, Hadeel and Jack typically spending between 5 and 15 minutes and Molly, Rachel and me between 15 and 30 minutes. This finding points to the ubiquity of internet access and availability of devices for these learners as an important factor in their pattern of engagement. Frequent, short, face-to-face engagements of this nature are not logistically possible for geographically dispersed learners with busy lives. Similarly, such engagements would 'clog up' inboxes if done via email and demand frequent synchronous attendance if using telephone or Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) software such as Skype. The learning experience is materially altered by the affordances of the medium in which it occurs, in ways that would be recognised by Marshall McLuhan and which chime with his seminal idea that 'the medium is the message' (McLuhan & Gordon, 2013, p. 5). These early reflections led me to a focus on the consequences of these affordances and how they might mediate field effects of the type postulated by Bourdieu (1984) and this is explored in more detail in later chapters.

Though all except Ava visited regularly, once there, regular visitors Grace and Hadeel report less varied activities than the other participants. Of note is that neither of them reports initiating conversations, though in practice both did post starter messages, albeit on rare occasions. Similarly, neither report editing a shared 'note.' Yammer notes are pages rather like Word documents with an Edit and a Save button. The note is a single,

web-hosted, shared copy that all members of the network can access and change if they want to and this was used, for example, to devise shared ground rules for participation. In fact, though Hadeel did not edit this note, Grace did make a single, small change to it early in the module. Similarly, neither Hadeel nor Grace report using Yammer's search function to recover past content from the mass of messages that accumulated over the ten-week period. Jack, Molly and I used the full suite of Yammer options listed in the questionnaire and Rachel used all bar one, the tagging function, which was also unused by Hadeel and Grace. This is the 'topic' function described in the introduction to this thesis, which allows 'labelling' of posts with keywords, making them retrievable later by theme. This represents an important digital literacy, enabling the organising and filtering of content that is of use to participants in assembling and developing their ideas for their reflective portfolios.

In summary, then, Table 4 adds to the sense conveyed in Table 2 of a variable experience across participants and a learning experience quite different in logistical and temporal terms from traditional face-to-face encounters. These differing patterns of behaviour show a clear relationship to the participants' dispositions, confidence and technical proficiency as expanded upon in their narrative accounts in the chapters that follow.

Table 5: Frequency and patterns of Yammer usage

Participant	Overall frequency of visits	Devices and locations used to access Yammer	Pattern of device usage
Ava	No response to questionnaire		
Cheryl	More than once a day	Tablet at home	Preferred
		Tablet at work & travelling	Occasional
		PC at work	Occasional
		Laptop at home	Rare
Grace	A couple of times a week	PC at work	Preferred
		Tablet at home	Rare
Hadeel	More than once a day	Smartphone at home, at work & travelling	Exclusive
Jack	About once a day	Smartphone and Laptop at work and home	Preferred
Molly	About once a day	Tablet device at home	Preferred
		PC at work	Occasional
		Smartphone whilst travelling	Occasional
Rachel	About once a day	PC at home and at work	Preferred

Table 6: Available devices not used to access Yammer

	Other available devices not used
Ava	No response to questionnaire
Cheryl	None
Grace	Laptop and smartphone
Hadeel	PC and Laptop
Jack	None
Molly	Laptop
Rachel	Tablet device

Tables 5 and 6 show that, whilst all had access to multiple devices, they made diverse choices about which devices to use and about which physical location they chose to be in when engaging in Yammer. Hadeel, for example, accessed Yammer exclusively from his smartphone and from a variety of locations, choosing not to use his laptop or PC whilst Grace never used her smartphone and accessed Yammer most frequently from her PC at work. Similarly, the tablet was my preferred device for accessing Yammer, whilst Rachel, who owns a tablet, chose never to use it for this purpose. The frequency of access also varies. I enjoyed checking and responding to Yammer at the start and end of each day, just after breakfast or when settling down to sleep at night, whilst Rachel habitually locked herself away in her study and sat at her desk to work on it. Hadeel and I visited more than once a day; Jack, Molly and Rachel about once a day and Grace a couple of times a week. Ava was an exception since she did not respond to the questionnaire and in interview reported that her visits were rare and certainly less than once a week and were typically via her laptop.

This disparate frequency and nature of engagement in the social media platform along with the differing choices of device for and location of access, even for so small a cohort hampers the development of a shared sense of the educational experience. It became clear at interview that this resulted in uncertainty about what the learning experience was 'supposed' to be like. This contrasts strongly with learning that takes place at set times and in set physical locations, as does the short duration of visit reported in Table 4. It is also reflected in the questionnaire responses on the impact of participation in Yammer on home and work life, shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Perceived impact of Yammer on home and work life

	Yammer had an impact on...	Significance of this impact (from 1 for no impact to 5 for very significant impact)
Ava	No response to questionnaire	
Cheryl	The patterns of my home life	4
Grace	The patterns of my work life	3
Hadeel	None of the above	1
Jack	None of the above	1
Molly	The patterns of my home life,	4
	The patterns of my work life	4
Rachel	None of the above	1

Participants were offered the option to indicate an impact on patterns of home, work and social life. The option provided for participants to type in 'other' areas of impact generated no returns. Though Hadeel, Jack and Rachel selected 'none of the above,' Molly reported a significant impact on the patterns of both work and home life, Grace reported some impact on the pattern of her work life and I recorded a significant impact on the pattern of my home life.

A bleeding of teaching and learning activities out of their traditional classroom confines and into home and work-time is apparent in the frequency, duration and location of access to Yammer and for three of these participants this had a perceived impact on the patterns of their lives in these settings. This connects to notions of digital labour and the way in which 'all of life is put to work' (Marazzi, 2011, p. 113) in the current conjuncture. Peters and Reveley (2014) argue convincingly that there is an attendant loss of individual control, intensification of labour and scope for the incursion of managerialism and performativity into previously sacrosanct areas of people's lives. Cognitive work becomes fetishised as a commodity and merely living becomes a type of 'biolabour' that serves the purposes of capital:

> The corollary is that cognitive capitalism squeezes value from this quality by transforming labour into "biolabour" as the whole of life is "put to work" outside of paid working time (Fumagalli 2010, 82). Central to biolabour's constitution, the boundaries between the mode of production and – to use a term coined by feminists in the nineteen-seventies – *the mode of reproduction* blur (Peters & Reveley, 2014, p. 143).

The experiences reported in this narrative account fit within this larger picture and I mention this perspective here because this early finding shaped my research questions and my approach to data analysis, by directing me towards a search for congruence

between the individual stories of my participants and the grand narratives within which they sit.

Further, I had begun, even at this early stage, to speculate on the effects of all of this on the participants and their impressions of the learning experience and so I included in the questionnaire some questions that sought to explore how they felt about the experience, the results of which are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Levels and sources of anxiety and worry

	Anxiety about frequency of participation	Confidence of keeping up	Worry about keeping up	Sources of worry
Ava	No response to questionnaire			
Cheryl	1	4	2	Keeping up with everything that happens
				Being judged
Grace	5	1	4	My own contributions
				My lack of contribution
				Keeping up with everything that happens
				Being judged
Hadeel	3	1	1	None of the above
Jack	1	5	1	My own contributions
				The replies of other people to my contributions
				The lack of response to my contributions
Molly	1	4	4	Other people's contributions
				My own contributions
				Keeping up with everything that happens
				Finding things that I want to recover
Rachel	1	3	2	My own contributions
				My lack of contribution
				Keeping up with everything that happens
				Being judged
	From 1 for no anxiety to 5 for a lot of anxiety	From 1 for not at all confident to 5 for very confident	From 1 for not at all worried to 5 for very worried	

Having established how frequently the students participated in Yammer, I included these questions because I wanted to gauge whether they felt any anxiety about their level of participation and I used a Likert scale for this purpose. The most prolific users in Jack, Molly, Rachel and I reported no anxiety about our frequency of participation. Hadeel who contributed less frequently returned an ambivalent, mid-scale response of 3, but Grace, also an infrequent poster gave the highest possible rating of 5 and at interview saw her lack of participation as deeply problematic. She also had no confidence that she was keeping abreast of developments, despite visiting a couple of times a week and she was

worried about this. Similarly, Hadeel, who reports visiting more than once a day, had no confidence that he was keeping abreast of developments, which in interview he ascribed to the challenges of learning in a second language. However, unlike Grace, he attested to being not at all worried by this and was happy to take from the site what he thought was most interesting and helpful. Though Rachel returned an uncertain response of 3 about her level of confidence that she was keeping up, she was like Hadeel in that this did not worry her a great deal and she spoke in interview of being happy to let some conversations pass her by and to engage in others according to her interests. Jack and I were confident or very confident that we were abreast of developments. Jack was not at all worried about keeping up, but I was slightly worried, burdened I think by my sense of responsibility for these learners and their progress. I knew I was abreast of the majority of the activity, but I was somewhat worried that I might miss single contributions and that learners might be disappointed or learning opportunities missed. Molly, despite being confident that she was up to date with developments was also worried about keeping up intellectually throughout the module and spoke in interview about feeling this as a constant pressure.

Other sources of worry were selected from a dropdown list of options. A field for 'other' sources of worry was provided for respondents to type into, with no returns. Hadeel selected 'none of the above.' I worried about keeping up with everything for the reasons given above. I also worried about being judged as a tutor and falling short of learners' expectations in terms of my expertise and teaching abilities and this provided an impetus for my participation throughout. Of the other respondents, all reported worrying about their own contributions. Grace and Rachel worried about being judged and about their lack of contribution. This is entirely congruent with Grace's other responses but is somewhat puzzling for Rachel since she registered 'no anxiety' about her frequency of participation, explained, perhaps, by the fact that 'participation' has a broader definition than contribution. Further, Molly worried about other people's contributions and about whether she would later be able to find things that she wanted to recover. Only Jack worried about the lack of response to some of his posts and about some of the replies he did receive. As with the earlier data, this focus on sources of worry and anxiety shows a complex web of differing dispositions towards the online learning experience, which was part of my motivation for the choice of narrative approaches to the study.

Recognising that worry and anxiety around a programme of study is not always a bad thing and is sometimes productive in ways that are explored, for example, by Brookfield on the inherently disconcerting uncertainty of covering new ground (1990, p. 102), I also sought perceptions about the perceived impact that Yammer had on participants' learning, the results of which are given in Table 9.

Table 9: Perceived impact of Yammer on learning

	Impact on learning	Yammer as a source of confusion	This confusion as a source of learning (from 1 for never to 5 for frequent)
Ava	No response to questionnaire		
Cheryl	Large positive	Occasional	4
Grace	Small negative	Occasional	5
Hadeel	Large positive	Rare	2
Jack	Small positive	Never	1
Molly	Large positive	Occasional	5
Rachel	Large positive	Occasional	4

Grace was the only respondent to report a negative impact of Yammer on her learning. However, her questionnaire indicates that on the occasions when she experienced confusion arising from her use of Yammer it was frequently a source of learning for her. This is an ambivalent response and may link to Grace's vexed relationship with Yammer, which in interview she frames within an effort to take the positives from her experience. Jack reports a small positive impact and that Yammer was never a source of confusion for him. Molly, Rachel and I all report that Yammer had a large positive impact on our learning and that the occasional confusion that arose from the experience frequently acted as a source of learning.

The data reported above illustrates that throughout the questionnaire I chose questions which, whilst providing some scope to report positive outcomes, also enabled learners plenty of scope to register the more problematic aspects of their experience on the module. This was a deliberate attempt to ameliorate any bias that might have arisen because of my own vested interest, arising from my inevitable hopes and expectations for the module. However, I was also concerned to avoid a negative bias to the questionnaire and, therefore, included the following question (Figure 9) with response options culled from some of the benefits that I felt had accrued from my own experience of participating in the network:

Using the Yammer network for this module has helped me gain...
Please select all those that apply.

- ☐ practical advice from others
- ☐ help with understanding concepts that were new to me
- ☐ emotional support
- ☐ thought provoking ideas
- ☐ fun
- ☐ community spirit
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other:

Figure 9: Question on the potential benefits of Yammer

'None of the above' was included for any who felt no benefit. The field to type in 'other' benefits returned no results and the responses are shown in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Perceived benefits of participation in Yammer

	Using the Yammer network for this module has helped me gain...
Ava	No response to questionnaire
Cheryl	Practical advice from others
	Help with understanding concepts that were new to me
	Emotional support
	Thought provoking ideas
	Fun
	Community spirit
Grace	Emotional support
	Thought provoking ideas
Hadeel	Practical advice from others
	Help with understanding concepts that were new to me
	Emotional support
	Thought provoking ideas
	Community spirit
Jack	Practical advice from others
	Emotional support
	Thought provoking ideas
	Community spirit
Molly	Practical advice from others
	Help with understanding concepts that were new to me
	Emotional support
	Thought provoking ideas
	Fun
	Community spirit
Rachel	Practical advice from others
	Help with understanding concepts that were new to me
	Emotional support
	Thought provoking ideas
	Fun
	Community spirit

Nobody selected the option to record 'none of these benefits.' Molly, Rachel and I registered every one of them. Hadeel left out only 'fun' and Jack also set this option aside along with 'help with understanding concepts that were new to me.' Grace registered only emotional support and thought-provoking ideas, leaving aside all the other options.

Finally, I included the entirely open question shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Open question for comments on Yammer

	Are there any other comments about Yammer that you would like to make at this time?
Ava	No response to questionnaire
Cheryl	No response to this question
Grace	Although I didn't participate in many of the discussions, I did find following

	these helpful. I also feel guilty that I read and gained information from others and it not being a 'two-way street.' I gained access to journal articles that others had posted which were very useful but often forgot to just say thank you!
Hadeel	No response to this question
Jack	Yammer is a private tool and I would like to know how our data is used? Why should we pay for a service as a university that we could do on a free site?
Molly	Love it! Wished I could abandon email and use Yammer instead, or perhaps use it to supplement and enhance college communications.
Rachel	No response to this question

Rachel, Hadeel and I left this option blank. Grace used it to highlight some of the positives of what was an apparently vexed experience and Molly gave an unequivocally positive reflection on the experience. Only Jack adopted a critical perspective, asking about use of data, cost and ownership of the platform.

Conclusion

Through using data drawn directly from the Yammer network and from a questionnaire that was triangulated where relevant with interview findings, this chapter has set the scene for the narrative accounts that follow. Though I transpose into the narrative accounts some of the data on individuals as a reminder of their usage patterns, this chapter stands as a source to revisit for comparative data across the whole cohort. It served the wider purpose in my own research of alerting me to potentially fruitful avenues to explore in interview. It also alerted me to possible theoretical frameworks that informed the focus of my subsequent data collection and later data analysis. In revisiting this chapter after my first abortive attempt to code my interview data, as described in the methodology section of this thesis, the highly individualised nature of each participant's experience that became evident also helped me to select a narrative approach.

Chapter 6: Cheryl - Reflexive Account

Jack
Hey
Like · Reply · More

Jack
have a quote for your essay
Like · Reply · More

Jack
Elbaz (1991), who wrote, 'Story is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which we live as teachers and researchers and within which the work of teach- ers can be seen as making sense' (p. 3).
Like · Reply · More

Jack
Elbaz, F. (1991). Research on teacher's knowledge: The evolution of a discourse. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 23, 1–19. Retrieved from http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/tf/ 00220272.html
Like · Reply · More

Cheryl Reynolds
Thank you. I will definitely use this. It helps strengthen the justification for the use of narrative in this context, I think...
Like · Reply · More

Figure 10: Exchange with Jack on stories as the stuff of teaching

In this chapter, I provide a reflexive narrative account, selecting out from my own childhood and progress through the education system those aspects that have a bearing on my current dispositions towards teaching and learning. As explained in my methodology chapter, I do so in light of my decision to deploy Dewey's notion of 'continuity' (1938, p. 36) between past, present and future as a key criterion of experience and also in light of Bourdieu's notion of habitus as 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them' (Wacquant, 2005 cited in Beckert & Zafirovski, 2013, p. 316). This narrative approach also acknowledges that stories might be considered the very stuff of teaching, as pointed out by my participant Jack in the online contribution shown in Figure 10 above. This decision to use reflexive narrative then is congruent with my broader methodological approach, which borrows from the field of action research the call to reject 'the notion of the 'objectivity' of the researcher in favour of a very active and proactive notion of critical self-reflection' (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013, p. 6).

The data that informs this account is drawn from an interview conducted by a suitably briefed colleague, using the same schedule that I used to interview the other participants in the research. This interview was recorded and transcribed in the same way and was subject to the same kind of narrative analysis as the other accounts. It was conducted after all the others were completed and this reflexive account was the last one that I constructed. Nonetheless, it is presented first in this thesis, reasoning that I set the tenor of the online participation and had a central role in shaping the experience in important ways. Presenting my account first, therefore, helps to explain and contextualise the way in which others responded and participated.

Introduction

I am a 51-year-old, female lecturer, working in a School of Education and Professional Development at a University in a large town in the North of England. I live 3 kilometres from the University with my partner and have two grown-up daughters, who now have their own homes in other cities. I qualified as a teacher in 1999 and worked for four years as a teacher of Biology and then as a VLE Manager at a large Further Education college in a Northern City. This latter role, which entailed helping other teachers to use technology, enabled me to apply for and gain a position as a lecturer in Teacher Education at my current University, where I have worked since 2004. I currently teach on a range of courses including teaching qualifications, a BA in Education and Professional Development and an MA in Education, of which the module under consideration in this thesis forms a part.

I am a graduate of this same Master of Education degree and my first acquaintance with the module was as a student. I recall this as a productive experience, both in terms of its exchange value and its use value; it provided me with the credentials to bolster and retain my standing as a University Lecturer, whilst also enabling me to improve my practice. I developed knowledge and understanding of key sociological concepts, theories of interactive media, critical pedagogy, reflexive practice and learning theory. My dissertation module helped me to develop my understanding and use of research methodologies in ways that are explored in more detail in my reflexive methodology chapter for this thesis. Furthermore, I was able to use the Master of Education course to learn how to create multimedia web content using a range of authoring tools and hypertext mark-up language. I have used these outcomes extensively in my role as a teacher and teacher educator, in both face-to-face and online settings of various kinds.

The delivery pattern for this module of six Day Schools spaced throughout the academic year, that was extant at the time of this research, was the same as the pattern I experienced as a master's student. A great deal of content was delivered at the Day

Schools and I recall being somewhat disengaged and adrift both during the sessions themselves and in the intervening periods. Though we were encouraged to use the virtual learning environment (VLE) discussion board, my recollection is that I took part merely because I had been mandated to do so and found the discussions rather stilted and of limited value in developing my understanding of the modules or of engaging me in the topics for discussion. In Chapter 1, I explored how my early experiences of *teaching* the module informed my pedagogical decisions, but it is important to note here that these decisions were also informed by my memories of disengagement and aimlessness *as a student* on this blended learning provision. These experiences were not unalloyed, and I also recollect some good and engaging teaching. Moreover, the limited but valuable interactions with others that I *did* experience at the Day Schools were important and productive. However, I think that the links with a community of practitioners that I made there were under-exploited and could have offered far more if they had been more frequent and extensive. This motivated me with the desire to teach the module through encouraging sustained interactions, and at the same time, to facilitate a more vibrant and engaging community of practice that would be of benefit to the students.

Schooling

I grew up on what was described in local parlance as a 'rough' council estate in a deprived area of a Northern Town. I went to a Catholic primary and a Catholic comprehensive school, both of which fostered a strong link between school, church and family. Many of my contemporaries, like me, were of Irish descent with shared social and cultural mores. Families tended to go to church every Sunday, freshly scrubbed and in our 'Sunday best' and there was a clear sense that the moral and spiritual aspects of my education traversed the physical boundary between church and school. My primary school and the church were named after the same saint. We lived close to both. Saying prayers before meals and at the start and end of each school day, gathering for assemblies with religious themes and singing hymns were all typical of my school experience. There were regular visits from the parish priests and nuns both to the school and to our home. The community was relatively insular and the children I saw at church and in my neighbourhood were also my school friends.

In retrospect, these factors had a profound effect on my notions about what constituted 'good' behaviour in school. Obedience and humility were values with which I attempted to align myself from a very young age. However, as a very young child, perhaps five years old, I distinctly remember an assembly about the bible story of 'the wealthy young man.' The story was that he was unable to give up his riches even though Jesus promised him eternal life, saying to him 'many who are first will be last and many who

are last will be first' (Matthew 19:30). I decided that I would always put myself last because I definitely wanted to be first: a kind of ambition masquerading as humility. Though now a lapsed Catholic, to some extent, these values persist in my adult and professional life. I want to be an excellent teacher, but I think that a good teacher is a generous one, who can value and acknowledge the quality of peers' and students' thinking as equal to and sometimes better than their own. I think this set of ideas and values is intimately entwined with my pedagogical thinking and the student-centredness to which I aspire in my practice.

However, my 'humility' did not and does not extend to keeping silent in the classroom. A great part of my sense of self-worth as a child sprang from being described as 'bright' and I consistently won praise from my teachers, my family and particularly from my mother for being 'clever.' I enjoyed this immensely and it meant that I was always an extremely vocal child in the classroom. I often experienced bullying because of this. Teachers' reports consistently said things like 'Cheryl is a chatterbox' and 'Cheryl is far too fond of the sound of her own voice.' However, the bullying from peers and the admonitions of teachers did not prove a strong enough disincentive to speak. I was extremely curious and impatient of repetition and would struggle to sit in silence if I became bored, which was often.

I also typically spoke up when I knew the answer or wanted to ask a question that I thought would impress the teacher. The confidence to do this arose in part from the influence of my grandmother, who lived in a neighbouring street throughout my childhood. She was the daughter of a London barrister who had lost her first husband during World War II. Having remarried, there was always a sense that she had 'come down in the world' and I often heard her characterised by friends and neighbours as 'posh.' She had a 'posh' accent quite different from any of the other people I knew and more than this, would treat with authority, or even disdain, anyone with whom she found herself at odds. My grandfather loved classical music and it was often played in their house in the evening. Novels, poetry, encyclopaedias and books of all kinds were in abundance in my childhood home and I grew up surrounded by and valuing this literature. My grandmother had been a ballet dancer in her youth and I was taken to ballet lessons and performances at the local theatres. Even though we were in material terms often less well off than our peers, I felt that those of my friends who were deprived of this kind of influence were in some ways poorer. This sense of being 'better off,' than peers culturally meant that when I was bullied for being different, it mattered to me less than it might otherwise have done.

Feeling an innate sense of self-worth means that I feel comfortable deferring to others where I see value in that deference. It is no surprise, for example, that the democratising potential of social media, and the promise it proffers to give everybody a voice, making them 'equal as thinkers' (Kline, 1999, p. 45) would be attractive to me. My aspiration to enable others to take on a leadership or 'teacherly' role is linked to this and arguably more easily achieved in online spaces, where the hierarchies that are embedded in the physical layout of the classroom dissolve away. Further, my own sense of boredom and frustration with extended periods of silent listening in the classroom, coupled with my wish to put others first, results in a deep-seated desire to create interesting and participative cultures both in face-to-face and in online encounters. This is a conflicted position, combining a sense of deference and compunction around one's duty to others with personal ambition and the desire to excel in the role of teacher.

At 18 years old, having achieved four A Levels, I went to Exeter University. This proved to be an enormous culture shock. I had coasted through A Levels, in the words of one of my teachers 'on a wing and a prayer,' relying as I had always done on being 'clever' rather than on hard work and application. This left me ill-prepared for the academic challenges of independent, undergraduate study and, for the first time in my life, I felt myself to be at an academic disadvantage amongst peers. In addition, most of my peers were from the South of England and a large proportion had been to public and independent schools. That my habitus was at odds with this new field was evident in the way in which my clothes, my accent, my manners, my family history, my religion, my financial resources and my demeanour all marked me out as different from and 'less than' the rest. Once again, but for different reasons, I felt myself to be out of place. An early event, which crystallises this, was trying to join in with a jokey conversation at a party and instead of laughing at my joke everybody laughed at my accent; not at what I had said but at the way I had said it. As the first year unfolded, I found that I could not adjust rapidly enough to be able to 'fit in' and I became very unhappy. I did not want to return to Exeter after the Christmas break but was persuaded by my mother to at least try to finish the first year. I managed to do this but applied for and was granted an academic transfer to Manchester University in my second year. This experience left me with a fierce hostility towards anything that marginalises students, resulting in teaching approaches that endeavour to give everyone a voice and a sense of belonging. At the same time, I developed an acute awareness that inequalities are played out all the time in seemingly insignificant interactions between people, such that they are deeply embedded in social situations and extremely resistant to change. These experiences mean that Bourdieu's notions of field, habitus and symbolic violence carry a great deal of verisimilitude for me. They give me a way to explain those early experiences of

University, liberating me from the sense that my misfit status at school and my false start at University were due solely to my own shortcomings and had, instead, to do with systemic inequalities and field effects. I have, therefore, conviction that Bourdieu's theories have explanatory power for my own predicaments and those of others within educational settings. This is, in part, why I have used them as my main theoretical framework in this thesis and have been engaged in exploring the extent to which this framework has explanatory power in an online setting.

Experience of the module

I endeavoured to use the first Day School to convey the basic tenets of what I took to be relevant and thought-provoking ideas but also to set the scene for an enriched period of online interaction in the subsequent weeks. The module calls upon learners to create a portfolio of reflections on their online interactions and I reasoned that more extensive and engaging exchanges would lead to livelier and more thoroughly theorised portfolios. I found the delivery of the Day School challenging but enjoyable. Ava's loquacity was a challenge, but I found a strategy to deal with this as explained in her narrative account.

During the Day School, I also orchestrated a one-hour, hands-on, technical induction to Yammer as well as negotiating ground rules for online participation. We did this through a 'rights and responsibilities' activity where the students first listed what rights they felt they were entitled to online before moving on to list the corresponding responsibilities which matched those rights. I posted these in Yammer as a jointly editable note. Participants were able to click an Edit button on the page, overtype existing content or add new content and then saving the changes for all to see. A revision history kept a record of any content that had been edited out for later retrieval if desired. Through a series of contributions from group members, these ground rules evolved into the following intentions:

- respect each others' opinions
- allow each other to ask questions
- support each other within and outside the classroom
- share information and resources, where practical
- act as critical friends to our peer group
- establish a sense that we are equal as thinkers, rather than adopting didactic approaches
- be informal but not personal
- avoid too much irrelevant content and 'visual noise'
- exchange ideas, not use the network merely as a repository
- help each other to develop the different topics

- 'be forever stimulating each other to increased exercise of our higher faculties, and increased direction of our feelings and aims towards wise instead of foolish and elevating instead of degrading objects and contemplations' (adapted from Mill on Liberty) (Utley & Maclure, 2013, p. 37)

At the Day School, we also covered the nature of the assessment tasks and some key theories that I took to be relevant and interesting so that the discussion was already quite wide-ranging as we entered the online environment. Overall, in my perception, it was a productive and thought-provoking day both for me and for the learners. The topics covered at the Day School had generated some lively debate relevant to the students' assignment and this continued online in the first week, especially around Yacci's (2000) notions of interactivity. There was also some lively and relevant discussion arising from a series of videos on utopian and dystopian views of a technology-enhanced future that I had first come across as productive triggers as part of Edinburgh University's *E-Learning and Digital Cultures* MOOC the year before (Knox, Bayne, Macleod, Ross, & Sinclair, 2013). I felt that the Day School had been a success and that the launch of the online phase was positive, with a supportive ethos and the beginnings of a good rapport with the students. I entered the online participation phase with high hopes and enthusiasm.

Tables 12 and 13 below provide a summary of my usage and perceptions of the network over the ten-week period of its use for this module as described in Chapter 5.

Table 12: My Yammer usage statistics

Posts		Replies		Likes	
Number	% of all posts in network	Number received	% chance of a reply	Number received	% chance of a 'like'
335	36	210	63	255	76

Table 13: My responses to the questionnaire

Typical duration of visits	15 to 30 minutes
Frequency of visits	More than once a day
Type of Yammer activity	Clicked on 'like'
	Sent direct (private) messages to other participants
	Initiated a conversation on the main network page
	Contributed to an existing thread on the main network page
	Took part in conversations within a sub-group of the network
	Tagged posts with topics
	Used the search function
	Edited a shared note
Where and how Yammer was accessed	Preferred	Tablet at home
	Occasional	Tablet at work & travelling
	Occasional	PC at work
	Rare	Laptop at home
Perceived impact of Yammer	Significant impact on the patterns of my home life.
Worries and anxieties	Keeping up with everything that happened
	Being judged
Perceived impact on learning	Large positive impact on learning, with occasional confusion on Yammer frequently giving rise to new learning
Perceived benefits of Yammer	Practical advice from others
	Help with understanding concepts that were new to me
	Emotional support
	Thought provoking ideas
	Fun
	Community spirit

As outlined in my introductory chapter, I made a pedagogical decision to create ample opportunities for people to interact with me and with one another during the running of the module, because I saw this as in important source of learning. In practice and as illustrated by the data in the tables above, this meant that I was a very active and prolific user of Yammer, visiting more than once a day via my iPad. I checked for new content first and last thing every day and occasionally responded to automated notifications of new activity that showed up on my iPad during the evening and all of this interfered substantially with the patterns of my home life. However, I did not find this burdensome and I enjoyed the module and the interactions with learners.

This disposition towards 'being there' as a centrally important aspect of my practice shows a marked shift from my attitudes to schooling as a student and this arguably constitutes a shift in habitus. At school and at University I had been a disorganised student and intermittent attendee, who preferred to get by with minimal effort and 'on a

wing and a prayer' as described earlier. On reflection, I trace this early disposition to a 'fixed IQ mindset' (Dweck, 1999, p. 20) that grew out of the way in which I tended always to seek and value praise for being 'bright' rather than for 'trying hard.' A lasting sense that I under-achieved in my earlier education because of this became a spur to increased effort as I transitioned into becoming a teacher and I made a strong commitment to work hard and provide a reliably good experience to my students. This strong commitment to teaching frequently impacted on my progress in terms of writing for publication, and I saw this as a failing that I found difficult to rationalise. However, the reflective practice that was an important part of my teacher training resulted in increased capacity to tolerate the possibility of productive failures in my teaching practice and I became increasingly able to deploy this capacity to countenance 'failure' as part of a wider project to improve. This shift in disposition has been an important part of becoming a teacher and a researcher. As part of this development, I learnt to value reliability and effort, which paid dividends both for me and for my students. There was also the added compunction that I was drawing down a salary to fulfil these duties and a fear of being judged as falling short in my role as a tutor.

This fear is amplified in the current field of Higher Education, characterised as it is by a culture of growing managerialism and performativity, especially pointed in the case of online teaching, because all the teacher's interactions are logged and eminently retrievable for analysis, should anyone desire to audit them at a future date. In this field, I saw the substantial effort on my part to 'be there,' as providing an important resource to students and to be of real benefit to them and their learning. Similarly, encouraging them to introduce their own, quite disparate theoretical perspectives and valuing these as equally important to my own, was seen as helpful in terms of developing their autonomy and more generally of providing student-centred learning opportunities. My use of assertive questioning to stimulate as full a discussion as possible was an important feature of this student-centredness, as was my conviction that learners need access to powerful knowledge (Young, 2014) and the confidence and ability to use this in conversation. I often did provide answers, advice and pedagogical content. However, as I interviewed them for this research, it became clear to me that the diversity in the discussion along with my frequent questions were sometimes a burden to them as well as a resource and were frequently the source of anxiety and confusion. I discuss more fully the implications of these factors and their nexus with the affordances of the online medium within a performative culture later in this thesis.

In the interests of providing the trustworthy account promised in my methodology chapter, however, I also want to reflect here that this performative culture has consequences for the way in which I have told my story and those of others. It means

that there is a sense in which, in the field of my own workplace struggles there may be a tendency to exaggerate my own significance and to engage in the 'self-presentation of moral purity' (Srnicek & Williams, 2016, p. 8) that is to some extent mandated by the context in which I work. I have sought to resist this through providing this reflexive account and by exploring my own motivations and assumptions, but these have involved me in evoking my own, early personal history as a member of what might be described as 'the sunken middle class' (Reay, Davies, David, & Ball, 2001, p. 858) with all of the dispositions, values and allegiances that that entails. This has been a deliberate move that entails some vulnerability but stays true to the aim of enabling the reader to draw their own conclusions about the meanings of the various stories told in this thesis, not least of which is the possibility that I have not been entirely able to resist the tendency inculcated by my past and by the current field in which I find myself for 'capital's appropriation and domestication of dissent' (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007, pp. 27–30). I have, however, endeavoured to use the various theoretical frameworks proffered in the chapters that follow as antidotes to this tendency; as powerful ways of seeing and interrogating the social world.

In summary then, because of my Yammer usage patterns, I read every contribution within a day or two of its posting and, whilst I often held back from answering to allow others a voice, I also often replied to posts and added my own. This meant that I was entirely up to date with what was happening in the network and why it might be happening throughout. When questioned in interview about whether I had a sense that our use of Yammer could be constructed as a coherent story, I, therefore, felt strongly that it could. For me it had the typical elements of a story in the sense employed by Labov:

> All stories begin with an orientation outlining who is involved in the story and when and where the event takes place. This is followed by the description of a complicating action that is the core of the narrative, followed by an evaluation of the significance of what has happened and some form of resolution before a coda signifying that the narrator has relinquished the conversational lead (Earthy & Cronin, 2015, p. 476).

Orientation happened at the Day School as we began to get to know one another and negotiated the ground rules of our prospective use of the network. Complicating actions came in the form of challenging early contributions from Jack and from Ava as outlined in their narrative accounts, which follow. Evaluation of the significance of these challenges came through my own reflections and those of other participants on their significance and implications and through the unfolding discussions. Resolution for me

came in the form a productive ongoing dialogue, in which I could trace my students' developing understanding of relevant ideas. It also arose out of developing a sense of a 'family' or community of scholars within the network, which others also report in interview. The coda came through the final submission of assignments and my nomination by some of the students for a 'thank you award' at the end of the module. When asked in interview to give an overall impression of what my online experience was like, I, therefore, offered the metaphor of a student-centred classroom. However, my participants offered very different metaphors and none of them had as clear a sense of a coherent narrative as did I. They were far more likely to report a sense of fragmentation, confusion and even chaos. It was this disparity and others between their experience and my own that led me to include this reflexive account in the thesis and to record my own motivations for constructing the story in the way that I have at the end of my methodology chapter.

Chapter 7: Jack

Table 14: Jack's self-description

Gender	Age	Participants' own descriptions of their online persona
Male	20-29	Encouraging, questioning and curious

Introduction

Jack is in his thirties. He lives with his girlfriend in a European capital city, where he works as a language teacher. He flew back and forth to the UK for most of the Day Schools, though for some he attended remotely via Skype. He is highly motivated to succeed academically and aspires to publish his work and to progress to higher-level study. He is vocal in the classroom and this disposition towards classroom discussion shows he is hungry for knowledge and motivated by the desire for the kind of debate that comes from being an active member of a community of scholars. He frequently makes challenging and interesting contributions in classroom discussion and displays a great deal of independence of mind and a tenacious spirit of enquiry. He asks curious questions; curious in their hunger for new ideas and curious or unusual in that he is constantly looking for the roots of things, asking why things are the way they are, asking why people say the things they say or do the things they do. This makes him both an asset and a challenge for the group to accommodate, particularly online, where his affable, personable demeanour and tone of voice are hidden. Figure 11 shows a typical exchange just after the Day School, illustrating the consequences of this.

Cheryl Reynolds
It was lovely to meet you all and work with you today. Just typed these in quickly to capture them.

Hopes and Concerns

All Network › Notes   ···
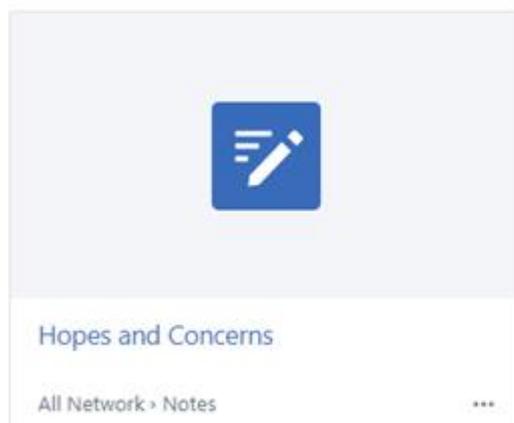
👍 LIKE   ↩ REPLY   ⤳ SHARE   ✎ EDIT   ···

Ava and Rachel like this

Jack

Why post this?

👍 LIKE ↩ REPLY ⤦ SHARE ⋯

Rachel

So that we can return to them and remind ourselves, perhaps identify with what hopes/concerns others have? Also, some of the stuff on the groundrules page (that you've commented on) was not intentional and was meant as a bit of fun which I thought had been deleted before it was published. Apologies that it didn't get completely cleared off.

👍 UNLIKE ↩ REPLY ⤦ SHARE ⋯

You and Molly like this

Cheryl Reynolds in reply to **Jack**

Yes, it's intention is to show people that they have shared hopes and concerns - links to community, perhaps. What are your thoughts, Jack? Is it pointless / counter productive, do you think?

👍 LIKE ↩ REPLY ⤦ SHARE ✏ EDIT ⋯

Molly likes this

Jack

It seems people have viewed this as a negative question. It was a socratic question. Why do anything? Why post about our emotions? Fears? Do they affect learning. (I understand partially why to post it, but perhaps this could be developed as a consideration of community and as a way to bond people in that community) I'll ask a lot of socratic questions

👍 UNLIKE ↩ REPLY ⤦ SHARE ⋯

You and Molly like this

Molly

I like feeling that we are all sharing similar hopes AND fears (especially the fears makes me feel less thick!).

👍 LIKE ↩ REPLY ⤦ SHARE ⋯

Rachel

Perhaps by sharing some of those emotions does mean that we bond more as a community. It also means we are becoming more familiar with each other and therefore people may feel more confident to share their ideas and opinions.

👍 LIKE ↩ REPLY ⤦ SHARE ⋯

Molly

I concur Rachel

cc: Rachel

👍 LIKE ↩ REPLY ⤦ SHARE ⋯

Rachel likes this
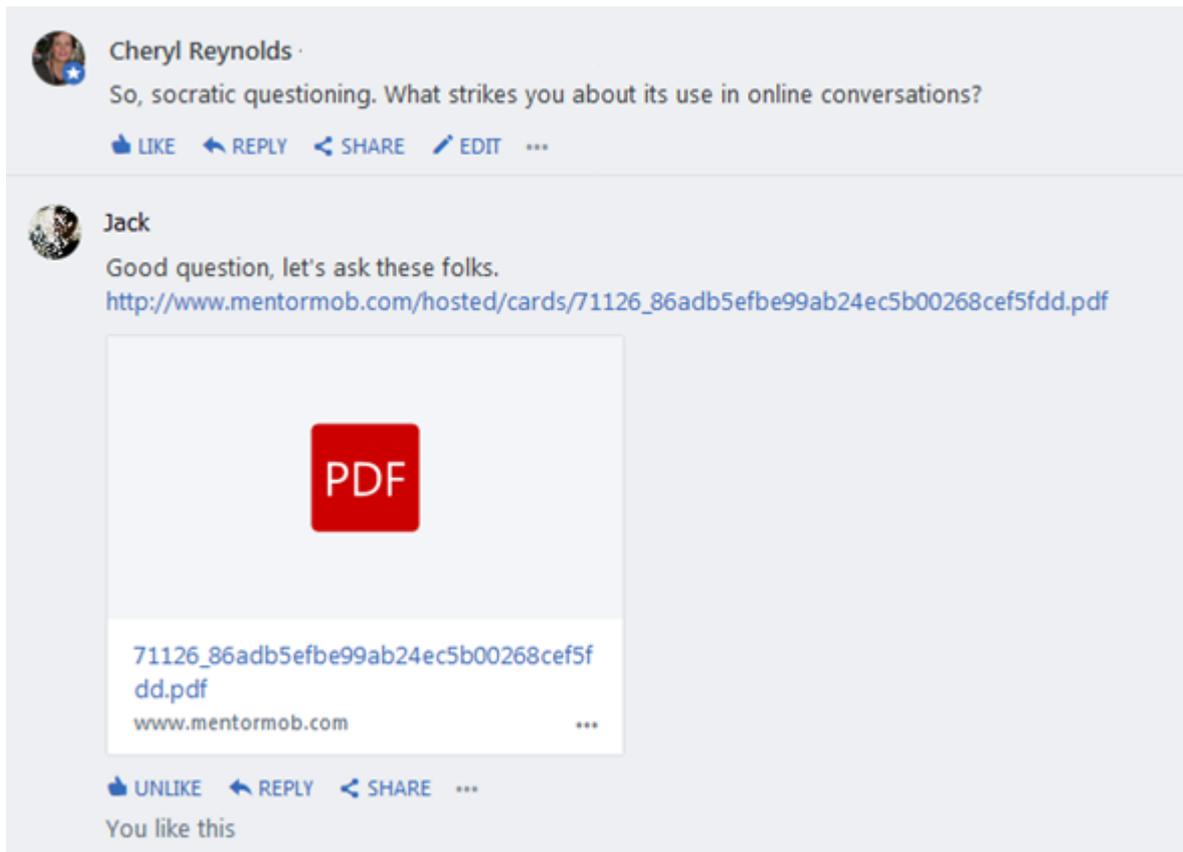
Figure 11: Socratic questioning

Jack in interview explores the challenges of being Socratic in online situations, speaking about ways in which it becomes more difficult to handle conversation via social media than face-to-face because of the need to explain one's tone and disposition more fully in the absence of non-verbal cues. He has a ready wit and sense of fun and loses some of the ability to convey this online, which he likens to being disabled:

> so you can't really make jokes or you can't say things as quickly or you can't offer off-handed comments or you can't offer snides or you can't say or... I don't know, that lower the tone or improve the tone as easily or change the emotion in the room quickly and then bring it back, so you don't have as much control over the message you're sending... It's a bit like being disabled or something isn't it, because if you are quick at understanding interaction and jokes and things then, I suppose Yammer's a bit like working from a sort of disabled point of view, so your communication and the kind of skills you lose...

As these excerpts suggest, both in form and content, Jack has a very particular, direct and quick-fire style of communicating, something that we talked about online (Figure 12):
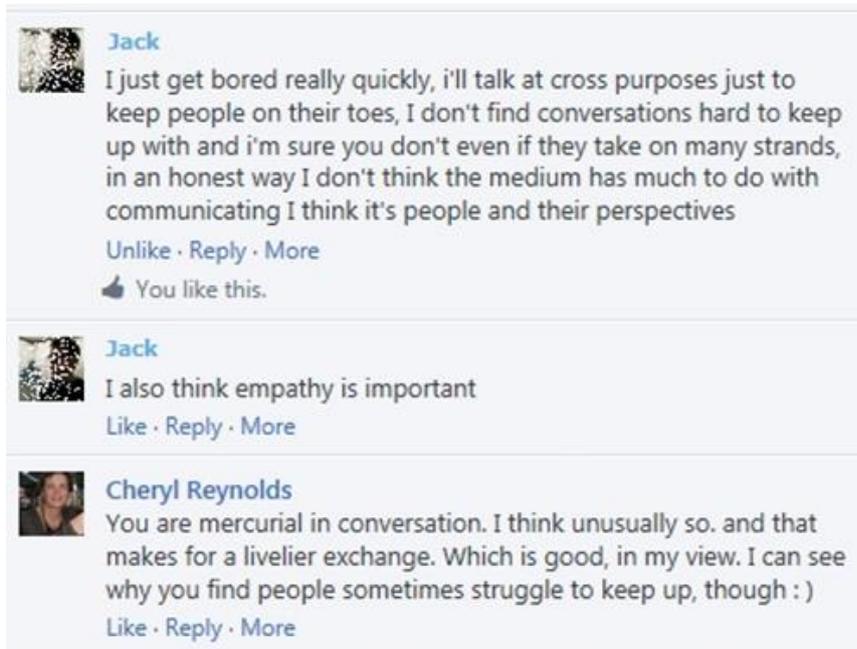
Figure 12: Jack's style of conversation

It is interesting to note the contradiction here in Jack's thinking about the effect of the medium. On Yammer he says that he doesn't think the medium has much to do with it, but three months later in interview, he talks about the disabling potential of the online medium. Shifting conceptions of what it means to be online and its implications and a persistent spirit of enquiry into this are characteristic of all the accounts of participants, as will be seen in later chapters but are particularly pronounced in Jack's case.

Further, Jack often introduces into online discussion new, challenging and diverse theoretical perspectives as a subject for discussion and critique. Often his contributions wrong-foot people, cast them back upon themselves and ask them to justify what they have said or done, rather than allowing them to forge ahead with the conversation they sought to initiate. At the same time, his questions make people think hard and in productive ways about their assumptions and about what they are trying to achieve:

110
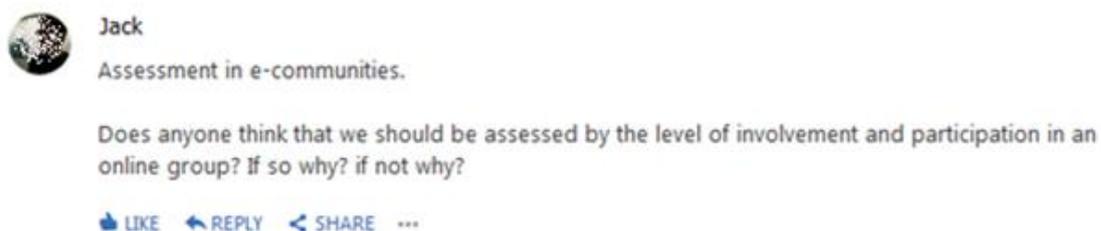
Hadeel

Sometime yes because it is important to assess the participation and involvement if it is compulsory.

👍 LIKE   ↩ REPLY   ＜ SHARE   ⋯

Jack in reply to **Hadeel**

Hey **Hadeel** but why is it important? Why would it be made compulsory?

👍 LIKE   ↩ REPLY   ＜ SHARE   ⋯

Hadeel

Hi **Jack** i think it is an important strategy to encourage students participation which may lead to better outcome. if

👍 LIKE   ↩ REPLY   ＜ SHARE   ⋯

Hadeel

it is a part of the course I think it will be compulsory

👍 LIKE   ↩ REPLY   ＜ SHARE   ⋯

Jack

Why would it lead to a better outcome? What would that outcome be?

👍 LIKE   ↩ REPLY   ＜ SHARE   ⋯

Jack

Is it also not a bit strange to force people to interact?

👍 LIKE   ↩ REPLY   ＜ SHARE   ⋯

Hadeel

For example if the courses about academic writing and the student involvement and participation in this courses. I think the academic writing will improve,so the outcome in this case will improved

👍 UNLIKE   ↩ REPLY   ＜ SHARE   ⋯
Cheryl   like this

Jack

What if the student loves working by themselves and is fearful of criticism from a group, they could read others work and improve by themselves. Maybe they have a friend who they trust who can look at their work who is external to the group. Perhaps they progress by the act of practicing, and if the paper is given to other students or put in the bin makes no difference. (I am not saying I believe this, I am saying maybe..)

👍 LIKE   ↩ REPLY   ＜ SHARE   ⋯
Molly likes this

Figure 13: Jack asking challenging questions

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Schooling and experience of the module

This kind of tenacious questioning is not a new thing for Jack. It didn't arise during his master's level study but has a long history that can be traced back to his schooling.

> Okay, I think that in secondary school, I thought a lot of secondary school was quite <u>nonsense</u>, until I started to do my A Levels and then I much preferred it. My school was quite... quite a rough school, so a lot of the time, a lot of us thought that what the teachers were saying was a bit <u>ridiculous</u> and I'd often suggest that, a <u>little</u>, so I'd say things like "Why are we doing this?" and I'd get a lot... a really, sort of <u>aggressive responses</u>, so I stopped asking those questions.

Jack was able to rationalise the teachers' hostility:

> It was mostly to do with pressures on the teachers. I <u>understood</u> that at the time as well and also the fact that they were really stressed. Even though I was in the top sets for classes, the school I went to was one of the worst in the UK ... It got terrible results.

Whilst sympathising with his teachers and taking account of the difficult and challenging context in which they were working, Jack remained dissatisfied with his schooling. In his own estimation, the education he was receiving was not good and this uncomfortable fact seemed to him to be hidden in plain view. Everybody was aware of it. Nobody spoke about it in class, except Jack. Eventually, though, he stopped asking and in interview, he begins to explain why but turns aside from the attempt, apparently wondering about the relevance of what he is saying to the interview question he has been asked:

> So anyway, like, I didn't like it. I was a bit too sensitive as well, like I, erm, I was really <u>sensitive</u> at school 'cos I was... I wasn't, like, <u>that</u> sensitive, I, erm... I'm trying to think about my answer...

This is typical of Jack, too. Frequently during the interview, he seeks clarification for what the questions mean. Even as he is constructing his account, he is wondering about why he is being asked, what he is being asked and whether his answers are useful. He sincerely engages with the questions and tries hard, even when he is unsure of the answers to these questions, to give an honest and useful response. Arguably, some of this effort to help comes from Jack's fundamental values; certainly some arises from the collegiate, empathic and supportive relationship we have built up during our face-to-face and online exchanges, evident in this exchange, where he begins to wonder, in a humorous way, about the effect of the research process on me as the researcher:

Cheryl: Can you think about what you actually <u>did</u> when you were in Yammer, when you were actually formulating a post. What was that like, when you were actually contributing? How did that..? How did that <u>unfold</u>?

Jack: Are you trying to write down my thinking process..? You know Tennessee Williams went mad, thinking about the thinking process?

Cheryl: Did he?

Jack: Yes, he had a psychotic episode in which he tried to think about the thinking process. Are you trying to do that, because...

Cheryl: Yes [IRONIC TONE, LAUGHTER]

Jack: I'm not worried about <u>me</u>, I'm worried about <u>you</u> when you try and write it.

Cheryl: [LAUGHTER] Yes, you should be!

Jack: Because you're asking me about the <u>thinking process</u>, are you not?

This scope to perform a collegiate, empathic relationship with tutors meant that things improved for Jack as he grew older and progressed to higher qualifications. The more scope he was given to ask questions, the happier he became with his education. When he moved on to A levels, the classes were smaller, he found the teachers were more willing to countenance challenge, because it was more appropriate to the level of study and because they had more time to respond. However, this increased scope to ask questions also had its negative consequences. As Jack gained more airtime, more of his ideas, values and beliefs were exposed and they were not always welcome:

I was very prepared to offer answers, particularly in English class. In Economics class, my questions were often <u>ridiculed</u>. For example, I asked questions about social justice in Economics and my Economics teacher, I still remember, said, "What planet are you living on? These questions are <u>ridiculous</u>." I thought at the time, well, that's a bit rough.

Jack's questions presented more challenge than his Economics teacher was willing to accommodate. Nonetheless, he was able to persist with his fundamentally curious disposition towards education and this developed further as he moved on:

But, like when I went to University and <u>studied</u> social justice, I thought, "Oh, okay, my questions weren't ridiculous." So I think that I learnt a sort of a sense of self-assurance in my own questions in the face of public... or that sort of, authority figures. I learnt that my questions were okay, even if the authority figure was not going to respond in a way that was appeasing to me at all or even if they responded

in an aggressive way. I learnt to stand up for my intellectual beliefs and values quite well.

The literature and ideas to which he now had access gave him a sense of agency and a vindication of those earlier views that had been dismissed; in Bourdieusian terms, the kind of 'resistance capital' (Duckworth, 2014, p. 88) that enables individuals to rise above symbolic violence and acquire social and cultural gains in spite of it. Why, though, was Jack willing and able to persist in asking challenging questions for much of his school life, and before this kind of vindication through scholarship had become possible? When prompted to think about where that willingness to question came from, despite the discomfort this caused for his teachers and his own, younger and sensitive self, Jack talks about power.

> I just don't think that... I think that there's a sense for some people of power. So my questions don't come from a sense of power or wanting to have any real control of things, they come from a sense of just trying to understand what we're doing in life and if we're doing it well, or if we're not doing things well or what's the point in anything, so I constantly come back to the idea of, "Why do you do anything?" and then if I can't get a justifiable answer, it's quite hard to be motivated to stay there, so I think it's a constant question...

Why does Jack disavow any interest in power in this way, refusing to claim it for himself or to remain silent when others exercise to dismiss or silence him? His contributions elsewhere, both to the interview process and in his online participation reveal that he is suspicious of the effects of power in society and feels that there are often processes of exploitation at work that ought to be defeated. Moreover, he speaks with great assurance about his own values around equitable sharing of knowledge and collaborative enquiry and how they influence the way he interacts with others online:

> I've thought about this a bit with Yammer, actually, and I've thought about the fact that I do have a lot of values but one of the values that I have in terms of my identity, I do see myself as a teacher, so in terms of that, I think that my values influenced the way that I reacted. I wanted to encourage people to respond and I want to encourage people to take part in something, which I knew would help them if they did it ... So my values were those of sharing, of wanting to share knowledge. It comes back to a kind of political view as well, doesn't it? It's about how I see things.

In this way we see that Jack's intellectual curiosity, his willingness to engage in principled dissent in educational settings, his suspicion of the effects of power, his own

values around teaching and collaborations and his ontological convictions are shaping, at a fundamental level, the way in which he operates in the online environment:

> That's what annoyed me about the Day School, the last one I went to, erm, when people said, and "You know what? Yammer is just about what you can get from it..." and I think that the second someone espouses those views of what you can get from things, I think that people forget that the only things that exist in your life are things that we've created as a group of people.

I also prompted Jack to offer a metaphor for his online experiences:

> Cheryl: I think this maybe a difficult one to answer, so you might want a minute to think about it. But I'm interested in trying to find out what the experience is like for people or what it feels like and so, I'm going to ask you whether you can think of any metaphors or similes for Yammer. If you were trying to explain it to someone who had never been in it, what would you say it was like or similar to?
>
> Jack: A road.
>
> Cheryl: A road?
>
> Jack: Yes, so it's just a straight road.

The speed of his response made me think that, perhaps, Jack had thought about this already and this is another instance of Jack questioning the nature of the learning experience in which he is engaged. It has similarities to his account of early University experiences, when he sought to question the learning process:

> I think when I went to University, I remember on the first week going and asking how universities work to my professor and saying, "How do you teach at University?" and getting a big smile back from the professor and he was sort of laughing at me a little bit. Okay but, not laughing at me but sort of happy with the question, because I imagine that not many people ask him.

My supposition then is that in having a ready metaphor to hand, Jack shows that he has already been thinking hard about the nature of the experience and trying to make sense of it. I take the 'road' he describes to be the 'All Network' main feed where new messages appear. It is rather like a strip that runs down the centre of the screen, with activity streams and chat options running down the right-hand side and optional group creation running down the left (Figure 14).
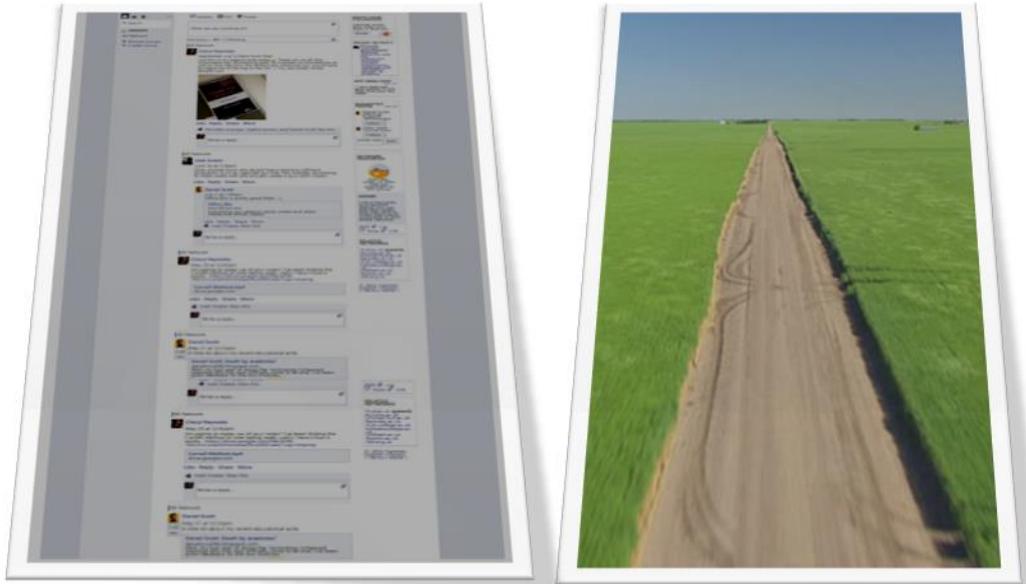
Figure 14: Jack's road metaphor

So, in a visual sense it might be taken to be rather road-like. However, there is also the part of the metaphor that refers to the function of the road, something that carries you from A to B, the way a journey is achieved. The corollary is that Jack sees himself as a traveller. This forms an interesting contrast to other participants whose metaphors evoke the network as a static place to inhabit, taken to the extreme in Grace's account where she describes the network as a diving board. In fact, she sees herself paralysed on the brink of entering the network rather than moving within or inhabiting it as will be explored later in her own narrative account. By contrast, Jack sees himself as a traveller, extending the metaphor to take in the idea of multiple destinations not all of which are worth the journey taken to reach them.

> Jack: Yes, so it's just a straight road. You've got a piece of tarmac as a thing and you could add turn-offs at any point that you like and you can build on those turn-offs and you can make small villages or towns and you can make them interesting and you can make them large, or they can just become a barren wasteland. They can just become a place where you have tumbleweeds and they become abandoned and disarranged. So I guess it's just a road and it's an intellectual thought.

This extension of the metaphor is a reference to the various conversations that branch off periodically, and the notion that as one follows a branch one doesn't necessarily know where it will lead. Some conversations prove more popular than others with 'a small village or a town.' Others do not lead to anything productive or subside into 'a barren wasteland.' In fact, Jack's 'constructions' often attract others and he ranks second as the 'most replied to member' after the tutor. His hit rate in terms of starting engaging

conversations is high relative to others and he is the most prolific student in the network (Table 14).

Table 15: Jack's Yammer Usage

Posts		Replies		Likes	
Number	% of all posts in network	Number received	% chance of a reply	Number received	% chance of a 'like'
302	32	153	51	199	66

Table 16: Jack's responses to the questionnaire

Typical duration of visits	5 to 15 minutes
Frequency of visits	About once a day
Type of Yammer activity	Clicked on 'like'
	Sent direct (private) messages to other participants
	Initiated a conversation on the main network page
	Took part in conversations within a sub-group of the network
	Tagged posts with topics
	Used the Search function
	Edited a shared Note
Where and how Yammer was accessed	Smartphone and laptop at work and at home
Perceived impact of Yammer	No perceived impact on home or work life
Worries and anxieties	My own contributions
	The replies of other people to my contributions
	The lack of response to my contributions
Perceived impact on learning	Small positive impact on learning with no confusion arising out of Yammer
Perceived benefits of Yammer	Practical advice from others
	Emotional support
	Thought provoking ideas
	Community spirit
Open question for any other comments...	Yammer is a private tool and I would like to know how our data is used? Why should we pay for a service as a university that we could do on a free site?

Jack was confident that he was keeping up throughout the module and used almost the entire range of available activities in Yammer (Table 15). Though he had some worries, particularly around lack of response from others to his posts, he identified a range of positive outcomes of the experience and a small positive impact on his learning. He is also the only student to take a step back from the experience and ask about its broader

significance as an educational tool and how it might be implicated in data collection and the marketisation of education.

It is arguable whether his sense of travelling and building arises out of or is a consequence of his relative success within the network. What is clear is that Jack uses his metaphor to convey a sense of progress, control and development and that he sees this as an intellectual exercise: 'So it's a road and it's an intellectual thought.' He is not only a traveller but also a creator of the online world which he inhabits; 'you can build on those turn-offs and you can make small villages or towns and you can make them interesting and you can make them large.' All these aspects of his metaphor convey a marked sense of agency for Jack.

In common with all of the other participants, Jack's story of his earlier educational experiences takes a fairly traditional, narrative form, containing all of the essential characteristics of a 'true narrative' in the sense employed by Labov, (1972):

> All stories begin with an orientation outlining who is involved in the story and when and where the event takes place. This is followed by the description of a complicating action that is the core of the narrative, followed by an evaluation of the significance of what has happened and some form of resolution before a coda signifying that the narrator has relinquished the conversational lead' (Earthy & Cronin, 2015, p. 476)

Table 17: Jack's story

Stage	Jack's story
Orientation	Jack was a sensitive and intelligent boy who went to a 'rough' school
Complicating action	He was openly critical of his education in the classroom and this engendered some hostility from his teachers, but he persisted in asking challenging questions throughout his school life and into University.
Evaluation of the significance	The significance of this was that it shaped his evolving response to others in educational fields and his developing sense of self within those fields
Resolution	He ultimately found a clear sense of agency and self-assurance, arising out of strong values, scholarship and collegiate relationships with tutors
Coda	"So my values were those of sharing, of wanting to share knowledge. It comes back to a kind of political view as well, doesn't it? It's about how I see things."

However, again in common with all the other participants, when Jack shifts from talking about his face-to-face education to an account of his online educational experiences, his account becomes much more fragmented. This account is less reminiscent of traditional

narrative as outlined above and more typical of alternative literary forms. In particular, it has features of literature that endeavours to explore and evoke the postmodern human condition, as typified here by Lacoue-Labarthe's poetic text, *Allusion à un commencement* (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 2006):

> Heedlessly we wandered through the wide flatlands … We hoped to reach the hills at the end before the big frost – and we looked forward to find a resting place there … The only small doubt was that we did not know exactly what direction we had chosen at our departure point … A few hours later, it appeared we had not made any progress at all. The night began to fall and the darker it became, the thicker the fog seemed to be … We had to admit that we were lost … Everything around us was without boundaries; it became evident that there was no endpoint, nor any means of a possible return to the beginning (van Rooden, 2012, p. 138).

Narrative analysis became difficult, therefore, at this point in the data analysis, confounding the quest for the 'story' of each participant, because of the absence of any perceived sense of plot in the traditional sense. Here is how Jack attempts to describe this difficulty:

> Jack: I think it's more like Chekov. Lots of short... I suppose that in itself it's like lots of short stories, isn't it? So like this road, like I said, with turn-offs, it's more like that. More like short stories.

> Cheryl: Yes, lots of little short stories. Fragmented.

> Jack: Yes. And often, like, really poorly written and not well-developed [LAUGHTER] and no one will publish them, even though you keep asking for them to be published.

> Cheryl: So is it more like a perambulation without resolution than a story?

> Jack: Those are <u>exactly</u> the words I would use.

Jack's image of the road, then, conveys something of the logic or structure of the experience for him. Though the metaphor evokes an overall sense of movement, the branching off into unknown territory with lines of conversation that might lead nowhere has more of the sense of a postmodern than a traditional tale. To pursue this finding, I asked:

> Cheryl: How did the experience of using Yammer kind of unfold over time did it have a clear beginning, middle and end, for you, if you were to try and tell it as a story?

> Jack: [LAUGHS] Not a very well-selling one. [LAUGHTER] There's not a *"Story of Yammer"* [IMPERSONATION OF A DEEP, CINEMA AD VOICE, LAUGHTER] erm, I

don't know if I'd go to the cinema to see it, erm, [LAUGHTER]. I suppose, *"It started, with a semester. Four people, three laptops, who will die..?"* [CINEMA AD VOICE, LAUGHTER].

Jack finds the notion of Yammer, as a story, faintly ridiculous and comical and it does not seem to him to be a satisfactory way to describe what happened. He struggles to apply this traditional narrative structure as a satisfactory explanation of what he experienced in the online environment, though he *was* able to apply it in a temporal sense:

> Jack: [Yammer] was like a story in the sense that it was like an academic module, so that they have particular starting and finishing points. I suppose they tie up chronologically.

However, he expresses some dissatisfaction with the ending of the module and a desire for a greater sense of a satisfactory denouement or resolution. He wishes there had been some sharing of the work they had produced for module assessment to reach for a 'happy ending':

> Jack: So I thought... because I wanted people to put their work up, so that we could actually talk about it, so that people would get better grades and then they would probably learn more and they would be encouraged to learn more.

In the event, he felt that people had drifted away and the network had 'died' (Figure 15).

Figure 15: The end

One of the things that is potentially meaningful in Jack's story, though, is what it tells us about what ends Jack might be aiming to achieve through the telling. Plummer (1995) urges us to see stories in terms of the social purposes which they serve, as collaborative productions involving not just the teller but also the 'coaxer' who elicits the story and the audience who will ultimately hear it. The primary importance of the story, then, is not that it is accurately representative of an aspect of Jack's life but its status as a social production for social consumption. The 'truth' lies in detecting what the story tells us

about the teller and his orientation to the coaxer and about both and their relationship to the imagined audience of this thesis.

Jack's use of a range of complex and nuanced metaphors, his tenacious interest in the research process that comes across through his questioning and inquisitive orientation towards it, his sincere attempt to convey how his relationships with education and educators have developed over time and his willingness to extend the discussion to explore the phenomena in more detail are all indicative of someone who is endeavouring to develop his own scholarly identity, in and through the research interview. A strong spirit of collegiate enquiry is performed by both interviewer and interviewee during the interview and this links strongly to a shared aspiration as scholars and researchers, seeking to perform that identity to more securely attain it. Jack avows a desire to progress to a higher degree and to write for publication and this is most evident in those phases of the interview where he asks me about my research methodology and how and why I have formulated my questions in the way that I have. He also asks me what I am going to do with my data and how that relates to his own experience of the research process, with transcription as an example.

The way Jack uses exchanges as opportunities to perform and develop as a scholar is, I argue, also strongly reflected in his online persona. In Bourdieusian terms, Jack deploys his existing cultural and digital capital and strategically gains more capital through this performance. He constructs his story of online participation in ways that suggest that he is less concerned with what other students might think of him within the network. He is prepared, because of the capital that may accrue, to risk being misunderstood in ways that sometimes cause others to withdraw from him. These advantages include learning about how online interaction works, discovering new ideas, performing the role of a good and effective teacher of others and forming a confident and engaged scholarly identity as part of a network of scholars. Part of my empathy with this participant comes from the fact that as the coaxer of this story, and its teller I have a similar orientation to the process and similar goals and aspirations.

This then is the first of my participant's narratives and what follows is the full series of comparative and contrasting cases presented by the rest of the cohort. In each account, as here, I explore the nature and possible explanations for the kinds of online participation in which my participants engage and the meanings and interpretations that they attach to these experiences. As a result, each of these accounts provides detail and contextualisation for the theorisation to which I turn in Chapters 13 to 15.

Chapter 8: Ava

Table 18: Participation in Yammer network

Posts		Replies		Likes	
Number	% of all posts in network	Number received	% chance of a reply	Number received	% chance of a 'like'
1	<1	7	700	2	200

Introduction

Ava, who is in her fifties, teaches English at a College of Further Education. Health problems had slowed her progression on the Master of Education course and she was returning to study after a break. Her questions and contributions in class were frequent and lengthy and she raised lots of interesting and useful points. Whilst valuable as an insight into Ava's thinking about the ideas covered in the class, this carried challenges of its own, in that it tended to make use of time that might otherwise have been spent on exploring more fully the ideas and questions of others in the group or ensuring that we got through all the material for the day. Others in the group were, in my judgement, frustrated by this and, without being expressed vocally, this leaked out in their non-verbal communication of which Ava appeared to remain unaware. This was increasingly apparent as we progressed towards the lunch-break, through a growing number of instances of people frowning, looking down at the floor or shifting uncomfortably in their seats.

As lunch approached, and not wholly because of Ava's loquacity, it became apparent that the schedule had slipped to the extent that we would have to curtail some of the discussion in the afternoon session. In the period after lunch I, therefore, implemented a 'no hands up' policy (Wiliam, 2015, online). This means that students are not allowed to interject with questions or even to raise their hands, though the tutor can periodically nominate individuals and ask them for their feedback or ideas. Wiliam's rationale for this is to ensure that all students and not just the most vocal in a group are drawn into socially constructivist learning interactions; students' awareness that they might be asked a question at any point keeps them intellectually and socially present to the lesson as it unfolds so that they learn more, even when they are *not* being asked to articulate their learning. I used the method in conjunction with 'assertive questioning' (Petty, 2009b, p. 281), in which the teacher takes the response of the first nominee and bounces it to another participant to ask if they agree or have anything to add and to a third or fourth if potentially fruitful, finally asking the last respondent to sum up what has been said by others. In the course of eleven years teaching at this level, I had never

used this kind of tightly orchestrated strategy at master's level, because it had never become necessary to actively share out the time more equally between participants.

It was, therefore, remarkable that when we moved to the online activities Ava fell silent. After a week, I messaged her directly enquiring if all was well and offering support. Though she did not reply by email, in response to this, Ava logged in to Yammer and posted some useful reflections on some of the ideas that were covered at the Day School. Others replied, but Ava once more fell silent. Four weeks into the online phase, Ava notified me and the course leader that, regrettably, her health was once again impacting on her ability to maintain her studies and she suspended her participation on the course.

Schooling and experience of the module

Despite this enforced break from studies, Ava agreed to be interviewed for the purposes of this study and I visited her at her place of work later in the academic year. When prompted to speak about early educational experiences and familial attitudes to education, she began to describe a set of circumstances that had caused a rupture in her educational progress and that of her siblings:

> None of us were educated. None of us. I have one sister who is a nurse but like me she left school very early. She left school at fifteen but then as an adult, like me, she went back in and did training and then went to University to study nursing, so we both [succeeded in the end]. But previous to that we did a lot of the same kind of [dropping out] stuff.

It appears that the difficulties alluded to here began around the time of Ava's transition between the primary and secondary phases and it was at this time that her schooling became fragmented and troublesome:

> I come from a background where my early schooling was in Scotland and so it was very, very strict, so we sat in rows you know and you did as you were told and so my senior schooling, then, when I came to England was very much hit and miss, as in... I just didn't go. You know, and interestingly enough, I remember going back to the school, one of those [reunion] things that they have and seeing the deputy headmaster who said, "Do you know something? You must have averaged once a month, coming to school!"

Ava concurred with this perception that her attendance had been extremely infrequent, and she described a cycle that began with family issues and was exacerbated or perpetuated by a sense of disengagement:

There was all, well I had lots, there was lots of family problems that contributed, but I just wasn't interested. It just bored me to tears, you know, and it didn't engage me at all... the secondary classroom was really boring.

Further questioning revealed that at least some of this sense of boredom and disengagement at school came as a natural result of being 'out' of things and passed over or ignored.

Cheryl: What was it about that kind of environment that turned you off so much, why was it boring?

Ava: Well I think there was an element of disengagement from myself, because obviously I wasn't engaged with the other students, because I wasn't <u>there</u> enough to have developed that relationship. So I think there was an element of that, but there was also an element, perhaps, that was the <u>time</u>; that period that I went to school when a lot of the teachers were not interested, were not interested in <u>you</u>, you know, they didn't try to engage you. They just said, "Well if you want to go to sleep just sit at the back of the room and don't bother the rest of us." You know so I think there was an element of that and... and so basically you know, you just didn't bother.

Ava's classroom behaviours during the first Day School can be considered in light of the limited experience of school that she describes here. Undoubtedly there is a process of enculturation into participative schooling practices that for most children comes as a natural consequence of spending a great deal of time in the classroom, learning its rules, norms and social mores and reading the ways in which other children communicate with one another verbally and non-verbally. The teacher generally has the primary claim on the 'soundscape' of the classroom and typically controls the frequency and nature of vocal exchange very tightly. Periods of discussion are usually initiated and halted by the teacher, even in relatively student-centred classrooms. In this kind of scenario, students find alternative ways of communicating with one another so that they become finely attuned to a world of information that is transmitted subtly and without speech (Barry, 2011; Zeki, 2009). Ava's limited time spent in this kind of environment as a child and young adult meant that her experience of the classroom has been preponderantly that of a teacher, who leads rather than responds to what happens in a session. This may explain why she either ignored or remained unaware of her peers' impatience at the Day School. Her interview responses evoke a lively sense of disengagement at secondary school and of 'being out of step' with her peers. The apparent consequence of this at the Day School was that she did not read or register as important the signs that revealed

others' growing impatience for an opportunity to speak or to hear the next part of what the tutor had to say.

Moreover, and perhaps partly because of this disengagement from school, there was a clear sense from her interview responses that Ava had developed her own, idiosyncratic and individualised ways of learning outside and independent of school.

> Ava: [School] just bored me to tears, you know? And it didn't engage me at all and I remember going back for my mocks and they were all quite shocked that I actually passed the mocks, you know, because I didn't have any input from them.
>
> Cheryl: How did you do it? Did you just study at home?
>
> Ava: No, no... maths, which is not my strong point. I don't like maths, I mean, I passed Level 2 maths here [*the college where Ava works*]. I still can't believe I managed it, but English has always been a subject I've found very easy. I just get it. You know it's probably why I teach English. The whole thing about reading voraciously. So yes, I think because of that I didn't really find it difficult. And then associated with that, History, you know, because there's a lot of, you know, reading and stories behind it and so, again, it never, you know, I never had a problem with that.

Ava engaged with secondary education, then, on her own terms, withdrawing entirely from subjects she found least engaging (maths) and studying for pleasure and interest those for which she found she had a propensity and an appetite (English and History) through partial attendance and independent enquiry. She was able to succeed in those subjects on her own terms and in her own ways.

This enjoyment of autonomy and control along with mastery of a subject carried over into Ava's experience as an adult returner to education and to her transition to the role of a teacher. The trigger for this return, though, was a fundamental shift in her attitude to constructive feedback, in what she describes as a life-changing illness:

> It was only really when I was thirty that almost like you know, I did an about turn. Right up until I was about thirty I was very, very, super-sensitive, you know, about what I did, you know, very precious about it and if somebody criticised me, it was almost like, very personal and erm, then, you know I went through a major surgery and it was just like a switch turned and I had somebody who I suddenly realised had been trying to support me. This person taught me so much about English and about actually how to use the language, you know and about how to distance yourself; walk away, come back to it, look at it from a different angle. This was a friend of

mine that I worked with who became my mentor and I was then able to pass that on [as a teacher of others].

To re-enter the educational field, Ava recognises that she had to overcome some long-held vulnerability within that field and to become able to accommodate critique from others.

Elsewhere in the interview, Ava contrasted the social networking experience unfavourably with blogging, for which she held a strong preference. She said that she looked at Yammer on several occasions but described her disengagement from it in identical terms to those which she had used earlier in the interview to describe her response to secondary school, using precisely the same, drawn out intonation of the words to powerfully evoke the tedium of it all: 'it was reeeeally, reeeeally borrrrring.' This similarity begs the question of whether there were aspects of the social network that reminded Ava of her time at school or that grew out of or began at that stage. In fact, in a clear echo of a troubling aspect of her schooling she spoke at length about a powerful sense of dissatisfaction that arose out of not being in control.

> Ava: [Yammer] is boring to look at. It's really, really boring... whereas if you look at something like WordPress it's got the facility for you to add wikis and things to make it more colourful, you know where you press a button to find different things. And it belongs to you as well, WordPress, doesn't it? You have your own blog. And you can alter the theme and I guess in Yammer, it's like it comes out of the box. So you don't have the same control and there's not that flexibility.

This response is a rational corollary of Ava's wider dispositions towards education. Blogging confers sole authorship and complete editorial control, and this is entirely congruent with the disposition towards authorship that she reveals in interview. Whilst she reports that working with her trusted mentor helped her to overcome past vulnerability in the face of critique, some vestigial vulnerability may nonetheless explain, at least in part, why she withdrew from text-based discussion with strangers in Yammer. As a child with a strong regional accent, arriving at a new secondary school in a different part of the country, to a set of very different classroom dynamics, against a backdrop of a difficult and fractured home life, it is not surprising that she became marginalised and her testimony reveals a clear sense of suffering and alienation at that time. Her preference for a medium that provided for a safe, controlled and autonomous site for expression of ideas in her adult life would be a rational way to avoid repeated suffering of the kind that Ava had undoubtedly experienced at school. It is to this that she is no doubt attesting when she says that she was 'very, very, super-sensitive' to critique right

into her thirties. It is remarkable that she nonetheless ultimately returned to and succeeded within an educational setting.

As a teacher, Ava typically seeks to ameliorate this kind of suffering for others and one of her primary aims is enabling marginalised or struggling learners to make progress and to enjoy their learning, through what she takes to be good learning design and support. Similarly, her success in supporting her dyslexic Aunt to gain a degree was what drew her into teaching in the first place:

I went back to College and I think for me what engaged me was my Aunt decided to go back to College and I actually taught her how to write an essay and I taught her how to research, even though at that time I wasn't a teacher. My Aunt got a degree in Psychology. In her last year of university, she was part of a control group doing some tests for dyslexia. It turned out she was severely dyslexic. And dyscalculic as well. That brought me back into education. And brought me in to teaching because that's where it triggered, "Oh, actually, I've got something that I can contribute!"

When questioned further on that familial link with education, Ava contrasted it with her own and her siblings' earlier disengagement, saying,

Ava: My aunts on the other hand have all got degrees.

Cheryl: Ah, that's interesting, isn't it, if a parent or aunt or uncle has made that journey?

Ava: Yes. Yes. Yes…

Cheryl: It's a role model?

Ava: …and she is extremely supportive of her children. She never pushed them, but she was supportive if they chose to go back into education and one of them left and then went back and kept digging in and out, but it's been, you know, their choice. But yes! I do think it's important if you've got that background ethos.

This supportive modelling and encouragement coupled with the Ava's confidence with the use of language were important in her return to studies and her choice of a career in teaching, but it is significant that she describes the pivotal relationship with her mentor and the ability to accept critique as the decisive factor. Her history of disengagement made her sensitive to the need to design accessible and engaging resources for her own learners:

I need something to engage me. It's why, I suppose, my resources are always very, very colourful. My Moodle is all picture-driven, you know, so people, so the students find the picture of the topic that they want and, you know, click on it and it takes

them straight to it and so it's about being able to find things and visually be able to see.

This preference for the visual, too, was thwarted by her perception of Yammer which she felt to be,

all text, text, text, text. That's why even if it was colour coded or something... but there isn't anything visual. It's all just bland. It's very bland. You know and because it's very bland, it then took me back to going back to school which was also very bland.

The consequence of all the above factors, coupled with her recurring illness, meant that Ava withdrew almost entirely from any active participation in the online social network immediately after the Day School. She attested to looking at Yammer on several occasions but quickly lapsed into a kind of resigned passivity. She acknowledged that she could see others benefiting from it, but this was not enough of a spur to draw her back into participating:

Ava: I did intermittently, thinking back, jump in, even after I'd left the course. And I found that they were very supportive, because you could see people being very supportive and commenting on each other's work ... I did see that people tried to support each other, you know and making comments and directing to different pieces of information, which I think would be really, really useful and I'd like to engage in that, but I still don't know how much I'd do with Yammer. Because I just don't like that platform.

When prompted to speculate on whether this had anything to do with power or status in the network, she felt that this, perhaps, did have some impact:

Cheryl: Did you feel that you were any, you may not have felt this, but did you feel that there were any power differences between people? Did you think that some people had more status than others or was it democratic? What was your perception of that?

Ava: I think it's funny that you should say that because some people were, you could tell the IT people on there; it was quite clear the ones who taught IT or who worked in IT erm and you could see the people who weren't, who were just actually trying to write about their experience and ask for help and you'd got others who were talking about this platform and that platform, which is great? If somebody takes the time to explain what it is and how it works and can be supportive but somebody who just says, "Oh, use this, blah blah blah," then you could see that

alienating people who are just dipping their toe in the water and I think there was a bit of that in there.

Cheryl: So if some were more knowledgeable or scholarly or, or articulate..?

Ava: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Cheryl: And that gives them a different status?

Ava: It does, it does and there's some people that engaged in almost like an academic level, you know? And then the others who weren't at that level I think you could see them not participating and I think that's sad because they could probably bring a lot to the discussion, but I know myself that there was once or twice I looked at it and I thought, "Oh God! I'm IT literate and that's losing me! You know, so if it's losing <u>me</u>, God help some of the others." And then when you get somebody else who engages at that level, then that takes them out of the picture and I think you could lose people at that point.

Similarly, she highlights the way in which people use language to establish power and status:

It's an element of control. And I think, you know, it's an element of, "Look what <u>I</u> know, look what <u>I</u> can do!" And I don't think it's even an overt, like, you know, someone doing it overtly, but it's something they <u>use</u>. It's like any kind of organisation when you go into it and people in that organisation will talk in acronyms, you know... there's almost a language that develops, you know from organisation to organisation and somebody who's coming in who doesn't get that, it's very easy to feel alienated and feel that they're more superior than I am and I don't think that it's necessarily intentional, but that's what happens.

She alludes to how this is potentially more oppressive in an online environment, because of the loss of some of the affordances for resistance that can be used in face-to-face interactions:

I think... there isn't the opportunity to inject humour, you know, into Yammer, you know because you can't just say, ugh, you know, does that really make sense?

When questioned about whether anything could be done to ameliorate this, Ava offered the following:

Ava: if there were [PAUSE] speech bubbles [PAUSE] so that you can see an engagement, like popping up... I know it sounds crazy, but [PAUSE] if you put a speech bubble you're more inclined to be able to put a question mark, or an

> exclamation mark, you know... to let them know what you are on about?
> [LAUGHTER] As if to say, "Now come back down to earth!" You know?

> Cheryl: Because the speech bubble icon says, "This is like speech, treat it as such."

> Ava: Yes! It's speech, you know? And I think it's more engaging? But when it's just a row of text, you know it's, "Which bit do I interrupt at?"

Ava appears here to be alluding to the problem that Yammer purported to be like a conversation, by virtue of the fact that it was an exchange of utterances, but that it was unsatisfactory as a replacement for face-to-face conversation, because it didn't have the same affordances, including the ability to interrupt or interject part way through an utterance. Ava's insightful reach for a solution to this shortcoming of the medium, through the suggestion of the subtle benefits of enclosing utterances in a speech bubble, is interesting when related to the fact that non-verbal communication can be an important site for resistance to symbolic domination. The significance of this is discussed in more detail in Chapters 13 to 15.

What social outcomes, then, might Ava be endeavouring to achieve, either consciously or subconsciously in the telling of her story? Her intention at the time of the interview was to return to study the module in the following academic year. Questions, therefore, arise about the impressions Ava might be seeking to make. Bourdieu describes the various forms of symbolic currency that direct relationships amongst those who are, as here, operating in the academic field, postulating that careers are either created or destroyed along the way because the 'university field is, like any other field, the locus of a struggle to determine the conditions and the criteria of legitimate membership and legitimate hierarchy' (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 11). That hierarchy can depend on the attainment of academic titles, such as *Master of Arts,* but also on a more finely grained level by superlative labels such as *gifted, inspired* or *remarkable* or rather more qualified or equivocal labels like *conscientious* or *industrious.*

There are exchanges during the interview in which Ava arguably attempts to convey some of the scholarliness, commitment, fluency and eloquence that accord status in such a hierarchy; all characteristics that we might ascribe to the successful master's scholar whom she aspires to be. An interesting example of this occurs when she describes her eagerness to read literature from an early age. She stumbles over the word 'voraciously' saying:

> Ava: The whole thing about reading comprehension and understanding behind the words, I've never, I've always enjoyed, you know I always read voray, voray,

voraysush... *[STUMBLES OVER WORD TWICE AND CHECKS PRONUNCIATION]* <u>That's</u> the wrong word!

Cheryl: Voraciously.

Ava: That's the word!

Cheryl: That's what you said.

Ava: Oh, okay, it didn't sound right.

Cheryl: I knew what you meant.

Her stumble, occurring at a point in the conversation when she was commenting on her own natural ability to *deal with* language embarrassed her and I felt the desire to reassure and pass over the stumble as seamlessly as possible. Some nervousness or lack of assurance in spoken language of an academic register is, perhaps, evident here and the need to check and correct it is arguably revelatory of the kind of sensitivity to and significance of language that Bourdieu describes within the academic field.

More broadly, her portrayal of self as someone for whom schooling had gone awry but whose natural abilities predisposed them to return to education as an adult, constructs a narrative that might reasonably be extrapolated into a successful academic career. However, there are evident similarities between Ava's repeated and extended breaks from post graduate study and her frequent and lengthy periods of withdrawal from school. Her lack of participation in Yammer is part of this picture. Whilst acknowledging that her early withdrawal from school was in part due to her own choices; 'I just didn't go' and 'there was an element of disengagement from myself because obviously I wasn't engaged with the other students because I wasn't there enough,' she always provides clear and convincing explanations for her past and current absenteeism. In the case of school, these included familial issues, failure of teachers to include her and mundane teaching. In the case of Yammer, they included recurrence of chronic ill health, the 'boring' and 'bland' nature of the platform and the marginalising effects of others' more scholarly or IT proficient contributions that acted as an intimidating disincentive. There is no reason to suppose that any of these explanations lack veracity. I merely comment upon them as aspects which Ava thought important to convey; a rational decision on her part given her relationship to the interviewer as a prospective tutor and assessor of her work; in other words, a decision-maker in her prospective academic career. The exchanges seem on the face of things to be quite trivial, but actually there is a great deal at stake, when one considers that perceptions of students by tutors can be thought of as 'euphemized versions of social classification, a social classification that has become natural and absolute' (Grenfell, 2012, p. 190).

On a more prosaic level, part of the interview exchange might be seen to be a gambit on Ava's part to influence the delivery of the module in the coming academic year. She repeatedly emphasises her preference for blogging over social networking, a topic that she returns to on six occasions during the hour-long interview. At one point, she goes to the trouble to explain exactly how a tutor on another module had set this up:

> Yes, well, the thing is that's what we did with Karen's module, everybody had different blogs, but what you would do is just hyperlink into the main blog and we all sent Karen links to our blogs and then she put them all down the side, so you could look into other people, directly into their blogs, as well as having the main blog that everybody could post to as well, which is easier.

This may be a coded request to her prospective tutor about a preferred, alternative form of delivery reinforced by her later comment:

> But erm, I really, I did find when I was blogging very useful. I don't think I'd ever get to that stage with Yammer and I don't even know if it's down to the fact that it's tiny little writing and little strands, you know? And it just doesn't do anything for me.

Finally, Ava lays claim to proficiency in using technology and in the pedagogy of using technology at various points in the interview, expressing a fellowship with the tutor in terms of this area of expertise; 'Oh god, I'm IT literate and that's losing me! You know, so if it's losing me God help some of the others!' This perception of competent, skilful use of the tools and artefacts associated with a particular field is noted by Bourdieu as a significant marker of legitimate status; just as those who know which fork to use and how to use it at a dinner party are perceived as somehow 'better' than those who do not, those who know how to negotiate an educational system and its technologies are seen as superior to those who do not, even where they have alternative means to access learning or to contribute ideas. Alertness to these kinds of distinctions in educational practices as manifested in online environments becomes important, because the symbolic value placed upon them can be influenced by the relative class loci of various players within the field.

In common with all other participants, Ava was asked whether she could offer a metaphor for what it felt like to use Yammer as a learning platform for this module. She chose, as did some others, a metaphor that conveyed a sense of fragmentation or chaos:

> It's like Spaghetti Junction, you know as they used to call the Birmingham motorway system. Because it's kind of, you know, when you get in and you set off, you know,

and you get your map out and you think, yeah, you're alright, you know where you're going. And then it starts branching off, you know, and then... you're following that road and you think, "Okay, I'm gonna go around this way," and then all of a sudden there's a road come in and it's shot straight through it, you know, and you're thinking, "Am I going left or am I going right?" You know, and then, you're trying to follow the route that you <u>want</u> to get to the conversation you were <u>having</u>, but then there's these other offshoots and for me it confuses you and you end up getting lost.

Some of this arose because of the way that content moved around in response to the activities of others; current posts are continuously replaced by new content and old posts are pulled to the top of the timeline whenever somebody adds a new reply. This undoubtedly generated a sense of disorientation and frustration for Ava:

I find it very difficult when the trail … it's like a whole… so you're having to jump, "Oh, what was it that person said?" and having to go all the way back up to read it. You know, it's not always easy to follow the train of thought, especially when you then get somebody popping in and it pops in between the middle of it. And you're thinking "Well, what's that doing there?" It's <u>different people's thoughts</u> and you can't follow it. You think, "What's <u>that</u> got to do with <u>that</u>?" and that... I find that very difficult. I don't work that way and so visually I find it very confusing and if that happens then I just switch off.

This again recalls some of Ava's patterns of learning that developed during her school years. Learning was a solitary process of reading, researching and reflecting at home, not a conversation in a social setting. Interestingly, the metaphor has some similarities with that chosen by Jack. Both liken Yammer to a road, but whereas Jack portrays a much greater sense of agency and control, being the pilot of his own journey, a builder of his own environment and an adventurer, who enjoyed the degree of choice and variety presented, Ava struggled to acquire the same sense of agency, travelling hopefully at first but soon overwhelmed by the complexity of stimuli and the ephemeral nature of the content that she experienced. The sources of this difference in degree of agency are an important focus of inquiry, since they might be seen as part of the causal factors in either enabling or preventing participation in such environments. The differences would appear to hinge on a particular kind of digital literacy; a set of behaviours that included frequent participation and a tolerance of variety, ephemerality and contingency. Further, fluency and confidence that confer a willingness to challenge the views of others and to accommodate challenge from others also seems an important distinction. The question arises, then, to be addressed later in this thesis, in what way

are these behaviours influenced by habitus and can we trace symbolic violence in the way in which they play out in social learning environments?

Chapter 9: Grace

Table 19: Grace's self-description

Gender	Age	Participants' own description of her online persona
Female	40-49	Quiet, lurking reader

Introduction

Except for my own reflexive account, which I constructed last but placed first in this thesis for the reasons explained at the beginning of that chapter, the rest of the narratives are presented in the order in which I wrote them. By the time I began Grace's narrative, therefore, I had completed those for Jack and Ava and had begun to form clearer ideas about the kinds of theoretical frameworks that might have explanatory power for this thesis. For that reason, this account contains rather more in terms of attempts to theorise and explain Grace's experience than those given for either Jack or Ava in the former two chapters. I used the narrative analysis of Grace's account as an opportunity to try out the extent to which those frameworks might apply in her case. Having done so, I was able to look back upon the earlier accounts to verify that similar approaches might have some mileage. I also went on to construct the accounts of Rachel, Hadeel and Molly and my own reflexive account with those theories in mind. However, as I completed Grace's account, I took the decision that the theorisation of the narratives should largely be presented as a series of chapters that followed on from and grew out of all the narratives so that it would have a sense of each and so that similarities and differences would be more evident. This gives my use of theory a greater sense of coherence across accounts than if I were to attempt to theorise each in turn. I explain this here so that it is clear to the reader why Grace's account differs in terms of the use of theory from the rest of the accounts and from the narrative inquiry convention that theorisation is deferred until after the story has been told.

Introduction

Grace provides training in the use of technology to staff at a UK University. She is in her thirties and is married with one child. She appeared to be highly focussed throughout the Day School session and was consistently attentive to what others were saying. She made carefully considered and insightful points when prompted to do so but typically took a long pause, appearing to thoroughly consider her words every time she spoke. She rarely volunteered a question or a point without prompting. Though relatively introverted during the taught phases of the session, she was confident and sociable during breaks and extremely supportive of and responsive to others during small group

discussions. On the whole, Grace had a quiet and contemplative demeanour during whole-group phases. On the rare occasions when she raised questions or made points, her contributions showed her to be intelligent, intellectually curious and well-read.

In interview, Grace professes to have an enduring passion for learning that has led her through a succession of qualifications:

> I've always just studied. I always get to the end of a course and I say, "That's it! No more! Never going to do it again," and then six or eight months later it's like "Right, what can I do next, what can I do next?" I just so enjoy that classroom situation and having information either given to me or snatches of it so I can go away and find out more. And I've always read. I read all the time, so it doesn't matter to me whether it's fiction or whether it's a theory book. It makes no difference. As long as I have a book in my hand, I'm happy.

She explains that this positive disposition towards educative reading, which she says was strongly influenced by her father, is a fundamentally important motivator for her to continue in education:

> Grace: It's reading my collection of books, though that makes me a happy person as well. I love books. I don't want them electronically. I don't want them. I want the book. So my bookshelf is growing! But that makes me... it's kind of a contentment. I like that physical paper in my hand. It's mine and I can pick it up and read it as and when I want.
>
> Cheryl: And you say your dad was a great reader?
>
> Grace: Massively.
>
> Cheryl: So you always had books at home?
>
> Grace: Yes. He'd always go out and buy us a book for birthday or Christmas. It was always the thing he did for us and he just had books everywhere. He'd sit and read a train timetable if he had nothing else to read!

This pleasure in a tactile engagement with books prefigures some of the difficulty with online environments, which Grace describes later in the interview, as does her preference for gaining information in class but then *going away* and finding out more, rather than engaging in the cut and thrust of classroom discussion. In addition, the familial dispositions towards education that begin to emerge here imply a particular kind of habitus and prefigure Grace's persistent attitudes to education that become more apparent as the interview progresses.

Schooling

When prompted to say how likely she had been to ask questions or volunteer answers in a school setting, Grace chose to typify this through an example:

> Okay, I will start with primary because it's a story my Mum told me and thinking how I was, it's probably true. I got to the last year in Junior's and at a parents' evening, erm, he was called Mr MacDonald, he was fantastic. I remember him vividly, he was great, but he told my Mum I was too quiet and he was trying to tease me enough to bring me out of my shell so I'd be cheeky to him and answer him back a bit because I'd sit and I was very diligent and I was very good and all the rest, but I wouldn't erm, wouldn't say anything if I thought I was going to be laughed at or anything like that. And I think he helped. Looking back, I mean it's hard to remember, but she tells me the story where by the end of the year, I was getting borderline with her, a little bit too cheeky, but Mr MacDonald did it deliberately in the class so that I'd go from there.

In the context of a consideration of how habitus is formed and how it persists in patterns of behaviour in educational settings, the teacher's strategy of encouraging mild transgression as an antidote to being 'too quiet' is interesting. One way to analyse this is the tripartite typology of classroom behaviour proposed by Archer and Francis (2007). Using this perspective, Mr MacDonald's actions can be read as a helpful response to a student who was performing the 'pathologised other' as outlined in Table 20.

Table 20: Archer and Francis tripartite typology

'Ideal' Pupil	Pathologised Other	Demonised Other
Dominant / assertive / active / independent	Passive / dependent	Aggressive / uncontrollable
Innovating	Conforming	Peer-led
Natural intelligence	Hard-working / 'slogging'	Lacking ability
The 'head' (mind)	The 'soft' body	The 'hard' body
Outside culture / culture mobile	Culture-bound	Victim of 'bad culture'
Entitled	Deserving	Undeserving
Normal / the subject	Unusual / the object	Abnormal / the abject

(Paraphrased from (Archer & Francis, 2007, p. 75).

Mr McDonald's endeavours to provoke a response, to which Grace's mother notably expresses some residual resistance, can be read as prompts for Grace to adopt the behaviours of the 'ideal' pupil; dominant, assertive, active, independent and entitled. Her

mother's description of Grace's behaviour as 'borderline too cheeky' perhaps expresses a fear that she might become 'demonised;' in other words, that she might become too assertive or uncontrolled. The forces that compel students like Grace to adopt a pathologised performance operate by virtue of the fact that when those students act in 'ideal' ways, they are treated like 'demons.' Archer and Francis (2007) argue convincingly that this is a gendered trichotomy, in which girls are more frequently subject to this kind of control than boys. This conception is congruent with the centrally Bourdieusian framework for this thesis if we consider the treatment of 'transgressive' girls as a form of symbolic violence within a gendered field.

Whatever the sources of her reticence and despite Mr MacDonald's efforts to alter her behaviour, Grace herself characterises her reticence as a persistent feature of a long history of passivity in classroom situations:

Cheryl: Is [how you react now] part of that long trajectory? Is it that same feeling that would maybe make you a little reticent when you were at primary school? Is it part of the same thing, or is this a different thing?

Grace: No, I think it is the same.

Cheryl: Same thing.

Grace: Yes, because I wasn't told that story until recently and it kind of made me think, "Actually yes, that could answer quite a few things as to where [this feeling comes from]" but it, it's down to comfort again, isn't it? [PAUSE] It's not uncomfortable; it's just that questioning myself as to whether I'd speak up.

This reticence was apparent even in the interview itself. Throughout the interview, Grace presents as scholarly, confident, relaxed, open and genuinely keen to contribute to the research when discussing all aspects of her perceptions and recollections. A notable exception, though, occurred when I endeavoured to draw her into discussing theories or what might be thought of as academic ideas that came out of the module:

Cheryl: Were there any new ideas or perspectives for you that came out of participating in the module?

Grace: Erm, [*nervous laugh, long pause*] Oh, I don't know, I'm struggling with that one. Erm. [*long pause*]

Cheryl: Does it feel like I'm testing you?

Grace: It does a bit. I should have read it before I came across here, shouldn't I? [*PAUSE*]

Cheryl: We can pass on that one if you'd prefer to or we could come back to it if you want to.

Grace: It probably was [*LONG PAUSE*] No, nothing's jumping out at me.

This was a puzzling response because Grace had recently produced, for her final assignment, an intelligent and well-theorised account of her struggles with online participation. However, it is a response that is congruent with her dispositions towards being judged in education, revealed in the account that follows.

During the interview, Grace returns five times to the fear of getting things wrong and, thereby, opening herself up to ridicule. She ascribes this to a lack of confidence in her own standpoint, which causes her to take great care over every contribution she makes, with the need to assure herself that she can securely back up any arguments that she makes before she feels able to raise them:

> I guess, given my reticence to put myself out there and hold myself up to... and it wouldn't have been ridicule... but a potential; "No, that's wrong, I don't believe that!" And then having to take that argument one step further to back that up and not seem foolish. I suppose it comes back to the question of being confident enough in your beliefs and values.

This is the antithesis of the 'muscular intellect' that Archer ascribes to the 'ideal' pupil (Archer, DeWitt, & Willis, 2014, p. 5). It is a deep-seated, wary disposition towards discussion that is problematic within the context of the social constructivist pedagogy that lay at the heart of the use of social media for this module. This pedagogy is at odds with Grace's disposition because it sees argument and discussion *as* learning rather than being *about* learning. However, Grace expresses surprise at the perception of others that this wariness might be an atypical response:

> I don't know whether this is applicable or not. My son has a stammer, which comes and goes. We took him to see the speech therapist and she was trying to ask him whether he thought questions through in his head before he'd ask them in a school setting. And I found that an odd question because I know I <u>always</u> do that anyway. I kind of phrase it and rephrase it and rephrase it to make sure that it's not going to sound <u>ridiculous</u> when it comes out of my mouth. But she was trying to say that was a thing that people don't usually do. I was surprised that she thought it was unusual.

She finds it difficult to imagine how else she could act in the classroom. Further explanation for this may lie in the fact that whilst at secondary school, Grace reports

suffering what might be characterised as symbolic violence that exacerbated and reinforced her reticence:

> In secondary, there was a teacher I absolutely despised. But that was his way of teaching. He was very belittling. He was a maths teacher and I still blame him to this day for my hatred of maths. Yes, so I do blame him. Whether it's true or not, I've no idea. I'm not a numbers person so there's a lot of that isn't there, as well? But it's easy to blame people isn't it, to decide it's his fault?

Notably, Grace immediately qualifies her initially unequivocal allocation of blame to the teacher here with an immediate disavowal of her own certainty and an acceptance of being in some way at fault herself and this, too, illustrates persistent features of Archer and Francis' pathologised other. There is a sense throughout Grace's description of her schooling of the awareness of conflicting models of 'good' behaviour that on the one hand value passivity, diligence and compliance but on the other see this set of behaviours as in some way limiting, insufficient and dysfunctional.

Furthermore, the fear of being judged and belittled, expressed above, may also explain in part Grace's aversion to handing in assignments, 'which I loathe and detest, even though they're a necessary part of the course.' This is a level of guardedness and discomfort that seems on the face of it to be considerably at odds with Grace's continued participation in education and with the way in which she describes her enjoyment of the classroom setting elsewhere in the interview; 'I just so enjoy that classroom situation and having information given to me.' However, as described earlier, she typically escapes from any open controversy in face-to-face situations, resolving conflicting ideas through 'going away' and reading more about them:

> I like the classroom situation and I like people challenging my views and my opinions and giving me the sources to go away and look at. So it's that stimulation I need, rather than being left entirely alone to study a topic.

Grace enjoys the intrinsic challenge to her views that plays out within her own thoughts in the classroom and later through reading about alternative ideas and arguments. This is not the kind of challenge that is performed through dialogue. Grace's hard-won strategy, then, for classroom learning is to keep her own counsel as much as possible, to only contribute when she is required to do so and has been able to clearly think through the purport and wording of her utterances and to listen hard so that she can follow up ideas by reading about them outside the classroom. This harvesting of ideas as a trigger for solitary reading is a source of pleasure for Grace and a valid and important way in which she and other students prefer to learn. Ava also tends to enjoy this kind of solitary approach to learning and has used it successfully to progress through the education

system to postgraduate level study. Grace clearly expressed guilt about this preference in her interview and in her final assignment, characterised it as parasitic on the contributions of others. The pedagogy I adopted had the effect of marginalising her preferences for listening and reading rather than contributing, even though I take this to be a valuable and valid way to learn. When cast in this light, social media learning can be seen as a cultural arbitrary in a Bourdieusian sense; not objectively necessary but causing learners to feel deficient when they do not wish to engage in this way. This is a problem given that her preferred approach has kept Grace engaged in a sustained period of study over many years:

> So I did my degree part time. I spent six years doing that in the evening over at [a local University] and did it that that way. I did an HNC first because I was working at the technical college, so I did that there then topped it up to a degree, erm, and I did Word Processing and Desktop Publishing and all the office skills type things as well, so I did those on top and alongside ... [and] I did my City and Guilds 7407 ... it's just been course after course after course. I might take a year off and then start again.

Added to Grace's professed enjoyment of learning is the suggestion of a sense of compunction with regards to education arising from familial influences. Grace's parents were supportive and consistently encouraged persistence in the face of difficulty:

> They never stopped me. It was always, "Yes, have a go at it, have a go," and if I wanted to back out in the early days, it would be, "No, you've not given it a good enough go yet, keep on and try it for a bit longer."

Grace's father, in particular, endeavoured to instil a sense of aspiration and self-confidence:

> My Dad would always say, "You're going to be a famous ballerina" or "You're going to be a famous musician," because I did both when I was a child, so there was that kind of half-joke there, but I guess it plants that seed doesn't it that you can be the best you can be if you work at it.

These are the kinds of aspirations that Valerie Walkerdine evocatively describes in her, *Daddy's Girl: Young Girls and Popular Culture* (1998), aspirations that she describes as working to variously enable but also to categorise girls' aspirations. For Grace, these aspirations were temporarily thwarted when she was asked to leave her sixth form college part way through her A Levels:

> And then I went to College. I was asked to leave after a year. They called me and my parents in and said, "She's not going to get the grades, so she either has to

start all over again, pick some different subjects or leave." So I left and got a job, [*SELF-DEPRECATORY LAUGH*] much to my parents' dismay and disappointment. But I discovered going out. I was 18. If I'm honest about it, I didn't put the work in and it drifted.

Grace reports that this event had a lasting impact on her attitudes and her educational choices thereafter:

I think it's more family, because they were very [*HESITATION*] "pushy" isn't the right word, but I knew that if I'd not got my O Levels I'd have been highly, I'd have disappointed them massively and when I did leave [the college] that was a huge disappointment. I remember it to this day! But I think [my commitment to education] is from then on.

Added to these familial influences, Grace expresses a desire to improve her working practices within her job role of Information Technology Trainer through the practical application of what she learns in her studies:

It's just the way it feeds into work as well, so I mean it drives my colleague mad because he's not into the, he's not interested in qualifications or reading or anything and I'll be like, "Oh, but have you seen this and have you... and let's try this!" I'm willing to put things in place and have a go and if it doesn't work we drop it and we move on and try the next thing.

In summary then, the picture which Grace paints of herself in the interview is of someone who loves to be prompted by listening to the views and expertise to which she has access in the classroom and enjoys the ways in which this directs her towards interesting ideas and further reading that can also be useful to her in her workplace. Her family are described as having encouraged and reinforced positive dispositions towards reading, participation and educational achievement. These factors have combined to result in her ongoing motivation to study, despite the discomfort she experiences when called upon to formulate her learning into utterances in class or in submitting assignments. The discomfort seems even to carry over into talking about her learning in the interview as reported here. There is an apparent conflict between two sets of factors. On the one hand there are motivators such as Grace's sense of compunction around self-improvement; the intrinsic and extrinsic reward of achievements that she knows will please her family, and an enjoyment of the intellectual and practical rewards of education. On the other hand, there are the disincentives of the way in which education exposes her to conversations and assessed tasks that make her uncomfortable and anxious because of a fear of being judged. Learners like Grace, then, who are performing a gendered role of 'pathologised other' must accommodate the discomfort that accrues

when they play what they and others may perceive to be a less than 'ideal' role in the classroom. Though they recognise this discomfort themselves and know that others recognise it too, they persist in order to be able to access the rewards which they feel to accrue from participation. This is an apparently vexed relationship with education and the source of suffering as well as reward.

Experience of the module

Table 21: Grace's use of Yammer

Posts		Replies		Likes	
Number	% of all posts in network	Number received	% chance of a reply	Number received	% chance of a 'like'
16	2	1	6	33	206

Table 22: Grace's responses to the questionnaire

Typical duration of visits	5 to 15 minutes
Frequency of visits	A couple of times a week
Type of Yammer activity	Clicked on 'like'
	Sent direct (private) messages to other participants
	Contributed to an existing thread on the main network page
Where and how Yammer was accessed	PC at work (preferred)
	Tablet at home (rare)
Perceived impact of Yammer	Slight impact on the patterns of my work life
Worries and anxieties	My own contributions
	My lack of contribution
	Keeping up with everything that happens
	Being judged
Perceived impact on learning	Small negative impact on learning with some confusion arising out of Yammer that never led to new learning
Perceived benefits of Yammer	Emotional support
	Thought provoking ideas
	Community spirit
Open question for any other comments...	Although I didn't participate in many of the discussions, I did find following these helpful. I also feel guilty that I read and gained information from others and it not being a "two-way street." I gained access to journal articles that others had posted which were very useful but often forgot to just say thank you!

What, then of the shift into the online environment that Grace was compelled to make immediately after the first Day School? Her contributions in Yammer proved to be minimal, wary, tentative and guarded, even more so than her contributions in the classroom. Though she downloaded content, occasionally thanked people for their

contributions and 'liked' their posts, she only remembers making one substantive post herself:

> I can't remember how long it had been going on but, all of a sudden, and I've forgotten the word now, all of a sudden, there was a discussion about erm [*PAUSE*] dystopian and utopian. That's right. And that intrigued me because I didn't know what they meant so I looked the words up and then I just thought, "You know what? I'm going to do this!" So I put a reply on and I <u>did</u> that and it was a bit of a, "Ooh, you know what, I've <u>done</u> that. That's okay. And I'll keep up with it." And then something else happens and I <u>didn't</u>, but that was a bit of a "Gulp" and a "Yes, put that reply on there," and I admitted I hadn't known what the words meant and I kind of thought, "I'll lay it out there," and I put that on. And that was my only contribution, I think.

Here is that contribution:

Figure 16: Grace's post on the theme of Utopia

Note the tentative nature of the post and the lack of assurance that Grace exhibits, which is congruent with her reticent disposition highlighted throughout this account. When questioned about whether there was anything in the responses she received that explained why she didn't contribute regularly thereafter, Grace said,

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There was no, nothing in anybody's replies that made me think, "Oh, no, I don't like this!" Erm, my main problem with it is... and it's the same with other forums that I'm on as well, is other people making me think that they know more than I do and that is a big off-putter for me and I guess it's back to the hands-up in the classroom type thing isn't it? It's, "I'll leave you to it because I know what I know and I'm comfortable in what I know and if I read what you're putting you're still challenging me because I can go away and read around it and do it that way, but I'm not going to engage because I don't think I'm up to that level."

Grace sees it as deeply problematic that other people 'know more' than her and is constantly seeking to reassure herself over this and to hide or excuse any perceived disparity. In Bourdieusian terms, she reveals a perceived mismatch between the assets and abilities she feels she has and those which she imagines are required of discussion in an educative medium, whether face-to-face or online. In other words, she effectively perceives her habitus as being insufficient according to the doxa of the academic field. In these terms, any contribution or lack thereof becomes a high-stakes transaction because it assigns Grace's symbolic capital within the field. She quite rationally fears being assigned a lowly status based upon this and is hyper-sensitised to the doxa of the field, being deeply concerned about her legitimate status within the group and her own symbolic capital. This fear strongly inhibits her from participating, even though she knows her silence might also influence this perceived capital. I argue later in this thesis that Grace is experiencing a kind of *digital hiatus* and that the sense of paralysis that arises is a typical and rational response to symbolic violence and its features in online networks.

Grace draws a parallel between this fear of online contribution and her fear of raising her hand in the classroom; 'it's back to the hands-up in the classroom type thing isn't it?' However, there is an additional layer of discomfort and difficulty that Grace associates with participating online. In part this arises out of the way that text is formulated and then persists on the screen, alluded to in her reflections on Jack's contributions:

Jack in particular, as much as I like Jack, he was very prolific on it wasn't he? And he doesn't, he didn't moderate any of his language and his terminology and anything on it and, unknowingly, I think he put me off and it wasn't deliberate because he's not that kind of a person. I think that's what I do in Yammer. I sit and I'll think, "I won't ask that because it is just <u>ridiculous</u>." Or I'll miss what's been said next because I'm so busy thinking about how I put it so that it sounds worldly and educated and all the rest so I think Yammer's a bit like that for me. And partly because, I think as well because I'm a touch typist. I can type things as quickly as I

think, pretty much and then it's <u>not pressing send</u>. Because I'll read it and read it and read it. Whereas if I just typed it and pressed send, it probably would be okay, but it's that confidence to do that, which for me is a bit like a classroom situation where you put your hand up and everyone looks at you as if to say, "Why have you asked that?"

This alludes to the way in which speech operates differently to text. When we speak to a live audience as in the classroom, the utterance and the hearing of the utterance happen simultaneously and the whole is a *fait accompli* that quickly recedes into the past without being transcribed, often to be completely forgotten in any detailed sense. Grace highlights how online text introduces a delay between the creation of the utterance and the sharing of it with the audience, with an opportunity to read over, edit and re-edit contributions before clicking 'send' and describes how this became a stumbling block, effectively silencing her, even when she had something she wanted to say. On top of this is the opportunity for others to revisit and pick over utterances in detail because of the persistence of text in place of speech. So, whilst she says it is a bit like the classroom situation, it is more difficult for Grace in important ways.

A further layer of difficulty arose for Grace out of the disembodied nature of online learning. We are accustomed to quiet or silent students in the classroom and whilst in student-centred as opposed to didactic classroom cultures, their silence might be seen as a deficit, their physical presence is a stable and socially acceptable signal of their legitimate participation. This operates differently online, and this took Grace by surprise:

Cheryl: Was there anything about the whole experience that you found surprising?

Grace: I think the level of guilt I felt at downloading everything that everybody put on there and having a read of it, because they'd taken time to find it and put it on there to share, then I'd download it and read it and think, "Yes, I need this, this is really useful!" But there was that level of guilt for not posting anything back again for a bit of a reciprocal arrangement, so I think that's what took me by surprise, especially when it has that little box on the right-hand side to say who's downloading and who's read things. So you can track what people have done as well. So people would <u>know</u> I'd done it. And then I wasn't commenting back on them.

Cheryl: Oh, I'd never thought of the Recent Activity Log like that!

Grace: Yes. So I'd maybe 'like' it or say, "Thanks." But that would be it. But it was a feeling of, "I should be giving something back here and everybody can see that I'm not."

Cheryl: So a desire to contribute and at the same time a fear of contributing and a guilt about not contributing? What did we put you through, Grace? It's dreadful isn't it? [NERVOUS LAUGHTER] I made you suffer. It's really awful.

Grace: [LAUGHTER] Yes.

What then of Grace's overall experience? When asked to choose a metaphor for what it felt like to study in this way, she offered the following:

Grace: I tried to think of something like that when I did the portfolio and the penguin that I put on the front, felt a bit like that to me, because even though I knew I was going to jump in at some point and swim, it felt a bit like being on that higher board than you'd maybe want to be on at the swimming pool. So you knew that you could get in and once you'd be in you'd be fine, you'd be swimming and you'd be quite safe, but if you'd have been on the lower board or on the poolside you'd have just gone in and not worried about it, so it was just that extra level of uncomfortable for me, so I think, yes, the highest board on the swimming pool would be what I would liken it to. You will be okay, it's just a grit your teeth, swallow, shut your eyes and get on with it.

Cheryl: Yes but until you do it...

Grace: Until you do it, you don't know.

Grace portrays herself here as frozen in full view on the point of entering the community in ways that made her vulnerable to disapproval or ridicule. In Chapter 15, I argue that what she experiences here is a kind of paralysis that tends to objectify social actors and that this sense of hiatus is exacerbated by the affordances of the online medium. What emerges is a picture of a troublesome and disconcerting learning experience. Whilst some quite diverse theoretical and literary frameworks have been used, the fundamental and unifying characteristic that I have sought to identify here is that of suffering, which I argue is a consequence of symbolic violence. In the conclusion to this thesis, I go on to comment on how far Bourdieu can take us in this kind of analysis and on the usefulness of deploying a select range of other theories, as here, as adjuncts to his ideas.

Chapter 10: Rachel

Table 23: Rachel's self-description

Gender	Age	Participants' own descriptions of their online persona
Female	40-49	Hopeful, encouraging, friendly, supportive & attempting to be humorous

Introduction

Rachel is in her forties and lives in a small town about 20 miles from the University with her husband and two children, who are in their early teens. Her husband is broadly supportive of her studies but not particularly interested in the details; 'He does his thing and I do mine.' Rachel works as an education professional and her studies for the Master of Education followed immediately on the back of a Certificate in Education and then a Bachelor of Arts (BA) Honours Degree in Education and Professional Development. Rachel was a lively and vocal member of the group at the Day School. She appeared relaxed, confident, intellectually engaged and curious throughout the day, both in terms of the practical aspects of educational technology and regarding the various sociological theories explored.

Schooling

However, in interview, Rachel painted a picture of a vexed secondary education that took place against the backdrop of the year-long UK Miners' Strike of 1984 to 1985. At that time, over 142,000 miners were involved in what has been described as 'the most bitter industrial dispute in British history' (Metcalf, Jenkinson, & Harvey, 2014, p. 219). Over 26 million work days were lost in what was the largest and most sustained industrial action since the General Strike of 1926 (Kessler & Bayliss, 1999, p. 210). Resulting in over 11,000 arrests, 200 imprisonments and 9,000 sackings (Metcalf et al., 2014, p. 117), the Miners' Strike was a dispute that significantly impacted upon individual lives and more broadly, the communities in which it was played out. Strike action was almost universally observed in Yorkshire and miners and their families suffered real hardship, especially towards the end of the strike when the £15 per week Union Strike Fund payments began to run out and 'urgent needs payments' previously available through the welfare system were banned by the government. This removal of support is frequently characterised as part of a sustained assault by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government on the Miners' Unions, which also included removal through new Collective Labour Laws, of, amongst other rights, the right to mount flying pickets. This enabled the mobilisation of the police force in huge and sustained numbers to crush

the strike and there were violent clashes between police and miners. The 'Battle of Orgreave,' a stand-off between 5,000 miners and a similar number of police officers, took place not far from where Rachel grew up. The strike ultimately resulted in a crushing and demoralising defeat for the miners and their communities, the closure of most pits and for many, the loss of a way of life. In March 1984 there had been 191,700 colliery workers. By 1992 there were only 49,200 left. The strike was also enormously divisive within communities, leading to lasting and bitter enmity and sometimes violence between those who kept the strike and those who broke it. Added to this, the nineteen-eighties also saw a period of sustained industrial action amongst teaching unions, when a long pay dispute that involved fitful work-to-rule and strike action, both locally and nationally, ended once again in defeat for the unions. The Burnham agreement, under which teachers had previously been able to negotiate local pay scales, was abolished, and national pay and conditions were imposed by the Secretary of State.

Rachel began studying for her GCSEs in the year the miners' strike began and remembers this time vividly, ascribing to it some of the troublesome aspects of her own secondary schooling.

> There was two pits in the village so it did have a big effect on the community ... You know the teachers came in and then they went home. You know we didn't really do much else like trips and stuff like that so there weren't... so I think the teachers were just doing, most of them were just doing the minimum. Bearing in... saying that though, it was a deprived area, or classed as one, so there was a lot of disruption in classes and a lot of teachers couldn't really handle it. Yes.

Though her own parents were not employed in the coal industry, the parents of many of her peers were and she reports a general sense of disaffection that led to children 'acting daft' through varying degrees of classroom rebellion that teachers seemed unable to control. Moreover, she strongly recalls that her teachers, with a few notable exceptions, 'were not really bothered' or 'just weren't interested.' This amounted in Rachel's recollection of events to a lack of aspiration by teachers on behalf of the children with whom they worked. She felt that the teachers had effectively 'given up on' those communities and the children of those communities, herself included. This chimes with other accounts from the time, in which teachers are characterised as 'outsiders' to communities with no real vested interest or motivation to raise aspiration or improve their pupils' life chances, to which pupils often reacted with a kind of pugnacious, defiant 'devil may care' response that said:

> If we pre-exclude ourselves, then the power of those that exclude is neutralised and the indignity of exclusion eliminated. It is defensive, to be sure but not necessarily

negative. In its very refusal it aims to protect and re-affirm through a range of tactics – including both direct disruption ("just doing stuff") and an exaggerated, resistant humour (see Dubberley 1993) that echoes the pit demotic of "pillocking" – a set of class-rooted values. As an aspect of the continuing singularity of coal-mining communities such resistant aspiration is richly active within community culture. It is also, I am suggesting, active in the school classroom, where it manifests primarily as resistance to the imposition of a set of class values imposed by "outsider" teachers (Bright, 2011, p. 71).

Whilst this kind of response undoubtedly has negative consequences and can lead to disengagement and disaffection, a healthy scepticism of the motives of authority figures in education and a disrespect for the forces that tend to silence the voices of the disempowered can support those engaging in principled dissent or in challenging inequalities or just in demanding answers to their questions about the curriculum, both in face-to-face and in online environments. I argue that this kind of healthy disrespect for academic norms and hierarchies can be traced in Rachel's story.

This troubled secondary school context marked, in Rachel's recollection of events, a significant sea-change from her experiences of primary schooling, which had been very good: 'It was a big shock for me going to a big school from a nice primary school where we were probably working at a lot higher level.' The move to secondary was a sudden and profound shift: 'I got a right big shock!' One key consequence was that Rachel felt inhibited from working hard and showing commitment to her own learning and was 'bullied a bit,' so that she learnt to 'ease off and not show too much effort.' This aligns closely with the findings of Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2010) when looking at young, working class undergraduates struggling to 'absorb a sense of themselves as students':

> Reinforcing an often tenuous sense of self as a successful learner is the continuation of the attitudes and dispositions that permeate schooling, and in particular working-class schooling in which it is seen to be "uncool" to work hard: "If my friends at uni knew how much work I did, I would never, ever tell them I loved history, because I would just like have no friends, and sometimes I come in and say, oh yeah, I haven't done the reading, when I have, I've done three times as much as I should have done." (Kylie, white, working-class history student, Northern) (Reay et al., 2010, p. 115)

For Rachel, this ultimately led to a real and lasting source of regret and frustration with her younger self; "you could shoot yourself now, couldn't you?"

As her General Certificates in Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations approached Rachel's aspiration to go on to Art College and the consequent need to gain 5 GCSEs at Grade C proved enough of a motivation for her to increasingly disregard peer pressure and at the same time kick against the general apathy of her teachers in a last-ditch effort to make the grade. This was strongly supported by her parents who were 'mad keen for me to go on to college,' her mother even offering the 'bribe' of £10 for each GCSE she passed. Rachel also had a small coterie of close friends, who were similarly motivated to succeed and with whom she studied and revised hard in what amounted to a kind of self-help group. This attitude was congruent with familial dispositions towards education as a source of both pleasure and reward. As a teenager, her father had enrolled on an apprenticeship and had worked his way up to a position of responsibility as an engineer in a large plumbing firm. Her mother, too, had studied for and gained vocational qualifications. Both her parents were enormously disappointed when, despite gaining her 5 GCSEs, Rachel ultimately had a change of heart and decided not to go on to College and instead to go out to work. They are commensurately proud of her now that she has gained a University education.

Rachel's recollection of the kinds of classroom exchanges that were typical of her school experience is quite different from what she has since experienced as a student of teacher education and as an undergraduate and post-graduate. All these higher education courses adopted, to varying degrees, relatively student-centred and discursive pedagogies. In contrast, Rachel cannot recall asking her schoolteachers questions to any great extent. Nor can she recall such questions being a thing that was encouraged or welcomed. Indeed, asking questions to clarify or pursue learning would almost certainly have exposed her to the censure of peers who were less engaged or curious than Rachel. Instead, classroom talk was generally initiated by teachers as a way of testing pupils' understanding rather than being part of an ongoing, learning dialogue and whilst she says she would not have been too shy to ask questions, it simply did not typically occur to her to do so within that field and at that time. Some of this disposition is arguably still evident in her views about classroom learning now, where she expresses reservations about too much 'student talk,' which she sees as, perhaps, a distraction from or barrier to the sharing of expert opinion by the teacher.

Experience of the module

This may allude to the problematic nature of Ava's loquacity in the first Day School and the impatience amongst other group members, Rachel included, that this triggered. It also, however, reveals an attitude that values teacher-led interaction and this persisted in her response to our exchanges in Yammer. Rachel describes the benefits that accrued from the fact that, as tutor, I regularly posted activities and things for the students to

discuss. Of particular value and interest to her had been the videos that I shared portraying dystopian and utopian visions of technology in the future and the discussion and reading that this prompted, and Rachel valued the fact that I regularly 'put things on there to discuss.' She also commented on the fact that I, as tutor, could not say 'Right! Let's move on,' in the same way that I would have been able to do in the classroom.

Table 24: Rachel's use of Yammer

Posts		Replies		Likes	
Number	% of all posts in network	Number received	% chance of a reply	Number received	% chance of a 'like'
122	13	59	48	118	97

Table 25: Rachel's response to the questionnaire

Typical duration of visits	15 to 30 minutes
Frequency of visits	About once a day
Type of Yammer activity	Clicked on 'like'
	Edited a shared note
	Sent direct (private) messages other participants
	Initiated a conversation on the main network page
	Contributed to an existing thread on the main network page
	Took part in conversations within a sub-group of the network
	Used the search function
Where and how Yammer was accessed	PC at home (preferred) and at work
Perceived impact of Yammer	No perceived impact on the patterns of work or home life
Worries and anxieties	My own contributions
	My lack of contribution
	Keeping up with everything that happens
	Being judged
Perceived impact on learning	Large positive impact on learning with occasional confusion arising out of Yammer that frequently led to new learning
Perceived benefits of Yammer	Practical advice from others
	Help with understanding concepts that were new to me
	Emotional support
	Thought provoking ideas
	Fun
	Community spirit
Open question for any other comments...	No comment

This contrasts on the one hand with Jack's attitude, which displays more autonomy and a greater willingness to introduce his own ideas and novel and disparate ideas from the

literature and on the other hand with Ava, who felt that a lack of tutor direction on Yammer was disorientating and confusing. Rachel's position is intermediate between these two extremes, appreciating tutor input but also willing to participate in and even initiate student-led discussion on some occasions. My own pedagogical thinking was that it was appropriate and developmental at master's level to introduce a range of ideas, to set some preliminary points for discussion and then to encourage the students to bring in novel theoretical perspectives considering their own prior studies and independent research. Whilst this proved to be productive and developmental for some of the students, for others the level of challenge inherent in this approach was too great.

So, whilst Rachel does value tutor input, this is not to the exclusion of the value she continues to place on peer support and peer learning. This can be seen as a continuation of those earlier dispositions to peer learning that developed when she was at school. The coterie of friends working together to pass their GCSEs finds an echo in the way in which the small group of students for this module encouraged and helped one another through their use of Yammer. Rachel was perhaps better prepared to exploit the opportunities this presented than others in the group, since Yammer had formed an important part of the BA in Education and Professional Development, a blended learning course that sought to support and extend learning through ongoing, online dialogue between Day Schools. This meant that she 'didn't need time to get [her] head round it.' Conversely, as an undergraduate, Rachel had felt that the 'technology and all that stuff' was 'something new and a bit scary to start with.' This meant that, at first, she had decided to 'just have a look at it' with no real expectation of gaining anything or of contributing to it but then had found that once she began to use it, it was 'a different story.' Growing curiosity and recognition of the benefits of participation had made of her a convert and she regularly visited and contributed to the BA Yammer network throughout her undergraduate studies. Some worries did, however, persist; about 'what people might think about you' when you 'weren't so much confident academically and were afraid to put something academic on there.'

This being said, Rachel felt that the intense activity on Yammer during the delivery of the module was the 'best time' for her on Yammer. She describes it as being 'a little community' arguing that it was 'good because the module was <u>about</u> it as well.' The fact that it was both the medium for and the subject of the module provided an added incentive to participate and this incentive had proved enough to encourage the development of interesting, engaging and productive dialogue from which Rachel felt she had learnt a great deal.

Rachel also reports the fragmented, ephemeral and sometimes chaotic nature of the discussion in Yammer, but where others experienced this as problematic, she enjoyed it; 'There was always lots of stuff happening and it was really fun.' Despite the highly variable level of engagement of her peers on the module, Rachel's perception was that 'everybody embraced it,' and that the exchanges that resulted gave her material, ideas and experiences that enabled her to complete her reflective assignment to a good standard. Whilst she conceded that the distractions inherent in multiple conversations going on at once could make it difficult, she grasped the fact that reflecting on this 'was the module - I am doing this stuff to learn about this stuff!' She liked the way that this 'really got you thinking about things' and the direction, encouragement, pointers and questions from me as tutor were sufficient for her to feel confident to continue.

Throughout the whole of Rachel's account, there's the sense of a determined will to succeed that enables her to deal with challenges of this nature and defeat the odds, summed up in the attitude expressed when she says of Yammer 'well it was difficult and I didn't really know what I was doing, but I just thought, "This is what I've got to do, so I'm just going to get on and do it!"' In terms of her patterns of engagement, this entailed shutting herself away in a study at home to work on Yammer, deliberately separate from her work environment and from her family. Whilst she did say that she intermittently had 'a quick flick through' on a mobile device whilst travelling or before falling asleep at night, typically, Rachel accessed Yammer on a laptop at her desk. Whilst she describes Yammer as 'fun' and 'interesting,' in contrast to Jack and Grace who experienced an overlap with work and Molly who reports regular incursions of Yammer into her family life, Rachel quite clearly delineates it from other areas of her life and wanted to make sure it didn't 'take over.' 'It was part of study.' She noted how frequently I seemed to be on the site and how quickly I tended to respond, alluding to the fact that she was not constantly there herself. On the rare occasions when her husband saw her using it, he teased her that she was wasting time on Facebook to which she'd responded light-heartedly, 'No, I'm studying!' She characterises this as 'not a big thing' and says in the main, her colleagues, friends and family were completely unaware that she was studying in this way.

However, there were aspects of the online experience that Rachel found challenging, including the frequency and nature of Jack's contribution. An early exchange saw Jack engaging in some Socratic questioning, asking me to justify why I had posted ground rules (Figure 11, pp. 107-109). Rachel says of this, 'Jack wound me up at first. I thought, "Why did you do that? Why did you put that on there?"' Interestingly, Rachel had contributed to this exchange in what amounted to a defence of my actions. This showed a robust, proactive and confident willingness to take on challenging discussions

in ways that others in the network were far less likely to do. Being more at home in Yammer through her former studies on the BA, some of which had involved robust exchanges with opinionated peers, as well as the willingness to countenance being at odds with her school friends that developed earlier, may have enabled Rachel to do this to a greater degree than others in the network. Similarly, she had often felt that Jack was talking over her head: 'Most of the time I don't have a clue what he's talking about.' But again, here, Rachel habitually shows willingness to question and challenge, showing little of the anxiety around revealing a lack of understanding that Grace, for example, found to be such a disincentive.

Jack also habitually engaged in one-word exchanges with me, with Rachel, with Molly and perhaps with others through the direct messaging functions of Yammer. Both Rachel and Molly experienced this as novel, puzzling and even disconcerting behaviour. Younger than both Rachel and Molly, Jack's teens had coincided with the advent of early instant messaging applications such as MSN©, in which it is entirely typical behaviour to 'poke' someone to see if they are there and willing to respond, using a single word, such as 'Hi!' or 'What's up?' This propensity arguably amounts to a kind of digital literacy that depends on the extent to which instant messaging forms part of participants' prior experiences of online exchange. In Bourdieusian terms this can form part of the capital of the individual within a digital field. It also reveals a level of un-guardedness, comfort and confidence in the use of technology as a medium for communication, strongly contrasted, for example, with Grace's arduous drafting and redrafting of contributions and with Ava's self-consciously formal utterances within Yammer (see Chapter 14). Again, Rachel and Molly appear to lie at the midpoint between these two extremes. Though they found it strange at first when Jack nudged them with a direct message, they were willing to accommodate that discomfort and engage with him on his own terms and developed new ways of interacting with him as a peer.

When prompted to offer a metaphor to sum up her online experience, Rachel struggled at first to come up with something. She tried out several metaphors, considering in what ways they worked and in what ways they fell short as an adequate reflection of what Yammer was like. She first offered the idea of a coffee shop, conjuring the social and informal aspects of the experience and the idea that you could 'drop in' for a 'chat' whenever you felt like it. However, she rejects this as an entirely accurate metaphor because of her experience of building relationships with people she had never met, which had been a feature of her experiences in Yammer as an undergraduate. In particular, she recalls 'getting to know and appreciate' one of the more vocal and articulate students on the BA, who was studying at a different centre and whom she didn't meet until much later in the course. Coffee shops, she argues, don't encourage you to walk up

to strangers and strike up a conversation, or to interrupt a conversation that is already in full flow.

To accommodate this idea of striking up a relationship with a stranger, Rachel moves on to saying that in some ways engaging in Yammer was 'like having a pen friend. But a quick and instant one,' but she rejects this because, while it portrays the disembodied and geographically distanced nature of the exchange, it does not sufficiently represent the social aspects, where multiple voices can talk across one another.

To adjust for this, Rachel offers the metaphor of a staffroom in a school or college, where people come in and out at lots of different times, where they have a shared endeavour and field of experience that unites them and provides a subject for conversation and where you might sit with old friends or you might join in with conversations with those who you do not yet know well. She settles on this as the most adequate metaphor though later in the interview she says that it was an experience that unfolded over time 'like a journey;' one that threw up pleasant surprises: 'It's good isn't it? It's like all little bits. It's like a sweet at the bottom of my bag.'

The way in which Rachel experienced Yammer, then, in common with the other participants depends on, I argue, her continuing dispositions towards learning developed at school and to her dispositions to learning in social media through prior studies. In Chapters 13 to 15 of this thesis, these dispositions will be related to those of others and to the wider context for the use of educational technology and social media learning.

Chapter 11: Hadeel

Table 26: Hadeel's self-description

Gender	Age	Participants' own descriptions of their online persona
Male	30-39	Helpful

Introduction

Hadeel, who is in his thirties, is studying as an international student in the UK. He comes from Oman where he works as a teacher and was studying with the intention of returning to Oman on completion of his Master of Education. At the Day School, Hadeel played a relatively low-key role in the proceedings, though he did offer responses from time to time, particularly regarding the technical or pragmatic benefits of using the Internet in teaching. It was at this point that it became clear that he was a keen technophile and was strongly focussed on acquiring technical and pedagogical expertise that would be transferable to Oman and this took precedence over the critical exploration of educational technology and the broader sociological theories that were also part of the module. This preference was played out and reinforced by the tenor of his contributions online and by his portfolio of reflections submitted for the module assignment, which also had a strong technological focus. Hadeel had a transactional relationship with the module and its contents, seeing it as means to gain the UK qualification that would have a high exchange value in the Omani education system, as well as a means to gain from the technical and pedagogical 'use value' that formed part, though clearly not all of the course.

Hadeel's English was still developing as he made progress through the module and it was clear that he had not yet fully mastered the language, either in speech or in writing. His use of English suggested that he was sometimes engaged in constructing direct translations that reflected his native language's idioms and sentence structures, rather than fluently using English idiom and grammar. This meant that his utterances were error-prone and though the main purport of his contributions was always clear and intelligent, he was not consistently or wholly successful at conveying the complexity and nuance of his ideas, though we were able to work on drawing these out together during tutorials and for the final assignment. This difficulty arose from a combination of limitations on his vocabulary and from grammatical errors, such as conjugating verbs incorrectly or confused word order. For example, when sharing a link to an article on Yammer he said, 'I have found this article about use an approach for evaluate an

educational materials. I hope it is helpful (sic).' This was representative of his contributions.

This difficulty with language also influenced the interview. I asked Hadeel, as I had with all the other participants, to offer a metaphor or simile for his online experiences. I endeavoured to give a clear explanation of what I meant by a metaphor or simile, giving some examples to illustrate the principle. In response to this, Hadeel said that Yammer was like 'a wheel to success,' and when encouraged to expand upon this, offered comments that evoked the sense of simultaneous travel and development. I formed the impression that this was a metaphor which may have been clearer in Hadeel's first language than he was able to convey in English. However, as with discussions of his schooling, his replies offered less in the way of nuance and detail than those of other participants and his word choice and order also left some scope for ambiguity and confusion. Moreover, he was unfailingly respectful to me as his teacher and this, no doubt, also influenced the tenor of his responses to me in interview. Whilst I endeavoured to encourage Hadeel to critique the module and the experience of learning online, the interpretation of his experience offered in this chapter, then, should be read in light of this dynamic and the limitations to the interview process outlined above.

Schooling and experience of the module

Table 27: Hadeel's use of Yammer

Posts		Replies		Likes	
Number	% of all posts in network	Number received	% chance of a reply	Number received	% chance of a 'like'
36	4	33	92	37	103

Table 28: Hadeel's responses to the questionnaire

Typical duration of visits	15 to 30 minutes
Frequency of visits	More than once a day
Type of Yammer activity	Clicked on 'like'
	Sent direct (private) messages to other participants
	Contributed to an existing thread on the main network page
	Used the search function
Where and how Yammer was accessed	Smartphone at home, at work & travelling
Perceived impact of Yammer	No perceived impact on the patterns of work or home life
Worries and anxieties	None reported
Perceived impact on learning	Large positive impact on learning with rare instances of confusion arising out of Yammer that did not generally lead to

	new learning
Perceived benefits of Yammer	Practical advice from others
	Help with understanding concepts that were new to me
	Emotional support
	Thought provoking ideas
	Community spirit
Open question for any other comments...	No comment

Despite the additional layer of challenge that studying in another language entailed, Hadeel was strongly motivated by values that centred on sharing and collaboration. He was unfailingly generous in posting to Yammer any resources that he had found to be useful and even in sharing his own assignments for peer review and feedback. He was also clearly motivated by the desire to apply what he learnt of UK teaching methods to bring about what he saw as improvements and development within that Omani context.

This is part of a wider pattern in the current conjuncture in which what might be thought of as Western or UK pedagogies of student-centred and technology-enhanced learning are being emulated in other educational systems to 'improve' those systems and their outcomes. It is a trend which is loosely predicated on the skills agenda and the perceived need to develop flexible knowledge workers for the new, global economy (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Olssen & Peters, 2005). In educational fields that have previously been strongly wedded to highly didactic approaches, such as in the Middle East and China, this shift is seen by many education professionals and policy makers as an imperative (Donn & al-Man<u>tr</u>ī, 2010; Mok, 2013; Ngok & Guo, 2008), an emphasis that is clearly apparent in the following quotations from Hadeel's assignment:

> The transmission model of learning is no longer appropriate as the emphasis shifts towards students becoming more autonomous in their own learning. Facebook, properly managed, can enable such a development. This shift to student-centred learning has various positive outcomes.

This student-centred, technology-enhanced pedagogy is strongly at odds with the education that Hadeel had experienced as a boy, which was characterised by large class sizes of up to 45, in which the teacher and the text were framed as the font of all knowledge. In Hadeel's words, 'In the past only the teacher has all things the idea.' There were extremely limited opportunities to ask questions or engage in discussion. Disappointingly, it proved difficult to explore Hadeel's schooling and familial background in interview in the same level of detail as the other participants, because I was not able to question him in Arabic and because we conducted the interview over an internet connection that had lag and intermittent connection. What is clear, however, is that

Omani education has undergone remarkably rapid development since the nineteen-seventies. In 1970, Oman had only three schools with 900 students, all of whom were boys. There were only 30 teachers, half of whom held qualifications lower than a GCSE and only 8% of whom were qualified to degree level. At this time just over half of Omani men and only 11% of Omani women were literate. By 2014, the education system had grown to over a thousand schools, with approximately 55,000 teachers, 83% of whom were University-educated. There were over 500,000 students, half of whom were girls. Despite these leaps forward, educational outcomes are still poor, the curriculum is 'overcrowded and heavily content-laden and the means of delivery are narrow and dull' (Al Shabibi & Silvennoinen, 2015, p. 2). Teacher education is seen as insufficiently practical with 'a severe lack in the use of student-centred learning approaches, with teachers continuing to show a preference towards teacher-centred learning' (Al Shabibi & Silvennoinen, 2015, p. 2).

This ongoing state of affairs illustrates the kind of persistence in patterns of behaviour that James and Biesta note in their work on learning cultures. Their theory, 'conceives of learning not as something which happens in the heads, minds or brains of students but ... as something that happens in and "through" social practices' (Avis, Fisher, & Thompson, 2014, p. 81). They make use of Bourdieu's notions of field and habitus as well as Lave and Wenger on communities of practice (2012) to argue that the cultural context of learning is more than a backdrop to the educational experiences of students. Instead, it must be understood as a cultural practice in its own right. Hadeel's case presents us with a striking example of someone who has to traverse learning cultures and adjust to the radically different fields in which he finds himself. The challenge is not merely one of adopting new strategies or acquiring language but also one of turning into a different kind of learner, in which learning is seen,

> "as becoming" (Colley et al. 2003), in which the self is transformed by a particular learning culture, developing socially approved ways of thinking, feeling and behaving. As Lave and Wenger (1991: 53) observe, "learning involves the construction of identities," so that knowledge, social membership and identity are inextricably linked (Avis et al., 2014, p. 81).

An example is the way in which Hadeel appeared to be strongly influenced by notions of good manners and a desire to show respect and appreciation in all his dealings with me as his tutor and with his peers. This made him extremely pleasant to work with and a real asset to the group in terms of generating a supportive ethos. However, it did lead me to question the validity of some of his reflections, such as the questionnaire response that *nothing* about Yammer worried him, since I felt that he was keen always to

emphasise the unproblematic and positive aspects of his experience on the module and to minimise or downplay any negatives. One instance of this was that during the interview, he frequently turned his answers about his schooling into reflections on how his experience on the module might be used in making things 'better,' in Oman, rather than dwelling in detail on his memories of school. This fed the narrative that he was keen to construct of his UK education studies as an antidote to or even panacea for what he framed as the ills of his own system and this, too, was congruent with his desire to show gratitude and respect for the Master of Education course and its outcomes.

Manners were also a strong component of Hadeel's online interactions as is evident in this extended exchange that followed on from his sharing of his draft assignment for peer review (Figure 17).

Jack

Hi Hadeel do you want any feedback?

👍 LIKE   ↩ REPLY   ◁ SHARE   •••

Hadeel

Thank you

👍 LIKE   ↩ REPLY   ◁ SHARE   •••

Jack

Thanks for sharing your essay, i'm going to say what I thought about it, but don't feel you have to listen to me, I have no authority and I am mostly just thinking about what you wrote. I would ask these questions to you:
How is facebook used with behaviourism? I know you can put a like on something, and that could be linked but surely constructivism is easy to use when considering knowledge construction here, and social constructivism? Even when someone writes something we consider 'wrong' we may click 'like?' Isn't that interesting semiotically? What is being said by like? Is it that 'I like this?' or as you say in semiotics something can be understood by what it is not, although interestingly for facebook the absence of like is not available, there is no 'dislike' button, what does that do when we consider knowledge construction? Do I either agree with everything or disagree passively? Also, how is knowledge created from an epistomological perspective, could this be linked to rationalism in some way? That we come to learn things through shared debate? Also how do you know that blue is calm?

best

👍 LIKE   ↩ REPLY   ◁ SHARE   •••

Rachel, Hadeel and Molly like this

Jack

You can add something from here about colour if it helps.

ONSHIP BETWEEN COLOR AND EMOTION: A STUDY OF COLLEGI
Epps, Helen H
dent Journal; Sep 2004; 38, 3; ProQuest Art, Design and Architecture Collection

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COLOR AND EMOTION: A
STUDY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

Naz Kaya, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Helen H. Epps, Ph.D.
Professor

PDF

emotions and colour

All Network › Files   •••

👍 LIKE   ↩ REPLY   ◁ SHARE   •••

Molly
Here's

LIKE   REPLY   SHARE   ...
Jack likes this

Rachel
Hi Hadeel thank you for sharing. I won't be able to read today but will read as soon as I get my own report done. I always go through the module requirments as a last check before submitting just to make sure I've not missed anything :)

LIKE   REPLY   SHARE   ...
Hadeel and Molly like this

Cheryl Reynolds
Wow. I'm feeling that we should do more peer feedback at draft stage since Jack and Molly both came up with some great points that I didn't identify. We had some useful discussions, didn't we Hadeel but I don't think we covered these points, which if you decide to act upon could have a positive impact in your final submission. Timing is difficult now, though isn't it so message me if you want to discuss.

It's very helpful that you have posted your work. Research shows that feeding back to peers actually is enormously helpful in enabling people to look more objectively at their own work, though less optimistic about the impact of receiving such feedback. In other words, it's better to give than to receive :)

If interested in peer feedback, see http://www.reap.ac.uk/Resources.aspx and in particular the work of David Nicol et al on the REAP project.

REAP > Resources
This section provides a copy of all the papers in the REAP resources section as well as papers relevant to the PEER project..
www.reap.ac.uk   ...

LIKE   REPLY   SHARE   EDIT ...
Hadeel and Jack like this

Jack
Reap the rewards of giving.

LIKE   REPLY   SHARE   ...
Molly likes this

Figure 17: Responses to Hadeel's assignment

Note here Hadeel's repeated thanks for and 'likes' of all the input from his peers and from me as the tutor. He refrains, however, from commenting upon that input so it is unclear whether he has found it materially helpful or not and this is characteristic of Hadeel's behaviour throughout the period of online interaction for the module. This kind of polite passivity is explored in more detail in Chapter 14, arguing that it is potentially a consequence of what I describe in that chapter as a digital hiatus. Also of note is that Hadeel has offered his assignment as *help* to others, not as a request for help: 'This is my work. I hope it can help,' but all of his peers respond by offering help *to him* of various kinds. Jack and Molly both adopt a collaborative rhetoric that would sit well within a broadly humanist, Rogerian pedagogy (Teich, 1992), rather than an overly didactic tone, but the tenor of their contributions is 'teacherly,' nonetheless. As tutor, I reinforce this as an appropriate set of responses by characterising their contributions as good peer feedback, although I do try at least to highlight the benefits that might accrue to the reviewer as well as to the reviewed.

This episode, in which Hadeel's peers perform the role of teacher to help him is characteristic of their online interactions and is noticeably more pronounced than when they work together face-to-face. Nobody corrected his spoken grammar in class, but they did do this online, as is illustrated in the following exchange (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Jack correcting Hadeel's grammar

Whilst the learning benefits that Jack intends and Hadeel acknowledges in his final comment are apparent (Figure 19), what is also apparent is that his attempts to engage

in a conversation of equals, where each offers their own viewpoint can be redirected into a focus on development and correction of language. This may explain, in part, that Hadeel's one suggestion for an improvement to the online interaction was a desire for more video conferencing and more multimedia exchanges of audio and video in place of text; a consequence, perhaps, of his struggles with written English, or of a sense that spoken exchanges did not generally expose him to the same level of scrutiny as written ones.
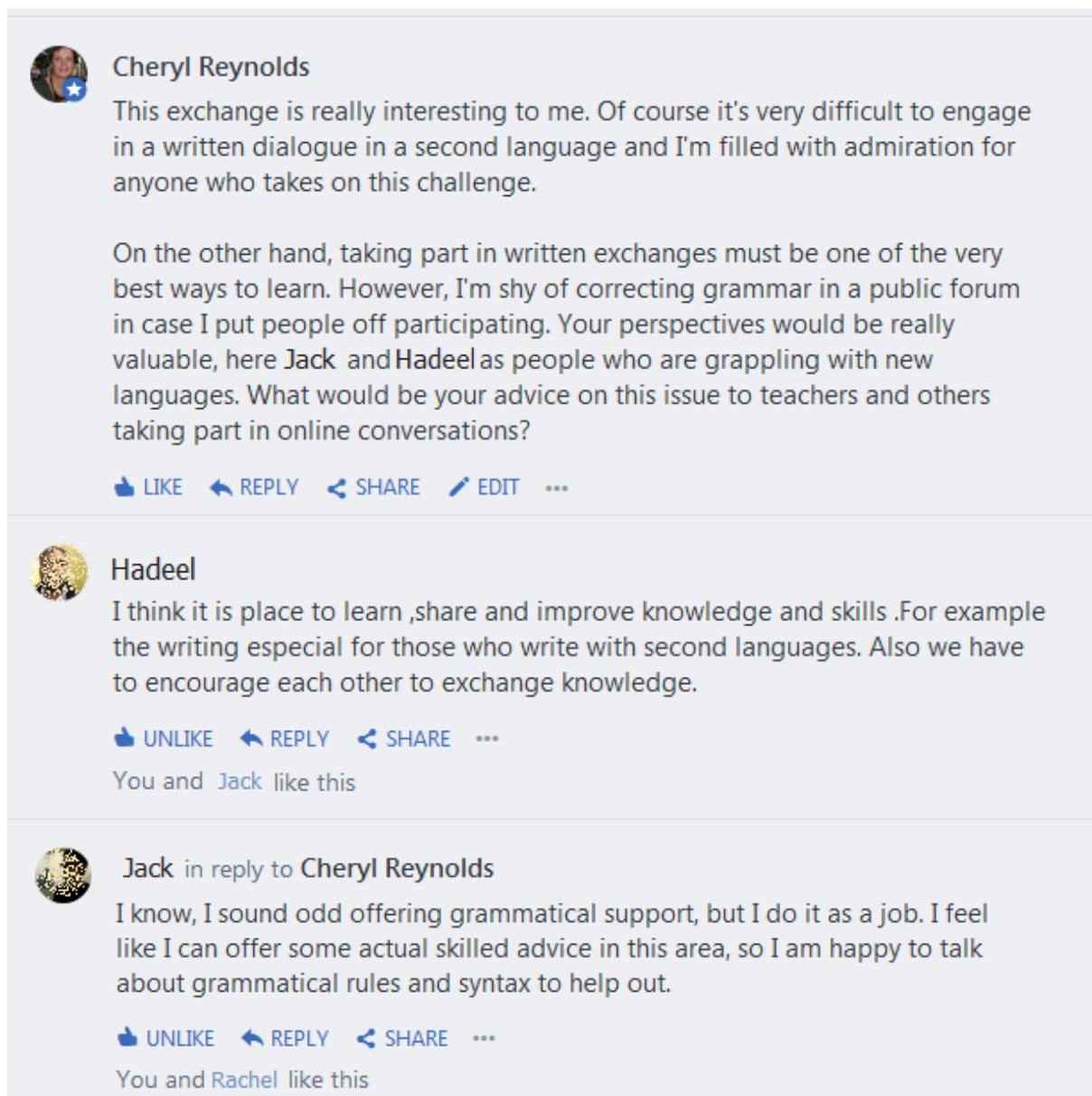
Cheryl Reynolds

This exchange is really interesting to me. Of course it's very difficult to engage in a written dialogue in a second language and I'm filled with admiration for anyone who takes on this challenge.

On the other hand, taking part in written exchanges must be one of the very best ways to learn. However, I'm shy of correcting grammar in a public forum in case I put people off participating. Your perspectives would be really valuable, here Jack and Hadeel as people who are grappling with new languages. What would be your advice on this issue to teachers and others taking part in online conversations?

👍 LIKE ↩ REPLY ⪪ SHARE ✏ EDIT ⋯

Hadeel

I think it is place to learn ,share and improve knowledge and skills .For example the writing especial for those who write with second languages. Also we have to encourage each other to exchange knowledge.

👍 UNLIKE ↩ REPLY ⪪ SHARE ⋯
You and Jack like this

Jack in reply to **Cheryl Reynolds**

I know, I sound odd offering grammatical support, but I do it as a job. I feel like I can offer some actual skilled advice in this area, so I am happy to talk about grammatical rules and syntax to help out.

👍 UNLIKE ↩ REPLY ⪪ SHARE ⋯
You and Rachel like this

Figure 19: Cheryl questioning online grammatical correction

Nonetheless, Hadeel reported none of the disorientation that others describe around the ephemeral and divergent nature of discussion within the social media environment. He says in interview that he enjoyed the sharing of information from many sources and

appreciated the assistance he gained in completing his assignments. He cited Yammer as a continuing source of help even after the module was over and he liked the way in which people were willing to continue to help each other in this way. With the proviso that the emphasis should be on learning, he saw a clear applicability of this disposition to help others through social media to his own teaching context in Oman and his second assignment for the module was an exploration of the caveats and more particularly the benefits of using Facebook in that context. He saw Facebook and other similar platforms as particularly useful because they are widely available as mobile applications, not requiring a PC with a reliable internet connection, which he described as being problematic in Oman. On the other hand, most Omanis have a mobile device and he saw this as an important way to reach them with information and to draw them into a dialogue about their learning. His intention was to create a training package for Omani teachers on using social media as a teaching and learning platform, drawing on his experiences of and his reading around these practices on the Master of Education course.

Aspects that he said were useful in this regard were the way in which I had modelled teaching online, with quick responses to activity in the network throughout the period of online study and what he characterised as my supportive disposition towards all the students throughout. Similarly, he felt that the ground rules which we negotiated at the first Day School and which I later posted online were very helpful.

A further benefit that Hadeel pointed out was that he said he was more likely to ask questions in Yammer than in face-to-face exchanges. However, an analysis of the different types of interactions in which he engaged shows that only 6% of his contributions were questions. Every other response was to offer resources to help others, to thank people for what they had contributed or to respond to a direct question from another participant. There is evidently, then, a disparity between what Hadeel professes to see as a benefit of learning in social media and his actual practice, raising the question of why might a student in Hadeel's position report benefits that they had never actually experienced?

In summary, Hadeel was extremely polite at all times, he had a strong and pragmatic focus on the benefits of educational technology and their transferability to less developed countries (Figure 20) and he refrained entirely from any description of the actions or words of others as being in any way challenging or difficult for him. Performing such a role is a rational response to the didactic and authoritarian schooling that Hadeel experienced as a boy, where dissent of any kind, even justified or principled dissent, was not to be countenanced. Though the ground rules to which Hadeel signed up explicitly encouraged asking questions and acting as critical friends to one another, Hadeel's

Figure 20: Hadeel's attitude to technologies

interactions show that he prefers not to fully occupy this role. The field is at odds both with dispositions acquired much earlier in his education and with his current values around participative culture and pedagogies and this points, perhaps, to something of a mismatch between habitus and field. This unfailingly positive and resilient disposition towards learning is arguably what enabled Hadeel to successfully navigate the challenges of a markedly different learning culture to that of his schooling, as well as learning in a new language and in the novel field of social media learning. Reflections on the impact of language thrown up by this case will be further explored in Chapters 13 to 15.

Chapter 12: Molly

Table 29: Molly's self-description

Gender	Age	Participants' own descriptions of their online persona
Female	40-49	'Gobby!' Friendly, supportive and helpful

Introduction

Molly is forty years old. A mother of two young children, she had previously followed a range of careers from hospitality and leisure management, through training within a business environment to her current role as a Teacher Educator in a Further Education college in the North of England, teaching students who are themselves working towards qualifications to teach in the Lifelong Learning sector. A shared understanding of learning theory and a corresponding interest in the pedagogy of what we were doing were, therefore, a feature of my interactions with Molly throughout the delivery of the module. She was unfailingly keen to make the most of whatever learning opportunities were offered and to relate these to her wider project of self-development as well as to her own teaching. The Master of Education qualification was important to her in terms of its exchange value in that it was a requirement for her to be able to teach Higher Education courses within her Further Education setting. In summary, she had a keen sense of enjoyment and fun coupled with a strong desire to 'prove herself' as a master's level scholar.

The 'narrative' that Molly provided in her interview was very full. She spoke rapidly throughout, explaining herself and her thoughts on the experience, often repeating herself to add emphasis, or asking herself rhetorical questions to work through her thoughts out loud. This gave something of a quality of a 'stream of consciousness' to her reflections which is reflected to some degree in this narrative.

Schooling

Molly's school story is one that can be characterised as one of 'not quite fitting in' and having to play 'catch-up.' Many of her utterances include the words 'catching up,' whether she is referring to the past or to her current studies. At primary school she had whooping cough, which resulted in a six-month absence. She was provided with a home-tutor who liaised with the school. Molly ascribes her ongoing struggles to master the language as arising at this period of her life, for example, the way that she has to stop and think, if she is writing quickly during an observation, about whether she should be writing 'where' with an 'h.' She feels that her lack of confidence around spelling and

grammar was because these kinds of basics were not 'embedded' because of her early extended absence from school. Thereafter, Molly had developed an abiding sense of playing 'catch up' that to some degree persists up to the present.

Despite this, Molly's recalled her primary education as a happy time. She described the school as 'villagey' and her time there as 'naive... innocent... nice.' Secondary school was much more difficult and being bullied was a feature of her time there. She described herself as, 'too short, wrong hair, the wrong school tie, buck teeth and lots of things wrong.' The school seemed to her to be very large and rough and she feels her parents were insufficiently aware of how difficult the environment was for her. Most of her references to her attitude to education at the time single her out from others. She saw herself as 'old fashioned' at school and likens herself to a character from the Enid Blyton series of novels about the private girls' school, *Malory Towers*, in an old Castle on the South Coast of England. That she uses this comparison is interesting, in that the heroine, Darrell Rivers, joins the school two terms behind the others and so the theme of 'catching-up' is reflected there, too. Further, there was a significant disparity between the 'rough' reality of this school and the standards of manners and behaviours to which she aspired, that would have been more at home in an Enid Blyton novel. As an example, she consistently showed respect for her teachers and was keen to behave well. On one occasion, she submitted to peer-pressure and behaved badly along with the rest of the class, only to stay behind at the end of the session to apologise to the teacher.

However, as a backdrop to these ongoing difficulties, there is a constant theme of personal aspiration and self-improvement that led to rewarding and enjoyable experiences; notably being part of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Other aspects of her life where she excelled included taking part in professional Scottish dancing to a very high standard and in amateur dramatics. These, she feels, 'kept her on a balance,' ameliorating the more troublesome experiences of her teenage years at school. She also referred to 'the see-saw of life,' and her efforts to accept with equanimity all the ups and downs it brings.

It was clear that Molly saw the bullying she experienced at secondary school as an important feature of that time: 'I was very badly bullied at school,' which she believed influenced her development into being something of a fighter and a very 'competitive person.' Though she clearly found direct confrontation of the bullies to be beyond her, it spurred her on to succeed in her out-of-school activities. She describes her current studies as being part of a project to 'prove the bullies wrong.' As a young adult and having graduated from University and worked in a professional context for several years, she returned to her home town and was asked to take part in an open event at her old

school on behalf of the College at which she works. Despite normally being happy to contribute to such events, on this occasion she made up an excuse of a family commitment and did not attend because she found the idea of going back into the school too difficult. Indeed, it took her four years to be able to drive past the school rather than taking a longer route. She does not keep in contact with those who bullied her in school but takes a delight in having achieved 'more than them' when she learns about their lives through others on Facebook and elsewhere and she ascribes this more to her consistent hard work than to natural ability.

In choosing subjects at fourteen, Molly rejected the advice of her parents and staff at school and followed a course of 'prevocational studies' rather than another GCSE. Partly enticed by the 'fantastic teacher' who adopted more interesting techniques for teaching, she ascribes to this period her fascination with pedagogy and with making learning accessible to others. She did well on this programme and along with her successes in Scottish country dancing and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme, this shaped her sense that success in life 'is a lot about self-belief' and the courage to 'keep persisting to getting to gold,' especially in the face of difficulty or negativity from others. She characterises this sense of the importance of courage to keep trying and a determined self-belief as a slow realisation that grew out of a long series of cumulative successes, during those formative years at secondary school and through her time at University. These attitudes remain evident in the way in which Molly participated in Yammer, being a regular visitor and contributor, even when she felt she might be exposing a lack of understanding through her posts.

Molly's characterisation of herself as a 'battler' is also congruent with familial influences. The support and modelling she had seen through her family members appeared important to her and, having studied Bourdieu as part of the module, she described the gains her family had made over time in terms of their social and cultural capital. One example of this was the 'big impetus' of watching her father's change in career from being a plumber to teaching plumbing as a sessional tutor at several different institutions. She saw him working hard, preparing teaching materials the night before and thought, 'If he can do it, I can do it.' That aspect of working hard to achieve was repeated throughout the interview and when Molly won a trophy for hard work at school she remembered her father's pride in her achievement and his praise that 'you've got that trophy forever. Nobody can take that away from you.'

Molly, however, wanted to excel in terms of outcomes as well as hard work and admitted to a secret desire to win the achievement trophy, rather than the trophy for effort. As in the case of Grace and her experience, the distinction between hard work and innate

excellence, that also affected me as a child, was keenly felt by Molly. It is arguably a cultural arbitrary, which is typified in Archer and Francis' (2007) distinction between the 'pathologised' and the 'ideal' student. Molly characterises her progress through the educational system in ways that acknowledge many of the qualities of the pathologised student. However, she continues to aspire to the ideal, sometimes achieving it, despite the associated behaviours lying outside her comfort zone. This disposition, too, is reflected in her online participation, which is far more active and vocal than Grace's even though this frequently engenders some feelings of worry and insecurity. Molly, then, adopts behaviours of Archer and Francis' 'ideal' student, even though she recognises that this is a gambit that exposes her to potential judgement and to 'getting it wrong.' She does so because she is tenacious about learning and making progress.

This background strongly informs both Molly's disposition towards her master's level study and her work as a teacher educator. She frequently cites her modest GCSE grades in the classroom to motivate the trainee teachers on her sub-degree Certificate of Education course, many of whom have come from non-academic backgrounds. She does this to provide them with an example of how far it is possible to progress in academe from unexceptional beginnings. Molly's A Level grades were similar, being three grade Es, and she frequently cites the impact of her work as a teacher educator as an antidote to these moderate achievements: 'I get my confidence through my students. So, them doing well enables me to believe in me.'

Molly's first degree was a continuation of the theme of 'playing catch-up' identified earlier in this account. Her grades meant that she was unable to take up a place at her preferred University to become a primary school teacher. Even though she did go on to study to become a teacher elsewhere, after eight months she felt that this was not the place or the career for her and transferred to a Hospitality Management degree. She was starting late once again, having missed a substantial proportion of the first year. Added to this, those who had taken the programme as a first choice had higher A level grades than Molly so that she spent a great deal of time feeling academically 'not good enough;' here, too, bolstering her confidence through the knowledge that she had far more practical experience gained through bar work than most of her contemporaries. The peer support of a close friendship with a girl of similar background, grappling with similar insecurities in terms of academic performance, was extremely important to Molly at this time and values around collaborative learning and peer support appeared to strongly motivate Molly's contributions to Yammer as part of this module.

Moreover, Molly relates what she describes as a decisive turning point in her undergraduate studies, when, after sitting through a series of puzzling lectures given to

large groups in a lecture hall and with the support of her trusted friend, she managed to muster the courage to stop the lecturer mid-explanation and ask him a question. Though fearful that he and her peers would judge her harshly because of this, she decided that this mattered less than gaining the answers that she needed. In the event, she was surprised by the positive responses both of the lecturer, who said he was grateful to find that someone was interested enough to ask a question and of her peers who said that they were grateful for the clarification her question had elicited. From this point on, she had adopted a more pro-active and vocal role in her own education.

However, notions of being something of a 'misfit' followed Molly throughout her University career and into her working life. Having worked in a variety of roles across catering, assessing and eventually training others, she eventually moved into a role in which she taught people who were training to assess energy certificates for house sales. Presenting to large groups, made up mostly of males who were substantially older than her and from the South of England, she felt that they were asking themselves, 'What can this little Northern woman know about what we do?' She was conscious that they had far more practical experience of the material covered than she did, but she strove to carry it off nonetheless. On becoming a teacher educator, she had felt a similar sense of being under-qualified, particularly in terms of learning theory but felt that she had gained mastery of these concepts through research, application and a tenacious determination to make these ideas accessible to others.

Molly works hard to apply lessons learnt from her own, earlier reticence in classroom and lecture hall scenarios, when she felt unable to ask for clarification of things that she did not understand: 'I'm constantly thinking of me not getting things at university, not putting my hand up in class, not being that way, so I'm conscious when I'm teaching of the need to get people talking and I am constantly asking things.' From her own lived experience, she feels that what her students need is to develop the confidence to believe in themselves and their own abilities and that this kind of self-belief will enable them to assimilate knowledge much more effectively. Similarly, as a student of the Master of Education course and within Yammer, Molly felt that it was vital to make the most of all opportunities to discuss ideas and ask questions. Moreover, she felt that the ethos of the course and the community of scholars was supportive and she, therefore, felt secure in the environment and able to 'ask questions and we wouldn't be made to feel stupid.'

Some of Molly's attitudes to education on the module appear to derive from her time at university. Whilst at secondary school, her habitual response was to 'conform,' at university she felt that she had been able to 'reinvent' herself as a more active and vocal learner. She carried this more active identity over into her work as a teacher educator

and as a master's student. Nonetheless, she feels that there were things she 'didn't get' when studying the module and she repeatedly refers to 'big gaps' in her knowledge. She ascribes those gaps variously to missing education, being too cowed to ask questions or even to 'a state of mind when you're learning [that determines] whether you assimilate new ideas or not.' She believes that all of these as factors that can be overcome with the right level of application or with a shift in disposition that Bourdieu would undoubtedly characterise as habitus. Molly attests to having found ways to convince herself that she is 'good enough' and alludes to coping strategies: 'I've done a little bit of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy... and I'm quite good at doing it myself now.'

Experience of Yammer

Table 30: Molly's use of Yammer

Posts		Replies		Likes	
Number	% of all posts in network	Number received	% chance of a reply	Number received	% chance of a 'like'
131	14	59	45	99	76

Table 31: Molly's responses to the questionnaire

Typical duration of visits	15 to 30 minutes
Frequency of visits	About once a day
Type of Yammer activity	Clicked on 'like'
	Sent direct (private) messages to other participants
	Initiated a conversation on the main network page
	Contributed to an existing thread on the main network page
	Took part in conversations within a sub-group of the network
	Tagged posts with topics
	Used the search function
Where and how Yammer was accessed	Tablet device at home (preferred)
	PC at work (occasional)
	Smartphone whilst travelling (occasional)
Perceived impact of Yammer	Significant perceived impact on the patterns of work and home life
Worries and anxieties	Other people's contributions
	My own contributions
	Keeping up with everything that happens
	Finding things that I want to recover
Perceived impact on learning	Large positive impact on learning with occasional instances of confusion arising out of Yammer that frequently lead to new learning
Perceived benefits of Yammer	Practical advice from others
	Help with understanding concepts that were new to me

	Emotional support
	Thought provoking ideas
	Fun
	Community spirit
Open question for any other comments...	Love it! Wished I could abandon email and use Yammer instead, or perhaps use it to supplement and enhance college communications.

Molly describes her experience of Yammer as a very positive one, 'because of the different way you taught it and the feeling that we could ask questions and we wouldn't be made to feel stupid.' She described her experience of using the platform as 'another way of learning,' and felt from the beginning that she had a clear understanding of the purpose of using Yammer as a platform for collaborative, open-ended, dialogic learning. She made much of the group setting of 'ground rules' so that it was seen as a collaborative and cooperative venture: 'we got that cohesive... "this is the reason we're doing it, we will be safe, it will be safe" feeling.'

Similarly, she interpreted Grace's posts as reminiscent of her own, earlier educational experiences: 'I knew that she perceived she wasn't as good as everybody else' and was able to identify with this feeling: 'you can feel very alienated and it is up to you to say, "Whoa! Can we just backtrack a bit and explain that?" But sometimes you feel very inferior to do that.' However, Molly reiterated how she had been able to overcome such feelings, becoming 'less fearful of what people will think now because I feel like I've got to do this for me, so just ignore what people think.'

Molly described strategies for handling some of the challenging affordances of Yammer, not least the need to categorise and filter content for later retrieval, which she did through creating separate folders to store threads for later reference. She also talked about the vital importance of feeling confident enough to 'pop back in and push that thread and ask, "Have you thought about reading this?"' She felt that her work as a Teacher Educator had enabled her to develop the confidence to ask open questions of the kind she might use in a classroom, to encourage the learning of others. She frequently saw Yammer both from the stance of a student of the Master of Education course and as a teacher in her own right, 'perceiving it as a student and also how I could use it myself as a tutor.' Molly describes how she would frequently analyse the pedagogy of what was happening online and wonder whether she could use the ideas in her own teaching, seeing the experience as a potential teaching resource in the manner of a 'magpie' and frequently slipping into the role of teacher in her interactions with peers: 'In my head, I think I'll always be a bossy, bossy organiser!' What she calls her 'teacher-voice' is often evident online; particularly in her sensitive handling of correcting Hadeel's

grammar or in attempting to use a robust sense of humour handle Jack's challenging contributions, which she describes as trying to 'out-Jack Jack.'

Molly also thought that Yammer had enabled her to make gains in terms of her social capital, building closer and more mutually supportive relationships with her peers on the course. She cites the instance of when another participant inadvertently posted a message about some challenging personal circumstances in the 'All Network' thread, instead of in a private message to me as the tutor. This had enabled her to connect more closely with the poster, which had led on to a visit to her place of work, developing into a friendly, supportive and scholarly and professional connection that would not otherwise have come about.

Molly liked the environment, feeling that it was sufficiently like Facebook to make it eminently engaging and accessible. Through frequent participation, she mastered the full range of affordances of the medium and frequently deployed them in combination to communicate and to manage the content that was building up rapidly as the module unfolded. She also spoke about adapting her register to suit the tenor of others' contributions, noting how her earlier posts were relatively long and informal but how she had adapted this in responding to Jack. She had made a deliberate decision to adopt his terse and quick-fire style of interaction, rehearsing how it felt to speak in this way and so that he could see how it felt. She also felt that he had reciprocated by adapting his style somewhat to suit her and had, therefore, felt a sense of affirmation and vindication in what she was doing.

Molly valued the diverse contributions that members of the community made to her own academic development. She felt that Jack had a large, positive influence on her learning and describes noting the strangeness of this when the only lasting contact she had with him was via Yammer and Facebook: 'All I have is this Jack entity!' Conversely, she made closer, real world connections with Grace and they would meet up face-to-face and discuss the module. She described how this had provided an impetus for her to produce some work for her assignment and described it as a turning point, after which she became more fully engaged in Yammer: 'I was on it all the time.'

Molly also discussed the way that social media colours language choices and to some extent, deplores the informality that it engenders. She sees widening her vocabulary as a lifelong project and keeps a notebook of new words and their definitions, endeavouring to introduce them into her conversation or written work at the first opportunity to more thoroughly assimilate them. Yammer provided another arena in which to rehearse this developing vocabulary. In this regard, she refers to the influence of her grandparents. Her grandfather had 'risen' from his role as a foundry-man to become a Justice of the

Peace and her grandmother placed a strong premium on correct use of English, frequently correcting Molly's grammar and pronunciation as a child. Molly also keeps lists of classic books that she aspires to read as part of this same project to acquire mastery of the language and of key works in the literary canon and links this with social standing: 'otherwise they are not going to take you seriously.'

This tenacious level of application as a continuous project of self-improvement links to Molly's frequent visits to Yammer during the module and this made a significant impact on the patterns of her home life. Typically, she would visit the platform late in the evening, often after having retired to bed, and then again first thing in the morning. Her husband, while not particularly interested, became engaged to a certain extent, because she would ask him to look up words so that she could understand what was going on. She described how her use of Yammer had provided the trigger for her husband to begin engaging regularly in Facebook and that this had represented a significant change during the module.

In summary, then, Molly whilst professing to some similar dispositions to Grace whilst at school, for a variety of reasons including familial influences, university friendships, professional roles and key moments in her progress through the system, had been able to assume a more active and vocal engagement with Yammer than Grace and to relate to others, forge supportive relationships and adapt her contributions as the module had unfolded. She had, therefore, enjoyed the experience and whilst acknowledging that it took up time and demanded commitment, affecting the patterns of her home life significantly, she felt that it had had a large positive impact on her learning and on her approaches to teaching her own students in online environments in the future.

Chapter 13: Effects of the medium on symbolic violence

In Chapter 4, I postulated that the medium might be expected to generate a hiatus effect, adapting Bourdieu's use of this term to describe a *digital* hiatus that my participants experienced when endeavouring to learn via social media. In this chapter and drawing on the narrative accounts that precede it, I expand on what I mean by digital hiatus. I also give a more detailed explanation of the sources of digital hiatus, setting it within the context of Bourdieu's ideas on social class and citing examples from my data. In doing so, I provide an answer to my research question on how the medium influences symbolic violence. I then go on in Chapters 14 and 15 to explore the nature of the attendant suffering that participants experienced. As explained in my methodology chapter, I am not seeking to describe all the possible forms of online symbolic violence nor do I hope to discover all the possible ways the medium might influence these forms. Rather I sought to establish what kinds of symbolic violence occurred for this group of six, key participants and the role the medium played in these occurrences. I do not seek, therefore, to make broad generalisations from my research. However, I do propose an index of digital capital that for these learners, typified the kinds of capital they needed to learn in an online, social media environment.

Bourdieu on social class

I constructed Figure 21, below, based on Bourdieu's conception of an orthogonal matrix of class conditions, which sums up his complex conception of social class (Wright, 2005, pp. 86–89). It shows how an individual's class condition can be plotted as the sum of their capital (cultural and economic) on the x axis against the ratio of cultural to economic capital that they possess on the y axis. Thus, two people might have an identical 'sum total' of economic and cultural capital, half way along the x-axis. However, one may be rich in material terms but culturally impoverished (the pink locus), whilst the other has little economic but an abundance of cultural capital (the yellow locus). Though their sum is the same, their class conditions are very different. Rather than seeing social class as a set of distinct categories, Bourdieu describes the space represented by the blue cube in Figure 21 as a universe of continuities with no lines of cleavage between classes. Each locus within this universe is 'a class condition,' which imprints a set of dispositions on its occupants; in other words, a habitus.
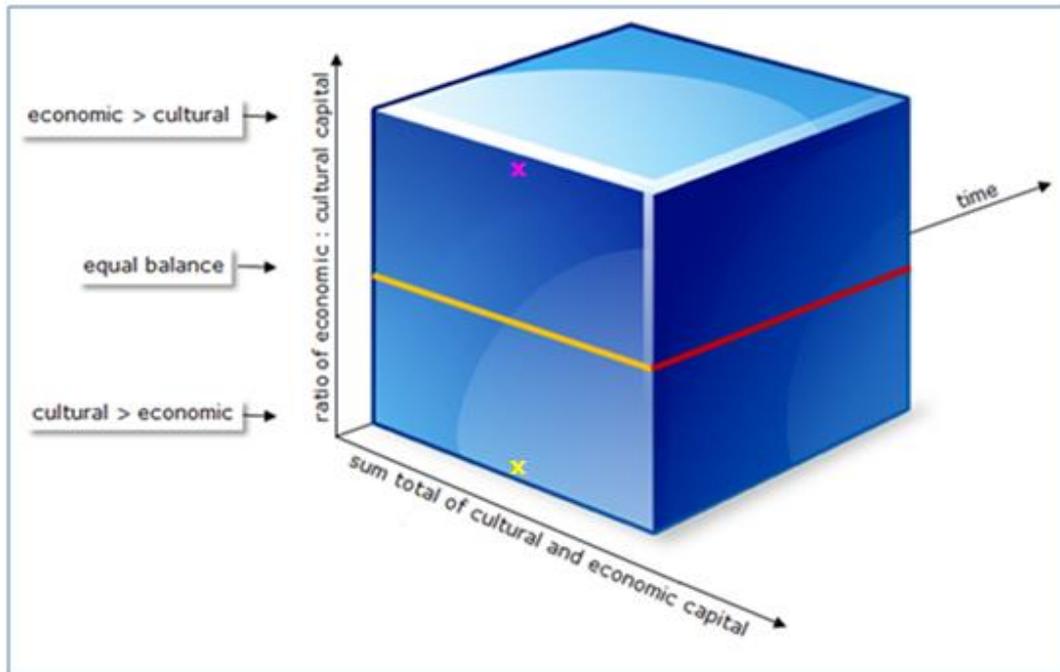
Figure 21: Bourdieu's orthogonal matrix of class conditions

What is relevant about this matrix for *this* study is the idea that alternative loci are inherently different in terms of their potential to make gains. Bourdieu's inclusion of a time axis implies trajectories; that people can acquire and lose cultural and economic capital over time and by doing so they take up new positions in the universe of continuities. The red line along the side of the cube in Figure 21, for example, represents the trajectory over time of an individual who has the highest possible sum of economic and cultural capital with an equal balance of each and retains this position over time. I argue that the way that online interaction impedes and accelerates such trajectories is qualitatively different from face-to-face interaction, so that the same person will have different chances of succeeding or failing because of the change in medium. Just as moving from air into water acts differently upon the body, moving from a face-to-face to an online medium acts differently upon the habitus, figuratively represented by changing the blue cube to red in Figure 22. An important factor in this shift is that it is impossible to completely insulate participants from the weight of socialisation that they carry with them into this novel learning environment or from the effects of the wider field of academe which surrounds and pervades it; habitus and doxa continue to interact and, through a process of symbolic exchange, to assign participants their legitimate status within the field. Pertinent examples of this are provided in the narrative accounts of my participants and I argue that these illustrate the abiding consequences of participants' upbringing and prior experiences of schooling and, for some, their consequent uncertain status as scholars in the academy.

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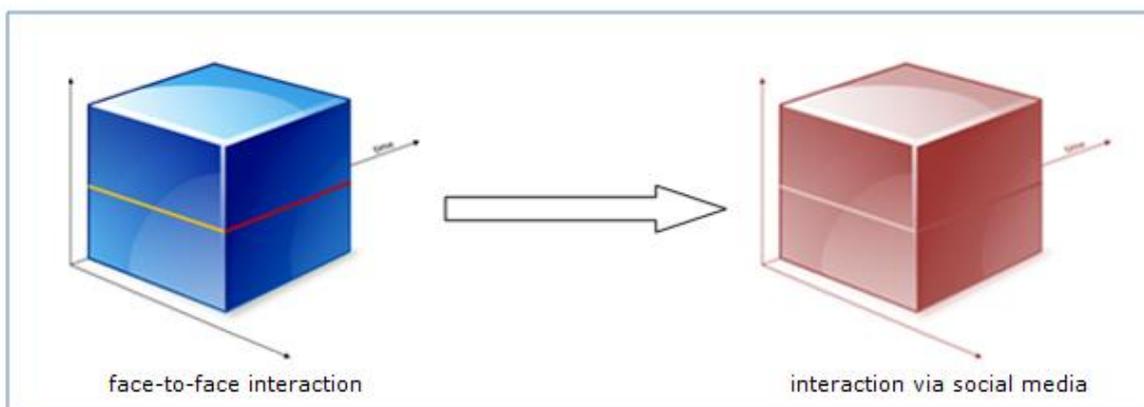
Figure 22: The online acts differently upon class conditions than face-to-face

I also argue that my participants needed digital capital to successfully negotiate this shift and to be able to continue to learn within social media. To define what constituted this capital and based on a review of their narrative accounts, I developed the following index of digital capital.

Index of digital capital

1. Ability to deal with the affordances of social media including
    a. the 'always on' nature of the social network as an enduring demand for attention
    b. the enduring retrievability of every contribution requiring either 'catch up' or tolerance of a partial grasp of what has been said
    c. the enduring possibility of 'reply' to every single contribution as a potential point of digression
    d. the scope for potentially fruitless and time-consuming lines of enquiry
    e. the scope for wide disparities in the frequency and nature of participation amongst peers
    f. the scope to read over, edit and re-edit contributions before clicking 'post'
    g. reliance on text, calling for an uncertain degree of formality and scope for textual errors
2. Confidence in one's own ability to handle ephemeral, divergent and fragmented online interactions, the challenges of which include
    a. the absence of a clear, overall chronology of events
    b. ambiguity as to which conversations are the most important or useful
    c. uncertainty about how much of one's own activity is expected or desired by others
    d. uncertainty about how much activity is happening in one's absence
    e. uncertainty over whether it is necessary to review all of this on return

f. uncertainty over whether this review has been successfully accomplished.
3. Strategies for dealing with ephemeral content including the ability to
    a. locate and prioritise new content on return after absence
    b. trace and categorise old content if needed
    c. confidently select which posts to reply to and which to ignore
4. Access to
    a. a reliable and readily accessible network connection
    b. software applications and devices that suit one's preferences, abilities and situations
    c. the skills required to use these applications and devices
    d. time to engage in playful participation
    e. conducive home or work circumstances that favour or enable participation
    f. networks of support amongst family, peers and /or institutions
5. Tolerance of the opaque gaze of others and the consequent possibility of
    a. being publicly wrong, ill-informed or naive in ways that might elicit comment and that persist in text with the potential to resurface over time
    b. uncertainty about whether such errors have been noted, by whom and with what consequences for one's status
    c. being judged unfavourably for visibly consuming more than contributing.
6. Confidence in communicative ability arising out of
    a. assurance in one's command of appropriate written communication for the community involved
    b. belief in the likelihood of 'being right'
    c. social standing within the group, feeling less 'assailable,' even if shown to be wrong.
7. Tolerance of, or preference for, physical disembodiment, including the ability to negotiate
    a. loss of the physical body as a marker of presence
    b. loss of the physical body as a site of resistance
    c. the loss of non-verbal communication
    d. the affordances of text as a replacement for speech
    e. shifts in power dynamics, patterns of interaction and register

    and in educational settings:

    f. loss of the tutor's physical body as a site of authority and control in the classroom
    g. loss of hierarchical relationships inscribed in classroom layouts
    h. ambiguity over what the learning experience is 'supposed' to be like.

      i.   potential need to relinquish of hard-won strategies, such as cramming for exams or intensive reading and writing just prior to a deadline

Digital capital of this kind, then, is different from other forms of Bourdieusian capital because it is activated by a shift in medium. In this sense, the digital might be thought of, not as we would think of the field of academe, as a field in and of itself, but as a theatre for the performance of field effects, determined both by the fields that are present and by the layout, accepted modes of exchange and conventions of the theatre itself. Even though this theatre contains the same individuals with the same aspirations, studying the same module for the same degree and in the same field of academe as the theatre of the classroom that preceded it, people experienced altered chances of success because of its digital affordances. Jack, Molly, Rachel, Hadeel and I to varying degrees, possessed the kinds of digital capital described in this index and, hence, reported a greater range of benefits, including in terms of our learning. Grace and Ava did not possess these kinds of capital to the same degree and were, therefore, disproportionately disadvantaged within that theatre.

How is such capital operationalised? People use social interaction to move from one class condition to another within Bourdieu's universe of continuities. In the contexts of education, examples include scholarly utterances in classrooms that bolster status in the academy; assignments that meet module learning outcomes and gain credits from awarding bodies; successful completion of qualifications; job interviews that draw down greater salaries and so on. To be attainable for the individual, these social interactions must lie within something akin to a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). When people with sufficient digital capital move into an online learning environment, they find that their ability to enact the right kinds of interactions remain proximal or draw closer, enabling them to gain enough purchase in the field to make gains. The opposite happens for those who lack digital capital. They find themselves on a slippery slope without foot or handholds, and productive interactions move beyond their reach. They are thus left in a state of digital hiatus, becalmed in a kind of doldrums, unable to gain the purchase within the field that is needed to move forwards. This happens merely by virtue of the interaction of the medium with the overlapping fields, within which it sits, which in combination interact with the participant's habitus. Symbolic violence is evident in this predicament. Whilst technology is a filter and a medium for such violence that influences how it is operationalised and experienced by participants, it is not the primary source. This lies instead within the social world. This conception aligns with Raymond Williams' prescient critique of 'technological determinism' (Miller, 2003, p. 45) in which he argues convincingly that it is a mistake to blame technologies for social ills,

and that we might also trace the 'social shaping of technology' (Edge & Williams, 1996, p. 865).

An important factor is that the shift into an online medium means that communication may become compromised because it is disembodied, at least in the physical sense (Index Item 6). For Bourdieu, habitus 'designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) ... durable in that they last over time, and transposable in being capable of becoming active within a wide variety of theatres of social action (1993a: 87)' (Grenfell, 2012, p. 51). However, aspects of the habitus that arise out of the habitual states of the body are *not* entirely transposable into online environments and cannot be deployed as in face-to-face settings. This means that actors are deprived of some aspects of their available cultural capital when they interact in virtual settings. They lose, for example, the ability to use their bodies as a silent marker of participation or to convey meaning through non-verbal communication. The tutor loses the authority conferred by their position in the classroom. Non-verbal communication and use of gesture, tone and facial expression to add nuance, humour, subtlety or weight to an utterance is also lost.

For, Archer and Francis (2007), identities are *bodily* acts that we must constantly do and re-do; 'doing girl,' or 'doing boy' through our embodied speech and behaviour. They argue convincingly that though our performances can be contested and may vary somewhat over time according to the context, they are undoubtedly constrained by social norms. The boundaries between what 'counts' as authentic identity, in other words what constitutes an 'intelligible' performance are constantly policed. This policing in a face-to-face situation is, in part, shaped by our bodies. Online, we are disembodied, and the policing must operate in subtly different ways, because it cannot harvest the same kinds of information about our physical being, nor can it make use of expressions or auditory cues such as accent or tone of voice. In research since the nineteen-nineties (Denning & Metcalfe, 1997) and in the literature on more recent technological developments such as avatar-driven virtual worlds like *Second Life* (Stewart, Hansen, & Carey, 2010), educational technology literature has frequently argued that this disembodiment liberates people from real-world constraints that militate against certain ways of being. People with disabilities, for example, are described as gaining from the ability to choose an avatar that lacks those disabilities. I argue that, though this may be true to some extent, in some settings and for some people, there are also costs associated with relinquishing the body and the loss is compounded by the fact that limitations on what we feel able to perform typically persist in our psyche, to an extent to which we are unaware. In the shift into an online world, we sustain losses in our

habitus, even whilst we carry over some of the limitations which this habitus mandates, as exemplified by this quotation from Jack:

> So you can't really make jokes or you can't say things as quickly or you can't offer off-handed comments or you can't offer snides or you can't say or... I don't know, that <u>lower</u> the tone or <u>improve</u> the tone as easily or <u>change the emotion</u> in the room quickly and then bring it back, so you don't have as much control over the message you're sending. It's a bit like being disabled or something isn't it, because if you are quick at understanding interaction and jokes and things then, I suppose Yammer's a bit like working from a sort of disabled point of view, so your communication and the kind of skills you lose.

At the same time, structural determinants of what it is acceptable for people of different genders, of different ethnicities or from different social classes persist and align neatly with Bourdieu's ideas on cultural capital and with digital hiatus. They cause participants to ask, albeit unconsciously, 'in this novel field, which roles can I legitimately adopt that will be seen as permissible for me to perform? Having relinquished the affordances and limitations of physical presence, to which kinds of utterance and which uses of language do I have access, and do I have a mandate to use them?' The uncertain answers to these questions casts into confusion those participants who lack digital capital and are unsure of the degree to which their habitus enables and supports different kinds of speech acts. Hence, Jack feels able to perform Archer and Francis' (2007) 'ideal pupil' through his dominant, assertive, active and independent contributions that have an emphasis on cognitive engagement. Grace on the other hand, carries over the behaviours of the 'pathologised pupil' that she tended to perform when she was still at school, namely passivity, dependence, conformity and hard work. Ava does not, however, fit neatly into any of these roles. Though she seeks in her one contribution to perform the role of the 'ideal' she falls foul of the digital hiatus, which she experiences with all its attendant challenges and consequences. Nor does she conform to Archer and Francis' 'demonised other' of aggressive, uncontrollable, peer-led behaviour. The fact that this is an online medium means that she is not 'held present' as a witness and a participant in the same way as she would be by the requirement to attend a classroom session and to remain within it. It is easier to retreat without consequences and this, too, is a characteristic of digital hiatus. I argue, then, that there is scope to add the filter of *desertion* or *withdrawal* to Archer and DeWitt's (Archer & DeWitt, 2017, p. 73) tripartite model.

Another important factor in digital capital is item 5 in the index; tolerance of the opaque gaze of others. The contributions of the participants are eminently retrievable by peers

and a tutor, whom they cannot see, conferring a panopticonised character to participation (Foucault, 1995) and this further objectifies and disempowers them in the face of symbolic violence. Further, the retrievability of utterances places a potential burden of responsibility on participants to 'catch up' or to 'stay on top of' all that has been said, as set out in items 1 to 4 of the index and in ways that do not operate in face-to-face conversations. This gaze of others becomes part of a system that pressures them to participate and comply, even as they worry about the consequences of doing so. Participants in interview variously portray the resources of persistence, courage, independent study and good humour as well as the importance of peer support in overcoming these worries. Often seen as alternative and in some senses opposing explanations of the social world, I argue here, therefore, that Bourdieu on habitus and field and Foucault on power and control can be deployed *in concert* to characterise the novel consequences of online learning in social networks.

A panopticon is a circular prison building in which the cell interiors are all visible from an opaque central watchtower. Prisoners never know whether they are being watched, so must behave as if the observation is constant, thus internalising the standards of behaviour of the imagined watcher. In his *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault invokes the architecture of the panopticon as a metaphor for the way in which we are increasingly subject to the 'vigilance of intersecting gazes' (1995, p. 217) in our institutions, work places and even our personal lives. Social media enables this kind of opaque observation of participants par excellence and consciousness of the gaze of others was an important factor for all the participants of this study. It is apparent, for example, in questionnaire responses about the sources of worry, perhaps most strongly expressed by Grace, Rachel and me, who all cite 'being judged' as problematic. It is also implicit in worries about one's own contributions or lack thereof and the replies they receive, or lack thereof, variously expressed by all the participants, except Hadeel.

Table 32: Sources of Worry in Yammer

	Sources of worry
Ava	No response to questionnaire
Cheryl	Keeping up with everything that happens
	Being judged
Grace	My own contributions
	My lack of contribution
	Keeping up with everything that happens
	Being judged
Hadeel	None of the above
Jack	My own contributions
	The replies of other people to my contributions
	The lack of response to my contributions

Molly	Other people's contributions
	My own contributions
	Keeping up with everything that happens
	Finding things that I want to recover
Rachel	My own contributions
	My lack of contribution
	Keeping up with everything that happens
	Being judged

In particular, the continuous automated logging of activity and the persistent appearance of this log on the screen in Yammer exposed Grace to a sense of guilt. It also generated fear of judgement and censure that had characterised some of Grace's schooling but in ways that were not a feature of classroom practice and this was a novel source of suffering when she tried to learn online.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have characterised digital hiatus as a predicament of learners who lack the digital capital, presenting an index of such capital to describe it in detail. I argued that the change in medium activated this kind of capital, altering their chances of success, where success means an improved class condition, achieved through social interactions that accrue cultural capital. Those participants who lacked this kind of capital were less able to engage in those interactions and, therefore, less likely to make such gains. I expanded upon items from the digital capital index to more fully explain the impacts of disembodiment, panopticonisation and the affordances of the medium, using a combination of Bourdieu, Foucault and Archer & Francis as an explanatory framework. In the next two chapters, I go on to explore the effects of these factors for the two participants who appeared to suffer most, namely Ava and Grace.

Chapter 14: Suffering due to digital hiatus: focus on Ava

From the general sources of worry cited at the close of the last chapter, I turn in this chapter to explore in more detail an example that illustrates how digital hiatus operated in the online environment explored here. I was conscious as the module began that the academic, assessment-related nature of the online interaction would potentially influence participants' contributions. Cognisance of the likelihood of this and also of the fact that the module required students to theorise about online learning, both as students and as educators, prompted me to encourage module participants to be reflective and reflexive about their language and its online effects, using theoretical frameworks, such as learning theory, theories of online community and interactivity and more broadly, sociological ideas such as those of Bourdieu, McLuhan and Foucault.

Attempts to mitigate the pervasive effects of symbolic violence within the academic field were, therefore, designed into the curriculum for the module, in recognition of Bourdieu's convincing argument that as 'producers of discourse,' educators occupy a privileged position in the symbolic struggle to 'make things seen and believed,' (Myles, 2010, p. 79) and those who are wholly unreflexive about this are in danger of unknowingly reproducing inequality. Thinking reflexively about one's language choices and their effects upon others arguably produces actors who are less likely to unquestioningly assume the dominant ideas, practices, dispositions and hierarchical thinking that can marginalise or silence people in educational settings. The subsequent online discussions sought to maintain and extend this use of Bourdieu's theories through reflexivity in action. The aspiration of this approach was to shed light upon symbolic violence within social media contexts in ways that these participants would find enlightening and empowering, enabling them to recognise and, perhaps, challenge doxa and its effects. The further pedagogical motivation for this was that the group was *made up of* educators with a professional interest in interactive media, who might be expected to deploy their learning as part of their teaching practices with their own students. Indeed, some were already doing so. The overall aim of this approach was to foster a more inclusive discussion in which all would recognise and, therefore, be able to avoid the potentially alienating and disempowering effects to which the various theories allude, so that each would feel comfortable to participate in ways that were beneficial to their learning.

In the event, this aim was imperfectly realised and only for some participants. In Chapter 4, I outlined the general argument that this was because of digital hiatus, which meant that participants were exposed to a mismatch between the novel field in which they found themselves and their habitus; habitus, field and doxa continued to exert their inveterate influence on legitimate status, but this was amplified for some, since participants were entering a novel arena for academic discussion and found themselves subject to the opaque gaze of others and stripped of the facility to nuance their utterances through nonverbal communication. The difficulties this presented were amplified because their contributions were eminently searchable and retrievable, in what Foucault would term a 'panopticonised' medium. Despite, or perhaps even because of the heightened and informed reflexivity that the module encouraged, participants were exposed to symbolic violence in ways that compromised their participation. Some fell into allodoxia, self-consciously mimicking or hyper-mimicking the dominant syntax. Others fell silent in a kind of resigned passivity. Still others adopted submissive linguistic moves to signal compliance.

The first example I offer here to illustrate this argument is Ava's first and only post in the online network. In exploring this example, I pay attention to the language used by participants, using Bourdieu's position that social structures both affect and respond to language choices as explained in Chapter 4. I recommend here a careful reading of the quotations, including any grammatical, syntactical or referencing errors, which are reproduced verbatim. This is because the intention of this analysis is to focus on ways in which the post, though a good opening gambit in a learning conversation, misfired in several minor but cumulative ways.

Ava's uncertainty as she enters the online field is implied in the language of her opening statement in which she excuses her late arrival, defers responding to others' posts and qualifies the value of her contribution:

> While I've had a few problems logging on but finally sorted it out. I've read the posts with interest and will response when I've been able to digest. So here is my 1st contribution for what its worth!"

This post came ten days after the inception of the network, by which time everybody else had contributed and there had been over fifty exchanges. Ava does not respond to any of them and instead picks up from where she left off at the close of the Day School.

> I found the 1st session very interesting; it opened my mind the different concepts and the discussions were thought provoking. We discussed mind control versus

mindlessness and technological determinism and whether technology could be used to facilitate mindlessness which really piqued my interest.

The discussion in the intervening ten days had been around these very issues, exploring them through a consideration of dystopian visions of technology-enhanced cultures. Another participant later described Ava's post as 'like when someone arrives late at a meeting and starts talking about an agenda item that's already been thrashed out. Everyone in the room knows it except them and it's a bit embarrassing and difficult to make them stop.' In this way, Ava unwittingly and immediately reveals herself to be somewhat out of step with the field she is entering. Not only is she in a place of hiatus, entering a medium with which she is unfamiliar and does not like, she is more exposed there than it would be possible for her to be in a face-to-face encounter. Late arrivers at a meeting cannot access a record of the preceding discussion before joining in. Late arrivers in an online forum can. However, that discussion is fragmented and divergent with no clear beginning, middle and end and this results in a sea of uncertainty around what has been said, by whom and when, which is very difficult and time-consuming for an arriviste to grasp thoroughly. Moreover, instead of one temporal point for an interloper to interject, there are multiple points that invite comment and it is very difficult for the newcomer to know where to begin. Just starting with one's own freshest thinking, as Ava does here, is a perfectly rational choice. Ava later comments on this difficulty in interview, with her uncertainty apparent even in the rather stilted and fragmented nature of her reflections:

> I think for me because it was just all text, text, text, text and so you're having to… and sometimes I find it very difficult when the trail… it's like a whole… so you're having to jump, "Oh, what was it that person said?" and having to go all the way back up to read it to get back down, you know, it's not always easy to follow the train of thought, especially when you then get somebody popping in and it pops in between the middle of it. And you're thinking "Well, what's that doing there?" You know, the thought. It's different people's thoughts and it's erm… it would have been easier if there is different trails… almost like a, what do you call it, you know like a tree with branches, you know, so that you could follow the different trains, but still have, you know, see the overall picture but then be able to clearly follow down branches of what people are saying.

Ava's very evident uncertainty here arises partly because in social media, every post has a 'Reply' button. Each contribution presents an enduring invitation to reply. These multiple points for departure lend a fragmented, chaotic quality to learning within social media. Further, this fragmentation is amplified by the fact that, whilst contributions within threads are presented chronologically, the threads themselves do not appear in

chronological order relative to one another. Rather than a pathless waste, social media presents a multitude of possible conversational paths, each of which ultimately trails off into silence and it becomes impossible for arrivistes to systematically read through all that has been said in chronological order. However, the retrievability of online utterances makes possible a responsibility to 'catch up' each time a participant enters the network. In this way, unless one is comfortable with the notion of a partial grasp of what has been said, the medium commands attention, either constant to stay abreast of developments as they unfold, or concerted, to catch up periodically. Failure to do so, as part of a taught course with links to assessment, implies either a deficit in digital capital or a deficit in commitment to the community and to one's studies, with consequences for status within the field and for perceived academic achievement. Hard-won strategies, such as cramming for exams or intensive reading and writing just prior to a deadline, are made redundant by this novel environment and what it can do. This is symbolic violence of a particular type, made possible because of the affordances of the medium. Grace also comments on this in interview, when asked if anything surprised her about learning in this way: 'I think the level of guilt. Especially when it has that little box on the right-hand side to say who is downloading and who has read things. So you can track what people have done as well.' This is a pernicious consequence of the kind of panopticonised digital hiatus that I argue is a feature of learning through online networks.

Some participants, however, are more confident in dealing with the technical challenges this presents and have digitally literate strategies for coping. Similarly, some participants were warier than others about the possibility of being misconstrued or in error in their online posts. Rachel, for example, though not necessarily entirely unconcerned, was more able to countenance the idea of not being fully cognisant of everything that had been said and when, contributing only where something sparked her interest. Molly was rather more worried about keeping up and about retrieving old content but was such a regular visitor that she was able to keep her worries in check. Further, both Molly and Rachel know how to use the tools presented to them to search, retrieve and filter content and this confers greater confidence and consequently greater symbolic capital in the field. This link between technical knowledge and symbolic capital is not new. Just as at a formal dinner party, those who know how to use the correct fork are judged as somehow better than those who do not; those who know how to negotiate digital educational systems end by being judged as superior to those who do not. Technical proficiency in, for example, tagging content, using search functions, setting and managing notifications, using mobile applications and filtering content are all examples that help people gain traction in the field. Not precisely a cultural arbitrary, because they are objectively useful things to know, these nonetheless confer distinction in ways that

can make those who lack such knowledge conscious of shortcomings, as with Ava's statement, 'Oh God! I'm IT literate and that's losing me! You know, so if it's losing <u>me</u>, God help some of the others.' Jack, Molly and Rachel, on the other hand, are all variously proficient in the use of these functions and these technical skills support them in their happy and confident exploration of and contribution to the online discussion. This confers greater capital than that possessed by those like Ava and Grace, who feel far less at home in social media and this in turn impacts upon their likelihood to participate and the nature of their contributions. Whilst a hands-on session at the first Day School sought to support learners in developing these skills, perhaps more was needed in the terms of modelling and reinforcement as the online phase unfolded, arguably a pedagogic failure of mine that contributed to the struggles of some participants.

Allodoxia

Given all the above, it is unsurprising that as Ava's first post unfolds, she begins to exhibit allodoxia; she endeavours to adopt the language moves, vocabulary and conventions of an authoritative, academic voice but does so imperfectly. The imperfections are particularly evident in a lack of clarity in her argument and in the type and number of technical errors she makes. Looking first at the technical errors, these include incomplete clauses, missing prepositions, lack of agreement between subject and verb, missing punctuation, wrongly attributed quotations and vague pronoun references. Though it is arguable whether these errors matter online as much as they do in more formal kinds of writing, the problem here is that they jar with the scholarly tone that Ava seeks to adopt, and this significantly shapes the impression her words make on the reader.

> Prior to our session, I watched the presentation by Michael Wesch on "Mediated Culture/Mediated Education" (2009) with interest. I found his reference to Marshall McLunan's (sic) (1964) quote "We shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us fascinating.

The citations with bracketed years to indicate date of publication signal that this post is intended to be a scholarly offering, backed up by relevant literature. However, allodoxia is evident in that the quotation has no closing speech marks, Marshall McLuhan's name is misspelled and the quotation is wrongly attributed to him, being actually from a work by another author, (Culkin, 1967).

This attempt to assume a scholarly voice develops further in the next section with a shift in register from the conversational tone that is typical of contributions from others in the network, to something that begins to sound more like a section from a formal assignment:

[this is] a contention that is supported by Raymond Williams (date) who proposed
that there is a self-perpetuating circle where technology evolves as we use it which
changes us, which then changes to adapt to our needs. Facebook would seem to be
an excellent example of this supposition and while it was developed to facilitate the
need for people to identify with each other feel less anonymous (Candy, 1924).

This work of comparing and contrasting ideas and of using authors to lend weight to an
argument is what we train students to do when they write for academic purposes and we
see in this excerpt some typical linguistic moves that are frequently deployed in this kind
of work; 'a contention supported by,' 'who proposed that,' and 'would seem to be an
excellent example of.' However, again, there are several technical errors that hinder the
success of this bid to speak with a scholarly voice. Ava leaves a marker of her intention
to fill in the year of publication for Williams' text (2005) in the form of the word 'date' in
brackets, signalling that she knows this is important but leaving it undone. The author
referred to as Candy, 1924 is an erroneous reference to Yale Professor, Henry Seidel
Canby, writing in 1926. Perhaps more damaging is that Ava's explanation of the 'self-
perpetuating cycle' is not logically developed, because the final clause of this sentence
apparently argues that a 'change in us … adapts to our needs.' What Ava means is that a
change *in us* causes a further adaptation *in the technology*, but an unclear pronoun
reference confuses the logic of the sentence. Further, her final clause is incomplete to
the extent that it compromises the sense of what is being said. The lack of clarity also
means that one possible reading is that Canby was writing about the development of
Facebook, which is patently absurd, given the date of publication. He was, in fact,
writing about the 'deadly anonymity' (Canby, 1926, p. 80) experienced by people
migrating from the countryside to the developing cities of nineteen-twenties America. In
all of this Ava falls foul of the way in which authority arises from the 'academic writer's
ability to demonstrate his/her familiarity with the conventions and practices privileged
within his/her disciplinary discourse community, seen as central to success in the
academy and the conveyance of authority in writing' (Hunston, Pecorari, & Charles,
2012, p. 171).

Authority in this kind of academic context rests largely on the success with which 'a
writer presents herself as being an "author," a "maker of meaning" (Ivanic, 1994: 12), a
social actor who "owns" her writing and takes responsibility for the ideas expressed
within' (Hunston et al., 2012, p. 171). As Greene succinctly puts it, 'the source of an
author's authority derives from an ability to create and support his or her vision'
(Greene, 1995, pp. 187–188). Ava has limited success in this regard partly because of
the technical errors outlined above, but also because she fails to skilfully construct and
convey a clear and logical argument. Points are introduced but not made clear or fully

developed. However, aspects of this predicament are unfair to Ava because she is being called upon to contribute text for an academic purpose, which generally mandates correct grammar, spelling, referencing conventions and academic register, but through a medium that generally favours informality and countenances errors. Learners can become caught between two stools in such an environment, arguably making allodoxia a likely outcome. Though the social media context is quite different, this presents us with similar academic language issues to those identified by Bourdieu in French education in the 1990s; part of that broader struggle to speak or write authoritatively in the academy:

> Constrained to write in a ... poorly mastered language, many students are condemned to use a rhetoric of despair, whose logic lies in the reassurance that it offers. Through a kind of incantatory sacrificial rite, they try to call up and reinstate the tropes, schemas or words which to them distinguish professorial language. ... with an obstinacy we might easily mistake for servility, they seek to reproduce this discourse in a way which recalls the simplifications, corruptions and logical re-workings that linguists encounter in 'creolized' languages. (Bourdieu et al., 1994, p. 5)

The significance of this mismatch is that the writing of students is a site of dialogue,

> not only between the student writer and a specific tutor-reader but also between the writer and the wider disciplinary community ... "authority" in student writing is associated with those writers who succeed in maintaining their voice as "dominant" within the heteroglossic diversity typical of academic discourse (Hunston et al., 2012, p. 170).

In some ways, this makes dialogue an excellent site for learning. Indeed, a whole branch of learning theory, founded on Vygotsky's social development theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985) is premised on the notion that people learn through interaction with a more knowledgeable other. Modelling good online discussion is a way to help students hone their ability to converse through text in a collaborative medium.

However, Ava's experience illustrates how the digital medium can amplify the hiatus effect in ways that impact on language choices and on the likelihood of continued participation. Layered on top of the factors outlined above, it is important to recognise that academic discussions that are spoken aloud do not have to fulfil the same standards of grammar or be referenced according to strict rules. Nor do they typically invite the same degree of formality or scholarliness that is possible or usual in writing. Transferring such conversations into text arguably suggests a need for formality that may or may not be present and it opens the possibility for textual errors. Doing so online makes these

errors public and subject to judgment on multiple levels (Foucault, 1995). Actors endeavour to adjust their texts to account for the standards of the imagined watchers, attempting to police themselves, yet uncertain of what is expected of them and by whom. Once again, symbolic violence can operate on different fronts than it can in face-to-face encounters.

That she fears the consequences of speaking with uncertain authority in this environment and does not welcome the prospect of conversation there is revealed by Ava in interview:

> The first post that I did [PAUSE] was, like you know, when I blog, yeah? And you know that was fine. And then when people came back and then started asking me questions about it, I'm then, "Arghh! Oh, no! What's going on here?" You know I didn't expect that, you know. "That's just my thoughts. There you go!" You know and that kind of threw me a bit and so [PAUSE] I was trying to formulate my answers and I found that, "Ooh, what do I do?"

This quandary about how best to react is an entirely rational response to symbolic violence, made more acute because of the link to assessment. A consciousness that uncertain gambits in academic language games might shape ways that tutors perceive us and their summative assessment decisions quite naturally influences how we speak and write. Such perceptions affect our status on the course, our results and beyond that our careers and as such, work to reinforce distinctions in a kind of 'euphemized version of social classification, a social classification that has become natural and absolute' (Bourdieu in Calhoun, LiPuma, & Postone, 1993, p. 178)

Resigned passivity

When looked at in this way, it is not surprising that Ava did not reply to any of the responses to her contribution and despite further invitations to participate sent via email, this was her only post in the network. I argue that the allodoxic character of her post, followed by her complete silence within and withdrawal from the network, are consequent upon a lack of the kind of digital capital set out in my index and the consequent digital hiatus that she experienced when our exchanges shifted to the online environment. In interview, Ava evokes the typical 'resigned passivity' of those in a state of hiatus as a kind of boredom that had nothing to do with the ideas discussed but everything to do with where the discussion was happening:

> I might have been able to get more involved, but if I'm being honest it's unlikely because it bored me. Not the content. The medium bored me.

Shortly after, she withdrew from the module, citing ill health.

Symbolic violence in the responses to Ava's post

Hitherto, we have looked only at Ava's contribution, explaining ways in which it provided scope for symbolic violence to operate. By its nature, symbolic violence can take effect without ever being enacted, since in Bourdieu's conception, it hangs over all social interaction like the sword of Damocles. Symbolic domination is 'something you absorb, like air, something you don't feel pressured by; it is everywhere and nowhere, and to escape from that is very difficult,' (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992, p. 115). It, therefore, affects your behaviour not only when you are ostracised but also when you anticipate that you might be. It has this in common with Foucault's panopticonisation of social actors, who feel compelled to internalise and behave according to the standards of the imagined watcher, even where no such watcher is present. However, whilst we can acknowledge the potential impact of this incipient character of symbolic violence on Ava, it is also pertinent to explore the online responses to Ava's post, to see if we can trace the enactment of symbolic domination in anything else that was said.

The first response to Ava was from me as module tutor:

> Welcome, Ava! I'm glad you found your way here in the end and that you've picked up on some of the key ideas we covered in the Day School with this nice, succinct summary and some interesting questions. These are rhetorical questions are they not? I think it's interesting to compare the effect of rhetorical questions in an online community with Jack's use of Socratic questioning (just type Socratic into the Search box at the head of the page to find it). Does anything strike any of you about the different effects they might have on conversation?

On the face of it, this is a relatively benign and welcoming message that seeks to draw Ava into conversation, to teach her how to use the Search function to filter conversations and to involve her in the existing discussion. I thought it so at the time. It was also inspired by the fact that the module we were studying was about 'how to teach well' within online platforms, with a close and theorised consideration of the effect of that medium on the quality of conversation and learning. For that reason, I thought it pertinent to use Ava's post as an opportunity to analyse the different ways we might address questions to one another online and my aim was to encourage the kind of discussion on this topic that would help the students with their related assignment, in which they would have to provide a theorised account with quotations from our online work. I was also, perhaps, attempting to model 'good online pedagogy' in my response. However, what became clear to me over the course of this module was that there are dangers associated with using online media to talk about *the effects of* online media, since it lends to the debate a level of scrutiny and introspection that might work to

objectify and make vulnerable the participants to a greater degree than discussion on other topics.

Moreover, looking at my post in retrospect, part of the work that it tries to do is to normalise Ava's behaviour relative to the rest of the group. It casts a spotlight on the ways in which her post is different from others and points to Jack's approach as a contrast. Ava as an arriviste is immediately asked to compare her style to that of the most vocal and confident student member of the online community. It was not my intention to make Ava feel vulnerable, but the conversation had been flowing well. I was conscious of her post as a jarring note, taking us back over earlier ground that had already been intelligently discussed. As the tutor, I felt responsible for the quality of the conversation and conscious also of the need to acknowledge the work already done by others and to move us along. In doing this, I think that in some ways, I sacrificed Ava to what I took to be the priorities of the group. This is always a difficult choice for a teacher, weighing potentially conflicting demands, but enacting this in text that is persistently retrievable and where there is no recourse to ameliorative non-verbal communication makes it qualitatively different online. By asking Ava whether her contribution was rhetorical, I was also commenting elliptically on the way in which I felt her post revealed a lack of interest in engaging in discussion, being primarily interested in voicing her own thoughts in a way that I thought unlikely to generate conversation. I was trying to correct that, opening the conversation out again for comment. Doing this so publicly in a medium that allowed our words to be revisited by others arguably operates as a particular kind of symbolic violence in the online field. This is important as it highlights how sensitive to these kinds of effects teachers need to be when working with learners online.

Arguably, the disembodied nature of the online debate also works against Ava and others like her. As discussed in Chapter 4, for Bourdieu, habitus 'designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) ... durable in that they last over time, and transposable in being capable of becoming active within a wide variety of theatres of social action (1993a: 87)' (Grenfell, 2012, p. 51). However, as I point out in Chapter 13, 'aspects of the habitus that arise out of the habitual states of the body are *not* transposable into online environments and can't be deployed in the same ways as individuals are wont to do in face-to-face settings.' Ava, for example, could not shrug or frown or pick up a pen and look occupied with some other thought, as she might have done were something similar to happen in the classroom.

Molly tries to evoke this embodied resistance in the next response in the thread:

Interesting comment, Cheryl, because without your open direct question, I might not have replied to this thread, as it did seem like Ava was writing rhetorical questions. However, I was "nodding along" and agreeing with Ava but didn't feel inclined to comment unlike the other posts.

Here, Molly describes how she might have used gesture to support Ava had they been face-to-face and appears to be maintaining a delicate balance between concurring with me as the tutor, whilst simultaneously being supportive of Ava. Note, though, how difficult it is for her to do this here. Subtleties of communication are lost when they have to be spelt out in written communication. Also, there is some awkwardness arising from the fact that the comment is *about* Ava but is addressed to *me*, almost as though Ava is not there and reinforcing my implicit point that Ava's post was closing down rather than opening up communication. Molly's next point acts both as a response to an earlier exchange, in which Jack corrected another participant's grammar and as an elliptical comment on the technical errors in Ava's post:

Slightly scared about posting now as worry about my grammar. However, I really value feedback on my inconsistencies in grammar - so critique away Jack!

This also alludes to the degree of scrutiny to which our online utterances were being subjected in this instance and is, thereby, emulating my attempts to analyse and call into question the tenor of individual contributions. It is interesting that Molly invites critique from Jack and then goes on to describe how this mirrors her face-to-face encounters with colleagues:

There is 9 people crammed into the staff room where I work, and two colleagues (both male and both teach computing interestingly enough) always feel the need to correct my spoken grammar so by the end of the course I may be speaking and writing a whole lot better!

The kind of symbolic violence that results from being wrong and publicly corrected in front of an audience of peers is a strong undercurrent in this comment, even whilst the learning potential of such experiences is acknowledged.

This entire exchange, then, reveals uncertainty around the questions, 'How do we speak here? What are the parameters of what is thought to be an acceptable or 'good' contribution?' This, too, is symptomatic of digital hiatus, arising as it does from the 'disorganization of conduct' (Grenfell, 2012, p. 182) that results from the shift to learning in a social media environment that was novel for these participants.

Both in her comment above and in simply remaining in this novel arena and continuing to engage, despite her potential vulnerabilities Molly shows great intrepidity and a real

desire to learn, even if that means learning through being publicly wrong. This is also evident throughout her narrative account and appears to arise from familial dispositions towards social and career aspirations and from incidents in her own progress through the education system. However, in enacting this intrepidity here, she also unwittingly adds to the pressures on Ava to check her grammar and to justify her rhetorical tone. Ava's only choices were to either re-enter the now fraught textual arena through further gambits in online conversation or to fall silent, adopting the 'resigned passivity' that is a natural response to symbolic violence. She chose the latter.

She was not alone in this choice to withdraw from contributing. Grace intermittently did so, too, and reflects upon this in her written reflections about the experience:

> I also did not feel competent to post. Some of the conversations on the group left me feeling inadequate with my knowledge of the subject and again here lack of time got in the way. If time had been available I would have been able to research the topic and then reply confidently with the knowledge I had gained, but a lack of time meant that I would let the post slide by. Nonnecke and Preece (2001) define the first time when a lurker speaks up as "delurking." If this is the case then I slid from lurking, to delurking and then back again.

Though the term 'lurking' has pejorative connotations that are not at odds with Grace's sense of guilt about her Yammer use patterns, Grace recognises the potential benefits of this pattern of behaviour and alludes to the value of silent participation. She does so even whilst acknowledging the pressures to reciprocate that arise out of the foregrounding of user activity in social media environments:

> Again, given the nature of Yammer, the work taking place was collaborative with a text dialogue. Members of the group could converse collaboratively with the group or with individual members. It could be felt though that it was not entirely collaborative by those members who posted frequently and regularly against those who did not. Coffield and Williamson (2012) state "dialogue is collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful" … [However, through the] discussions taking place and the sharing of information, it becomes likely that the members of the group do grow intellectually. Even a lurker increases their knowledge by gaining quietly from the other postings of the group.

Unlike Ava, Grace was thus able to maintain a position, albeit uncomfortable, on the fringes of the group that enabled her to successfully navigate the module:

> For 99% of the group it worked well and a community of practice was formed. I was in the remaining 1% who found that the style of working with Yammer did not suit

my personal preferences. I found that the speed in which I needed to interact was too quick for me and I soon got left behind. As a lurker, though, I gained a great deal from the group just by being 'around,' reading posts and documents uploaded to the site. On reflection, I do believe that communities of practice are an effective way of working.

To continue this analysis of the responses to Ava's post, Jack posted the following responses to Molly's invitation to '- critique away, Jack!' Note the 'likes' that were recorded on each of the posts (Figure 23).

Figure 23: Jack's responses to Ava's thread

Here Jack posts three things in 3 minutes, showing none of the reticence and careful self-censorship that others both perform and describe when reflecting on their online dispositions. Compare this, for example, with Grace's hesitance, revealed in the comment:

I think, as well, because I'm a touch typist, I can type things as quickly as I think, pretty much and then it's <u>not pressing send</u>. Because I'll read it and read it and read

it. Whereas if I just typed it and pressed send, it probably would be okay, but it's
that confidence to do that

By contrast, Jack's posts arguably gave the conversation something of the rhythm of
speech; the slight pauses between each sentence, which we might 'hear' in a face-to-
face encounter, being implied by the break between the individual posts. Strangely this
enlivens the exchange and gives it a greater sense of pace than if he were to say all
three things in one post. It evokes the sense of someone quickly and confidently
speaking, without feeling the need to craft or censor the message. Moreover, in strong
contrast to Ava's self-consciously formal post that opened the thread, he is evoking
informality through these rapid-fire contributions and by teasing Molly. At the same
time, he alludes to the idea that it matters not whether grammar is good, so long as
meaning is intelligible. In a deliberately ironic manoeuvre, he then immediately steps
into the role of 'grammar monster' that Molly has invited him to occupy, questioning her
use of the dash. At the same time, he disavows that role in a move that might arguably
be an example of the Greek rhetorical device of *apophasis*, where the speaker or writer
suggests something by denying it. This mercurial style of conversation is typical of Jack
and it arguably works to wrong-foot his peers and to make them uncertain of how to
respond, to which Rachel alludes in her interview:

> At first I thought, what, _what_? Why has he done _that_? Why has he said _that_? I were
> sat next to you [in class], we were talking about that. Why have you said _that_ on
> _there_? … And then I thought about what he was like when we met and I thought,
> actually I bet he's just [challenging us] in a kind of _curious_ way. And then when I
> thought like that, I thought, "Oh, okay, yes I can respond to that in that way." I
> don't think it was an attack. It _was_ provocative and I think he was deliberately
> provocative. … Cos he'd send bizarre messages sometimes … that might wind some
> people up.

However, in this instance, Molly does signal that she is 'going along' with all of Jack's
posts through 'liking' each of them in turn.

Despite the mercurial turn of Jack's contributions, he does confidently set out a position:
that grammar only becomes an issue where meaning is obscured, but that, where it does
not obscure meaning, it is rude to correct native speakers. However, from his
perspective as a language teacher, Jack asserts that correction of non-native speakers is
a legitimate and productive teaching strategy, with a benign intent to support learning.
In doing this, though in an informal register, he achieves what Ava signally failed to do
in her post. He presents himself as 'a "maker of meaning"' (Ivanic, 1994: 12), a social
actor who "owns" his writing and takes responsibility for the ideas expressed within'

(Hunston et al., 2012, p. 171). If, as Greene puts it, 'the source of an author's authority derives from an ability to create and support his or her vision' (Greene, 1995, pp. 187–188), then Jack has displayed that authority in this exchange, albeit informally. His is a complex and nuanced message, but it succeeds despite and perhaps even because it is so informal, setting aside the conventions of academe in ways that suit the informal medium of social networking. This illustrates how the doxa of this novel field is fundamentally different to that which applies to more traditional kinds of writing such as academic assignments, where status accrues to different kinds of utterances but that similar rules around confident and assertive meaning-making still apply.

Conversely, Ava has tried to carry over those traditional conventions into this novel environment and has found that nobody else is playing the same language game. This, perhaps, is part of the source of Ava's dismay at the responses her post receives and the reason why she chooses not to engage further. The patent contrast between her own use of language and that of others throws into relief the allodoxia of her first attempt to engage and this operates on her as symbolic violence that silences her, even though there is no discernible intent to do her harm. This violence is compounded, because it takes place within the panopticon of the online world, illustrating how Foucault's vision of the power of the panopticon to 'discipline and punish' clearly aligns in this context with Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence.

To conclude our analysis of this thread, the exchange about grammar between Jack and Molly finishes as follows (Figure 24):

Figure 24 Molly on hyphen usage

This, too, is an example of allodoxia, since Molly has erroneously conflated the idea of a hyphen with a dash. The textual mark is the same, but the grammatical function is quite different. She is endeavouring to display knowledge of the dominant syntax but gets it wrong. Jack does not answer, and we do not know whether this is because he has moved on to another conversation, whether he hasn't spotted the error or whether he has decided to refrain from acting the 'grammar monster' role that he has already disavowed. Regardless of the lack of response, errors of this kind can act as subtle

shibboleths in the fine and constant work of distinction that Bourdieu deplores as the hidden source of inequality. This exchange is, therefore, illustrative of how discussions within digital environments differentiate on different fronts than face-to-face encounters.

Chapter 15: Suffering due to digital hiatus: focus on Grace

Having explored some of the ways in which Ava responded to digital hiatus in the preceding chapter, in this chapter, I turn to a more detailed consideration of the other participant for whom online participation proved deeply problematic. Grace described her online predicament as being akin to shivering on the brink of a high diving board, the object of ridicule, too afraid to jump. I was shocked by this metaphor in interview and it was at this point that I offered Grace an apology:

> Cheryl: So a desire to contribute and at the same time a fear of contributing and a guilt about not contributing? What did we put you through, Grace? It's dreadful isn't it? [NERVOUS LAUGHTER] I made you suffer. It's really awful.
>
> Grace: [LAUGHTER] Yes.

Focussing on this notion of suffering was a key trigger for the emphasis on symbolic violence in this thesis and I was motivated to explore in detail the nature of this suffering. During this phase of the interviews, I also recalled thinking of Kafka and beginning to wonder about the extent to which Grace's experience might be described as 'Kafkaesque.' Kafka was a Czech-born writer of surreal fiction, which vividly depicted the fear, alienation and disempowerment of people struggling to navigate life in the early 20th Century. Increasingly used in common parlance with only a partial understanding of its meaning, Kafkaesque experiences in a more correct sense have five common features: particularism (meaning that the nature of each person's suffering is unique to them), chaos, conflicting goals, the abuse of power and a climate of uncertainty and fear (Hodson et al., 2013, p. 1251). Grace's description of her online experiences had elements of all of these.

At first an idle reflection, I later concluded that this was a useful lens through which to explore the particular nature of online symbolic suffering. I took as my precedent for this somewhat novel perspective the work of Sian Bayne on the 'uncanny' nature of virtual learning environments, in which she perceptively comments on 'the blurring of the boundary between fantasy and reality, and the foregrounding of issues to do with identity [associated with] ... being a learner across the digital and material domains' (2008, p. 197). Consider, for example, the parallels between Kafka's uncanny vision of the world and some of the experiences of online learning, particularly for Grace, that are described in this thesis:

Franz Kafka (1883-1924) was a writer of surreal fiction, which vividly depicted the fear, alienation and disempowerment of people struggling to navigate life in the early 20th Century. His work features nightmarish scenarios in which his protagonists are crushed by senseless, purblind authority and are unable to understand or control what is happening. The absurdity of modern systems and the irony of his characters' circular reasoning in reaction to them are emblematic of Kafka's writing. His tragi-comic stories act as a form of mythology for the industrial age, employing dream logic to explore the relations between systems of arbitrary power and the individuals caught up in them. His protagonists suffer because they are struggling against vague laws, following bewildering procedures to achieve unclear goals. However, they are often trapped by the combination of these systems and their own foibles (Jones, 2016, online).

In portraying this kind of world, Kafka (1883-1924) offers us a foil to Weberian logic on how humans typically operate within bureaucratic systems and, hence, an alternative way to conceptualise how students respond within new media learning environments. Weber (1864-1920) characterised organisations as machines whereby 'precision, speed, clarity, regularity, reliability and efficiency are achieved through a fixed division of tasks, hierarchy, supervision, detailed rules and regulations' (cited in Morgan, 2014, p. 17). The choice of social media as a platform for this module was premised on a Weberian logic, with its clear formulation of ground rules for participation and its finite ways of interacting that were enabled by technology. Learners participated by entering the machine and using its finite operations. This logic assumed that the technology provided the most accessible and efficient method for fostering learning conversations for students studying at a distance. Within the context of a marketised Higher Education system, efficiency and accessibility are at a premium and favour the choice of such systems. Though Weber noted the potentially dehumanising potential of machine-like organisation, Kafka thoroughly explored how such organisations are experienced by the individual in troublesome, unpredictable and sometimes horrifying ways. Understanding the potentially Kafkaesque aspects of online environments for students like Grace might, therefore, reveal useful insights into the ways in which people respond to and sometimes suffer within them and this in turn might allow us to endeavour to ameliorate their suffering.

In Metamorphosis (1915), for example, Kafka's protagonist Gregor Samsa wants to get to work on time and unnoticed, but it is impossible because he has inexplicably metamorphosed into a monstrous, insect-like creature during the night. He cannot even pick up his brief case. He certainly cannot get down the stairs without causing horror and consternation amongst his neighbours. Similarly, Grace simply wants to quietly consume

content from the online community without being noticed so that she can enjoy learning what she needs and wants to learn and can pass the module. However, the system, by placing her name and image and a description of what she has done at the top of the screen, foregrounds that she is regularly consuming without contributing. She wants to download and read content, but she's frightened of doing it because the clicks are recorded and made public under 'Recent Activity' (see anonymised example, drawn from a different module, in Figure 25 below).
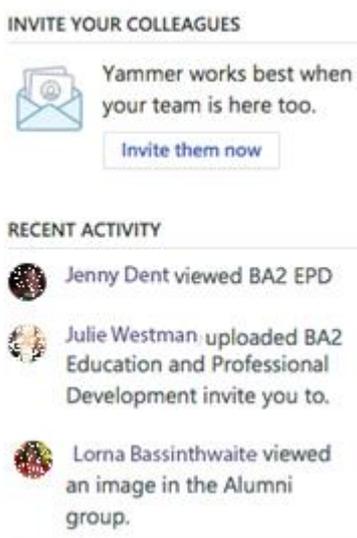
Figure 25: Screenshot of the Recent Activity on Yammer

This shames Grace in ways that accepting a handout in class would not. She is compelled to conspicuously consume, because she has been told it is what the tutor expects, and she wants to do this because she is genuinely interested in the material, but she feels guilty about it in the context of a lack of participation elsewhere on the site. She is also inhibited from making the contributions that would allay this guilt by her fear of being publicly wrong and thereby opening herself up to ridicule. That this is a deeply troubling predicament dawned on me during the interview and was what triggered me to ask, 'What did we put you through, Grace?' Here are the particularism, conflicting goals and climate of uncertainty and fear that characterise Kafka's dystopian vision.

In addition, Grace's perception of Jack's contributions when she says, 'he didn't moderate any of his language and [PAUSE] unknowingly I think he put me off' arguably reflect the negative, Kafkaesque consequences of power, which operate regardless of whether the powerful intend any harm. Though she does not say so, it is not unreasonable to suppose that my deliberately challenging posts had a similar effect upon her. Further, the asynchronous nature of the online discussion wrong-footed Grace in ways that synchronous classroom talk cannot:

Grace: I think I was surprised by how quickly I felt left behind by it, because I wasn't on there every day and I wasn't on there even close to every day. And by that point it had snowballed so much, the discussions had gone on that it just seemed a bit pointless joining in at that point and I'd retrospectively read them and try to catch up, but by then, three other conversations had gone on as well. Erm, so I think that was a surprise to me how everybody else just went, "Oh, look! It's a big, we can just chat." And it _is_ just a chat isn't it in some respects? It's just this big conversation about, "Here's my thoughts, what do you think?" And somebody else would post and somebody else would, erm, so I was kind of _okay_ with it as an idea but yes, just a bit taken aback by... [PAUSE]

Cheryl: That it was snowballing very quickly?

Grace: Yes

Here is the organised chaos that lies at the heart of all of Kafka's systems, in which even the ostensibly powerful have little or no control over outcomes. In one of Kafka's short stories, even Poseidon, the god of the sea, is trapped by his own ego in endless paperwork, which makes it impossible for him to enjoy his power or to use it to good effect. My failure as a tutor to recognise and find ways to make the system less threatening and the consequent difficulty, perhaps even impossibility, of ameliorating suffering within that system, echoes this impotence of the 'powerful.' The critical significance of the Kafkaesque nature of online learning for participants like Grace is Kafka's implicit point that there is a tendency in the current conjuncture for us to rely on increasingly convoluted systems for administering all aspects of social life, including education, and those systems prove unstoppable, even by those who are supposedly powerful within them. The system's sole function is to perpetuate itself and to inescapably ensnare us; judged by people we cannot see according to rules we do not know. The complicated, disorientating and frustrating nature of this experience for Grace, in which she is hamstrung by the combination of the system we were using and her own responses to that system carries strong echoes of the Kafkaesque, and this should give us pause. Kafka's contribution was to bring to our attention the absurdity of such systems, reflecting them back at us to remind us that the world we live in is one we create and have the power to change for the better (Jones, 2016, online).

Furthermore, Kafka's characters often suffer because they are unable to identify or establish clear goals about what is required of them or where they are supposed to go and this, too, is a feature of online learning for Grace. On the face of it, the goal is simple, since it is to succeed in the module. However, how to navigate her difficulties and make progress towards the goal is hopelessly unclear, depending as it does on the

varied and varying interests of the participants and the theoretical perspectives they choose to introduce as the module unfolds. This makes the syllabus amorphous and how to gain mastery of it remains a mystery to Grace. There is an unknowable whole of online interaction that no participant, whether tutor or student, can hope to fully comprehend because it is open-ended and divergent. There are echoes in this predicament of Kafka's parable, the *Message from the Emperor*, which I cite in full here, because it is illustrative of a deeply problematic issue of divergent discussion:

> The emperor—it is said—sent to you, the one apart, the wretched subject, the tiny shadow that fled far, far from the imperial sun, precisely to you he sent a message from his deathbed ... before the entire spectatorship of his death—all obstructing walls have been torn down and the great figures of the empire stand in a ring upon the broad, soaring exterior stairways—before all these he dispatched the messenger. The messenger set out at once; a strong, an indefatigable man; thrusting forward now this arm, now the other, he cleared a path through the crowd; every time he meets resistance he points to his breast, which bears the sign of the sun; and he moves forward easily, like no other. But the crowds are so vast; their dwellings know no bounds. If open country stretched before him, how he would fly, and indeed you might soon hear the magnificent knocking of his fists on your door. But instead, how uselessly he toils; he is still forcing his way through the chambers of the innermost palace; never will he overcome them; and were he to succeed at this, nothing would be gained: he would have to fight his way down the steps; and were he to succeed at this, nothing would be gained: he would have to cross the courtyard and, after the courtyard, the second enclosing outer palace, and again stairways and courtyards, and again a palace, and so on through thousands of years; and if he were to burst out at last through the outermost gate—but it can never, never happen—before him still lies the royal capital, the middle of the world, piled high in its sediment. Nobody reaches through here, least of all with a message from one who is dead. You, however, sit at your window and dream of the message when evening comes (Kafka & Pasley, 2002).

When we adopt increasingly student-centred and online approaches, we lose touch with the certainty of the teacher as the single centre of authority. Carrying this pedagogy into online spaces, where the teacher is no longer proximal to us and the possibilities for digression are endless, makes of it a Kafkaesque maze that can never be entirely mastered. However, in Kafka, the futility is never unremittingly bleak. Despite the sense of difficulty and futility in the face of insurmountable obstacles, there is always a searching, a yearning desire and hope. This, too, is a feature of Grace's experience. She believes that there are valuable insights to be gained. She returns to the fray repeatedly

and adopts behaviours that continually expect 'the message' to arrive, returning to sit at her computer over the course of the module and even after it finishes; trying to discern what is important in what is being said. Herein lies a compulsion to learn, despite a sense of impossibility of ever reaching the end of the task, typical of what it is like for people endeavouring to learn through participating in online communities.

In conclusion, then, I argue in this chapter that Grace's suffering is Kafkaesque and that this is no mere coincidence. I have used this to characterise the kind of suffering that accrues to Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence since Kafka strove to convey the nature of the suffering that people experience when they enter the 'machine' that constitutes life in technologically advanced societies. Shifts towards online education parallel and arguably extend that shift beyond the material and into uncanny, virtual worlds. Just as earlier in this thesis I offered an index of digital capital, I propose here Hodson et al.'s (2013, p. 1251) five key features of the Kafkaesque as a way to categorise the sources of suffering for those who lack digital capital.

Sources of suffering in social learning networks
1. particularism (meaning that the nature of each person's suffering is unique)
2. chaos
3. conflicting goals
4. the abuse of power (intentional or unintentional)
5. a climate of uncertainty and fear

Alertness to these sources of suffering, and the digital capital needed to overcome it, may have ameliorative power for educators operating within social media learning environments.

Conclusion

I conclude this thesis by explaining its contribution to knowledge, revisiting the research questions and providing an overview of how the thesis has answered them. I also reflect on its use of theory and the potential value of the index of digital capital proposed. I go on to revisit the methodology and discuss its value in answering the research questions, as well as reflecting on its limitations and the ethical dilemmas posed by the research process. The thesis closes with a brief proposal for future research.

Contribution to knowledge

My research questions were:

- To what extent is symbolic violence evident within a social learning network for master's level students at a UK University?
- What forms does such symbolic violence take and how are these forms affected by the medium?
- What kinds of dispositions, abilities and assets constitute and confer capital in this setting?

These questions were explored through usage statistics drawn from the online platform and a questionnaire that investigated participants' patterns of interaction and broad impressions, followed by a series of one-to-one, semi-structured interviews that were developed into a series of narrative accounts. These accounts were informed by participants' recollections of their schooling and broader attitudes to education as well as by reflections on the online experience itself. They were used in conjunction with a close consideration of some examples of online conversations that were drawn from the social media platform in question.

Based on this evidence, the answer to the first research question was that symbolic violence was indeed indicated by the resigned passivity or hyper-mimicking of the dominant syntax displayed by some participants, which left them less able to participate in ways that might have improved their learning and /or enjoyment of the module. Their response to their lack of certainty about how much they should contribute, about what was appropriate to contribute, and about what could be consumed legitimately can be seen as a consequence of the broader symbolic effects of the field of academe, the doxa of which mandates particular kinds of interactions that are variously understood or not understood by learners, depending on their habitus. By contrast, some participants were able to draw upon a habitus that was more congruent with the demands of this field of academe, deploying digital capital to profit more extensively from the online experience.

Symbolic violence was also indicated in some of the language and patterns of interactions displayed by these participants, for example in the way in which I responded, albeit with a benign intent, to Ava's single contribution to the network. In answer to the second question, then, the medium affected the forms taken by the symbolic violence enacted because it called for particular kinds of capital, as set out in my index of digital capital. The affordances of this medium resulted in ephemeral, contingent, fragmented and divergent conversations and this wrong-footed those who lacked such capital to a greater degree than the more traditional classroom environments that they had successfully navigated, though perhaps with some difficulty, in the past. The third question, then, as to what kinds of dispositions, abilities and assets constitute and confer capital in this setting, is answered by the index of digital itself and this index, therefore, forms the heart of the thesis and is its main contribution to knowledge.

In propounding this thesis, I have argued that some aspects of digital capital, such as technical skills, are susceptible to teaching in straightforward ways, through modelling and reinforcement, but that others, such as language choice, register, grammar and the distinction the academy makes between individual excellence and hard work lie on the boundary between objectively useful knowledge and a cultural arbitrary that works to reinforce distinction. These more arbitrary aspects of digital capital are more difficult to teach since they are intimately entwined with learning cultures and with habitus, which are inscribed in peoples' personal histories, dispositions and identities. In setting this in the broader context for a marketised education system in the current neoliberal conjuncture, I have used this argument to sound a note of caution; that the medium and the literature that explores its use in educational settings is partially blind to these effects and is vulnerable to a range of economic, political and cultural influences that are not always benign. This is particularly important given the interdependence between offline and online inequalities, which can be manifested as either a virtuous circle, leading to cumulative gains in capital or a vicious circle leading to the reproduction of persistent inequality. At stake is whether or not online learners 'are constituting and representing themselves as culturally competent members of our information-age society' (Ignatow & Robinson, 2017, p. 957) and this can carry over from online to offline scenarios and back again.

In terms of my use of theory in arriving at these conclusions, Bourdieu was of particular value to explore the individual stories of my participants, for interrogating their experiences and the language that they used and for naming arbitrary power as the source of some of the inequalities they experienced. In exploring that fine-grained experience, Archer and Francis on the impact of gender and the privileging of the

'idealised' student provided useful adjuncts and added nuance to the broadly Bourdieusian approach. Further, the way in which social media privileges social constructivist, Vygotskian models of learning and the negative consequences of this for those who prefer not to learn in these ways, casts doubt on the prevailing wisdom that conspicuous interaction must feature in all good learning experiences. Such an experience favours those who already possess the kind of 'muscular intellect' that Archer describes (2014, p. 5) and marginalises others, unless we can find ways to include them more thoroughly. In trying to more clearly articulate the challenges such learners face, I have found Bourdieu's notion of a hiatus amenable to adaptation in a digital setting, using it in conjunction with his 'universe of continuities' and Vygotsky's notion of a zone of proximal development to describe how some learners find themselves 'becalmed' when they enter online environments, unable to interact in ways that will help them to gain purchase and make progress. The change in medium variously impedes or assists individuals, according to the amount and type of capital the individual possesses.

Kafka also provided a novel way to characterise the kind of suffering that accrues to Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence, appropriate since Kafka strove to convey the nature of the suffering that people experience when they enter the 'machine' that constitutes life in technologically advanced societies. Foucault's notion of a panopticon was also useful in this regard, highlighting how the online medium more thoroughly objectifies learners, through the 'vigilance of intersecting gazes' (1995, p. 217) as part of the symbolic violence that some enact or experience. Often seen as alternative and, in some senses, opposing explanations of the social world, I argue that Bourdieu on habitus and field and Foucault on power and control can be deployed *in concert* to characterise how symbolic violence can be enacted online.

However, my key theoretical contribution is located within a broader literature of social media use in higher education, but more particularly in the literature that treats of digital inequality and the use of Bourdieusian concepts to explore that inequality. The index of digital capital explores the dispositions, assets and abilities needed to profit from participation in social media environments and is more finely-grained than broader attempts to define digital capital. As such, it is a clearer delineation of a particular aspect of digital capital and is a subset of those broader definitions, with which it is, nonetheless, broadly congruent. It also represents a shift in focus to more fully recognise ways in which what we might think of as *non-digital* cultural capital, such as self-assurance in one's scholarly ability and authority to speak, are merely redeployed within the theatre of the digital, being as much a part of the field of academe as they ever were.

The significance of this contribution is that it provides us with a way to more accurately anatomise the dispositions, assets and abilities that people need to profit from participation social media learning environments, with potential applications in curriculum design, learner support, reflection and review. It also provides us with further insight into the ways in which capital continues to be used by those who have already amassed it, to profit more thoroughly and more rapidly than those who have less, and so is a useful way in which to explode misrecognition in the digital medium; misrecognition of the kind that was deplored by Bourdieu because it is used to cloak, amplify and perpetuate inequality.

The above illustrates ways in which I have used theories in novel combinations to nuance and provide further insight into my analysis. This also applied to my approach to the literature, where I sought to adopt a critically aware perspective. To do this, I drew upon Gramsci as an adjunct to and a setting for Bourdieu's thinking, not incongruent since we might broadly align doxa with hegemony and fields of power with the dominant class. Gramsci and others provided alternative ways to explore arbitrary power and how it might operate to achieve its ends and these notions were particularly useful in problematising the polarised, technologically determinist literature that currently preponderates in educational technology. Gramsci's notion of the *meatus* and its abundant occurrences in online settings, along with concerns around 'click reification' in a 'post-truth world' further problematise this context, especially in light of a performative culture and the huge financial gains to be made by platform providers. The proletarianisation of teaching and the growing precarity of teaching roles in this context means that the profession is increasingly subject to the kinds of temporal and spatial urgencies that foster 'a taste for the necessary' (Robinson, 2009). This is an argument for a critical readership of new technologies and their consequences for teachers and learners alike.

Methodology review

In this section of my conclusion, I revisit the methodology, reflecting on its limitations and the ethical dilemmas posed by the research process. In constructing this section, I have sought not merely to repeat methodological and ethical concerns covered extensively in Chapter 3, but to provide an overall, evaluative conclusion on these aspects of the research. I begin by considering the value of the methodology in answering the research questions, which were:

- To what extent is symbolic violence evident within a social learning network for master's level students at a UK University?

- What forms does such symbolic violence take and how are these forms affected by the medium?
- What kinds of dispositions, abilities and assets constitute and confer capital in this setting?

Narrative inquiry was of value in answering these questions because it enabled the development of holistic insights into the highly individualised experiences of social media learning for each of the participants, keeping those within the broader context of their progress through the education system and making sense of each of them within that context. This was congruent with the Bourdieusian concern with symbolic violence, acting as it does upon the individual's habitus, accrued over their lifetime, strongly influenced by family and school. Moreover, my exploration of the metaphors that participants used to describe their online experiences led to some particularly useful insights into these stories, being a highly parsimonious means for expressing complex emotional operations when they are abstracted from the embodied world and into virtual environments (Ignatow, 2003, p. 43). The 'strong objectivity' (Harding, 2016) adopted had the advantage of shedding light on the interpretive process, recognising the impossibility of representing a single, verifiable truth, and focusing instead on a notion of trustworthiness arising out of transparent and reflexive development of the narrative accounts. However, augmenting this data with usage statistics from online participation allowed me to triangulate it in ways that aligned with the social realist epistemological convictions that underpinned the research.

Naturally occurring data from online interactions also led to some valuable insights, particularly since it included instances of online participants reflecting *on* participation *through* participation. However, this was both a benefit and a drawback. Whilst this undoubtedly yielded novel insights, it also leant to the debate a level of scrutiny and introspection that might work to objectify and make vulnerable the participants to a greater degree than discussion on other topics. This links to the ethical imperative, which I adhered to throughout, of placing educational concerns ahead of research concerns, whilst striving to remain true to both.

In both roles, I developed collegiate relationships with the participants (Fontana & Frey, 2000, cited in Etherington, 2004, p. 38), congruent with feminist conceptions of a pedagogy of empowerment (Weiler, 1991) and of research as, 'a process which occurs through the medium of a person ... which exists whether openly stated or not' (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p. 175). This led to an apparently relaxed and open exchange with participants that helped me to address the research questions more thoroughly, because they were willing to reveal to me aspects of their familial backgrounds and their

experiences of schooling that spoke of habitus. However, the relationship may also have inhibited participants from sharing potentially problematic aspects of their experiences of the module with me, out of a desire not to hurt my feelings or to offend me, particularly at issue because of the position of power that I held. Member-check presented a possible way to address this concern more thoroughly. However, the decision not to present the participants with the narrative accounts prior to their inclusion in this thesis was a jointly methodological and ethical one, influenced by Goldblatt et al.'s (2011) conclusion that applying member-check, though well-intentioned, is frequently vexed and can cause harm to participants and researchers. Instead, I saw the data as a valued gift (Oakley, 2016, p. 208), which conferred on me the responsibility to make of it the most insightful, well-thought through, balanced and rigorous account of which I was capable.

The relationship also gave rise to a reciprocal sense of compunction around the way in which I presented my participants in the thesis, for fear of offending them, with the risk that I might gloss over or conceal objectively useful and ethically sound findings. There was, therefore, a delicate, three-way balance between my methodological concern for reporting the findings in a trustworthy and thorough fashion, the ethical concern of care for my participants and fidelity to the trusting nature of the relationship developed, which I have sought hard to maintain through a vigilant reflexivity. I revisited each account numerous times, carefully comparing it with the raw data and endeavouring to read it from a range of viewpoints, including that of the participants, to check for fairness and balance. I was helped in this by the Bourdieusian theoretical framework because it compelled me to think in detail about my own arbitrary power in making decisions that affected my participants, both in research and in teaching. This lead, for example, to a thorough exploration of the troubling dilemmas with which I presented my participants in choosing to use social media as a learning platform and this had a direct and beneficial impact on answering the research questions more thoroughly.

Beyond these concerns, it is important to note that this study focussed particularly on master's level students, who had a pre-existing interest in technology and its use in education. The applicability of the findings to other types of students at other levels and in other settings, therefore, remains in question. In particular, whilst none of my participants had an untrammelled educational history, all displayed resistance, resourcefulness and tenacity in overcoming challenges and in pursuing their educational aims. Whilst I have argued that this was, in part, due to the habitus that each was able to mobilise in making such progress, I also want to acknowledge the agency that is apparent in these stories and to ask in future studies, 'What of those learners who have not yet been able to progress to postgraduate level? What would their likelihood of

success in such an environment be and are there ways in which the findings of this study can improve their chances?' In asking these questions, I want to explore whether a Bourdieusian approach can have *transformative* power as well as the *explanatory* power that I think is illustrated by this thesis. This is an important question given that one of the disconcerting findings of this study has been that, in some ways, consciousness of the notion of symbolic exchange made some learners less likely, rather than more likely, to challenge the doxa.

Plans for future research

Finally, this thesis raises the following important questions for future studies. Is it possible to combine Grace's quest for answers with Jack's apparently blithe disregard? In other words, is it possible for a greater range of learners to bracket their desire to act in instrumental ways in their pursuit of fixed outcomes, to engage more playfully and with an apparent unconcern for where they are going and how they will get there? At the same time, is it possible to remain alert to the ways in which such a pliant disposition makes us vulnerable to the manufacture of consent? The answers to these questions are important in the face of growing use of educational technology, if we are to provide learners with the kinds of rational, sustainable and just educational experiences that I set out to provide at the outset of this study.

In conducting this research, I have focussed on potentially problematic aspects of social media use for learning as an antidote to the frequently utopian and technologically determinist tenor of educational technology research, described in my review of the literature. This is not to argue that the digital affordances that can be conscripted in the reproduction of inequality cannot also lend themselves equally to mobilising resistance, to achieving productive or even transformative learning goals and to enabling positive learning experiences, some of which were reported by my own participants. The teaching of this module stands out for me as one of the most enjoyable, stimulating and productive of my career. However, these more positive outcomes were not the focus of this thesis. I also acknowledge that this study makes no claims that the index of digital capital and the notion of digital hiatus that applied here have wider applicability. There is scope, however, for subsequent research to explore the extent to which the index might apply more widely or might be used as a curriculum development or audit tool. Use of such a tool might provide a precursor to online learning, helping learners to reflect on their dispositions and to prepare for the shift and helping tutors to prepare learners more thoroughly for online participation of this kind. It might also provide a productive perspective for online teachers when planning for and supporting students through such a shift, alerting them to some of the troublesome aspects and sources of suffering within this medium for some participants.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Field notes explaining the composition of interview questions

Tell me a bit about your schooling and education and what your experience was like there.

How likely have you been in those contexts to contribute in class, ask questions or volunteer answers?

"Settling" the participant, encouraging them to talk
→ about themselves & initiating topics of conversation
Why is that? → that might reveal issues around cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990)

Tell me about how you've come to be on the MSc.

What do you hope to gain from it? → These questions sought to reveal what participants brought to the online environment: that detail of the
Are there any things that hold you back and make it difficult? "micro-level" context described by
→ Colley, 2010.

Can you tell me a little about the attitudes to your education that were around you during your own schooling? → Here I was thinking particularly of Vicky Duckworth's notion of 'resistance capital' & where & when it might arise for
...and later? marginalised individuals.

Thinking over your participation in the MSc Theories module on Yammer, can you recall what it was like for you?

Can you describe when and where you typically accessed Yammer and through what devices and applications?
→ These questions were all prompted by Wolcott's conversation with Robert Dubin, counselling him 'to include some systematic observation' (Wolcott, 1994, p.31)
How frequently did you visit Yammer →
→ They were ultimately removed from the interview
How long did you typically spend in it → & administered as a short questionnaire, because they were factual, short-answer style questions
What features did you tend to use (direct messaging, 'like' posting, following etc?) → and this freed up time in the
What were your levels of motivation to participate like and where did this motivation or lack interview thereof come from? for more discussion of complex, nuanced responses.

Did your participation in Yammer have a story? A beginning, middle and end? How did the experience develop or change over time?

Can you think of any metaphors or similes for your experience of a Yammer, what was it like?

Did it cause you any worry or anxiety, either whilst using it or whilst thinking about it?

Are there any specific outcomes of that experience that you can identify?

How would you describe the importance or significance of those outcomes?

Pilot interviews & prior iterations of the modules revealed a fragmented experience of social learning platforms & a lack of coherence around the learning journey. Stimulated by my growing interest in narrative approaches (Polkinghorne, 1995, Colley, 2010) and also the later links to postmodern literature (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 2006) & critical theory on the place of postmodern experiences in late-capitalist societies (Harvey, 1990. Jameson, 1998). I think of these questions as 'pursuing the postmodern' or 'Hunting the Snark!'

What do you think the experience was like for others in the group?

Were friends or family aware of your participation in Yammer for the course? If yes, what did they make of it? *These questions were again inspired by an interest in field & habitus after Bourdieu, but also by Brookfield's notion of 'cultural suicide'*

Did your experience of Yammer impact on your home or work life and if so, in what ways?

Did your home life impact on your Yammer participation and if so, in what ways? *→ This question is strongly influenced by the CPAR notion of participation.*

Do you have any suggestions for how the experience could have been improved?

from this point onwards, the questions are heavily influenced

Picture a future in which Yammer has became a substantial part of everyone's education. *by Kemmis et al's CPAR methodology & its critical engagement with the 'doings.' 'sayings' & 'relatings' of the participants. Those questions were used to assess the impact of the first iteration of the Action Research cycle on the second.*

Would that be good for society as a whole?

Why do you think that?

Would it be a rational way to educate?

Would it be a fair way to educate?

Would it be a sustainable way to educate?

Where were you when you accessed Yammer? What impact did your actual surroundings have on the experience?

What device did you use. How did this affect the experience?

Drawn from Kemmis et al (2013) Table 4.5...

What kind of language was used? Was it...

- comprehensible
- coherent
- accurate
- sincere / deceptive
- morally right
- appropriate
- rational

'sayings'

What influenced people's choice of language, do you think?

Did language change over time?

What were the most important ideas that you used?

What was the pool of ideas you drew from?

Did ideas change over time?

Was taking part in Yammer...

- worthwhile
- satisfying
- a waste of time / of energy / of resources
- did it ever cause harm of suffering?

→ 'doings'

Describe the space, set-up, resources of the Yammer network
How did the space, set-up and resources influence what was done by you and others?

Describe the relationships in Yammer. Was there any...
- domination
- oppression
- inclusion
- exculsion
- solidarity
- conflict

→ 'relatings'

How did the technology influence these relationships?

Can you describe the group dynamics and what kinds of things determined this?

Where there any outcomes of your participation in Yammer? What were they?

What kinds of skills were important in using Yammer and why?

What values underpinned your own use of the site? What do you think were the values of other participants?

MSc Yammer Questionnaire

Cheryl Reynolds is currently conducting research into educational uses of social media to establish whether learning through social media is rational, just and sustainable and whether it can be made more so. There are 23 questions, estimated to take between 5 and 10 minutes to answer. You can skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

You have been sent this questionnaire because of your participation in Yammer as part of your University of Huddersfield Masters module 'Theory and evaluation of elearning' (hereafter referred to as 'this module'). Please only answer with regard to your use of Yammer for this module and not in light of other uses of Yammer for the course in general or for other purposes.

If you choose to complete this questionnaire and to provide your name, you may then be invited to an optional, follow-up interview. Declining to take part in either the questionnaire or the interview will involve no penalty whatsoever and you may withdraw at any stage without explanation. If you have any questions, please email Cheryl Reynolds on c.reynolds@hud.ac.uk or her research supervisor, Professor James Avis on j.avis@hud.ac.uk

Basics

I began the MSc in...

Gender

Current age

I have access to a...

Please select all those that apply.

☐ Desktop computer

☐ Laptop computer

☐ Smartphone

☐ Tablet device

☐ Other: [_____]

Please type in which devices you are likely to use when accessing the module's Yammer network, starting with your highest preference and ending with your lowest preference. If possible, please say in brackets where you typically are when you use it for this purpose e.g. iPad (home), desktop (office), smartphone (train)

[   ]

[« Back]   [Continue »]

28% completed

Patterns of use

I typically visit ...

[▼]

I most frequently access the module on Yammer...

Please select all those that apply

☐ whilst at home

☐ whilst at work

☐ whilst travelling

☐ Other: [_____]

The average time I spend on Yammer per visit is...

[▼]

On the module's Yammer network, I have...
Please select all those that apply

☐ clicked on 'Like'

☐ sent direct (private) messages other participants

☐ initiated a conversation on the main network page

☐ contributed to an existing thread on the main network page

☐ taken part in conversations within a sub-group of the network

☐ created a 'Notes' page

☐ edited a 'Notes' page created by someone else

☐ tagged posts with topics

☐ used the Search function

☐ None of the above

☐ Other: [_____]

Typically, on the module's Yammer network...

[_____ ▼]

Do you feel any anxiety about the frequency of your participation in these conversations?

    1   2   3   4   5

no anxiety ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ a lot of anxiety

[« Back]   [Continue »]

[██████████   ] 42% completed

Impact

Visiting Yammer for this module has had an impact on...
Please select all those that apply

☐ the patterns of my home life

☐ the patterns of my social life

☐ the patterns of my work life

☐ none of the above

☐ Other: [_____]

Please rank the significance of this impact.

    1   2   3   4   5

no impact ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ very significant impact

246

My best estimation of the impact of my participation in Yammer on my learning for this module is...

[dropdown ▼]

Yammer has added to my confusion about the ideas covered in this module...

[dropdown ▼]

If you indicated above that Yammer sometimes caused confusion, was this confusion ultimately productive of new learning?

     1 2 3 4 5

never ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ frequently

Using the Yammer network for this module has helped me gain...
Please select all those that apply.

☐ practical advice from others

☐ help with understanding concepts that were new to me

☐ emotional support

☐ thought provoking ideas

☐ fun

☐ community spirit

☐ None of the above

☐ Other: [_____]

[« Back]   [Continue »]

57% completed

Feelings

Whilst using the module's Yammer network, I sometimes worried about...
Please select all those that apply.

☐ other people's contributions

☐ my own contributions

☐ my lack of contribution

☐ the replies of other people to my contributions

☐ the lack of response from others to my contributions

☐ keeping up with everything that happens

☐ finding things that I want to recover

☐ being judged

☐ None of the above

☐ Other: [   ]

How confident do you feel that you can keep up with everything that happens on the module's Yammer network?

                1   2   3   4   5

not at all confident ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ very confident

How worried are you about keeping up with everything that happens on the module's Yammer network?

             1   2   3   4   5

not at all worried ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ very worried

« Back   Continue »

71% completed

Overall impressions

Reflecting on your experience of the module's Yammer network, to what extent do you agree with the statement that all participants have equal status in the group?

        1   2   3   4   5

strongly agree ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ strongly disagree

Can you think of three or more words to describe your online persona within the module's Yammer network?

Are there any other comments about Yammer that you would like to make at this time?

« Back   Continue »

85% completed
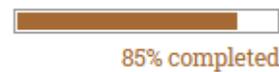
Anonymity

Your name is sought here to enable matching of your questionnaire responses to any possible interviews conducted in the future. However, you can choose not to provide your name if you prefer and if you do provide it, the information you provide will be anonymised before storage. The data will only be used for research and dissemination purposes and then, only in its anonymised form. The data will be stored in a secure location. Don't forget to Submit your answers before closing this page. Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.

Name if happy to provide it:

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