“No wi-fi, no snacks, no friends”

Adolescents in Iceland discussing media

Jodie Muree Birdman

June 2016

MA Thesis

Faculty of Education Studies

HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS
MENNTAVÍSINDASVIÐ

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Preface

This thesis is the equivalent of 40 ECTS and is the culmination of my MA studies in the International Studies in Education program at the University of Iceland. My supervisor was Þórdís Þórðardóttir, Ph.D. and Brynja Elísabeth Halldórsdóttir, Ph.D. was the specialist.

The aim of this research was to listen to and learn about the tastes and attitudes of adolescents in order to better understand their perspectives and culture. My previous experience as a middle school teacher showed me how powerful young people in this age group are, yet institutionally their voices are often marginalized.

My studies have included themes of sustainability, a capabilities approach to human rights, intersectionality, identity politics, and anthropology and folklore in the digital age. During this time, global events including the worldwide refugee crisis, the rise of nationalistic political parties in Europe, the campus safe space debate, the black lives matter movement, free the nipple, and many more have also come into focus. This is in no small part thanks to the democratizing power of the internet (within a Western context) regarding spread of information. Our lives transcend borders.

I wanted to know how young people today, the first generation of not only digital natives, but social network natives, experience the stories they encounter. I say stories, because what is media, but stories? Whether to inform, to convince, to entertain, or to provide common context, the stories they share help create their worlds. It began as an investigation of movies and television, but the young people interviewed showed me that it is much, much more.

I would like to thank Þórdís Þórðardóttir and Brynja Elísabeth Halldórsdóttir for their direction, suggestions, comments, and encouragement. Many thanks to the instructors and collaborators in the International Studies in Education department for their instruction and help through this journey. Thanks also to Randi Stebbins at the writing center for offering patience and direction, and for bringing my ideas back to Earth throughout my studies. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their support. It has been a long two years for all of us, though suddenly the time seems so short. Finally and most importantly, I would like to thank the parents and especially the participants. Without them there would be nothing here. I wish them bright futures and I promise I will do my best not to mess things up too much before they take over.

Ágrip

“Ekkert þráðlaust net, ekkert snarl, engir vinir”
Unglingar á Íslandi ræða um fjölmiðla

Þessi rannsókn miðar að því að kanna hlutverk fjölmiðla sem menningarlegs auðs meðal unglinga og gefa þeim færi á að deila reynsluheimi sínum og þekkingu.

Hvernig lýsa unglingar félagslegu landslagi sínu og hvernig tengist það þeim fjölmiðlum sem þeir upplifa, ávinningur þessa menningarlega auðs og eftirköst þess að vanta þessa þekkingu? Hvaða hlutverki gegnir kyn og sjálfsmynd í þessari frásögn? Þessi rannsókn kannar hvernir sí-tengdir unglingar á Íslandi velja fjölmiðla og hvernir upplifun þeirra og smekkur tengist virkri þátttöku, hlutdeild og valdeflingu.

Þó mikið hafi verið skirfað um áhrif fjölmiðla á unglina eru rannsóknir á valdeflingu unglina ennþá frekar nýjar. Tilgagnur rannsóknarinnar er að gefa unglingum tækifæri á að lýsa reynsluheimi sínum og deila þekkingu.

Þessi eigindlega rannsókn samastóð af sjö half-opnum viðtölum. Þáttakendur voru 12 strákar og stelpur á aldrinum 12 til 15 ára, búsett á Stór-Reykjavíkur svæðinu, í tveimur hópum. Hvor hópur um sig hittist þrisvar sinnum, að einu einstakslingsviðtali viðbættu. Þar að auki stungu þáttalendur upp á tvennum fjölmiðlaatriðum (*Pretty Little Liars* og *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*) sem voru gagnrýnd til að auka dýpt og samhengi í umræðunum. Hadrit viðtalanna voru greind og leytað endurtekninna þema sem tengjast virkri þátttöku, hlutdeild og valdeflingu. Voru þau svo túlkuð út frá hugmyndum Bourdieu um táknrænan auð.

Þessi rannsókn einblíndi á reynslu unglinga með þeirra eigin orðum. Tvö meginþemu komu fram í gögnunum: alætur og sérfræðingar. Unglingamenning krefst þess að þau fylgist með eins miklu og mögulegt er, ásamt því að vera viðbúin því að taka þátt í gaumgæfilegum samræðum. Yfirboðsleg tíska, aðgengi að snjallsímum og yfirvofandi hræðsla við að vera dæmdur átti stóran þátt í samtölunum, en einnig var rætt um tengslamyndun, kyn og það að stunda leynilega eigin áhugamál þrátt fyrir hópþrýsting.

Abstract

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This study aims to investigate the role of media as cultural capital among adolescents and give them space to share their lived experiences and their knowledge.

How do adolescents describe their social landscape as it relates to the media they experience, the benefits of this cultural capital, and the repercussions of lacking this knowledge? What part does gender and identity play in their narratives? This study investigates how hyper-connected adolescents in Iceland select media, and how their experiences and tastes relate to agency, belonging, and empowerment.

While there is an existing body of work on how media affects young people, the area of youth empowered research is still fairly new and open. This study’s purpose is to give space for adolescents to describe their lived experiences and share their knowledge.

This qualitative study consisted of seven semi-structured interviews. The participants were 12 boys and girls aged 12 to 15 living in the greater Reykjavik area, divided into two groups. Each group met three times, plus one solo interview. Additionally, two media items suggested by the participants (Pretty Little Liars and Star Wars: The Force Awakens) were critically viewed to add depth and context to their discussions. The interview transcriptions were analyzed for recurring themes related to agency, belonging, and empowerment and interpreted through Bourdieu‘s concept of symbolic capital.

This study focused on adolescents’ experiences in their own words. Two main themes appeared in the data: omnivores and experts. Youth culture requires that they stay constantly abreast of as much as possible while being prepared to engage in in-depth discussions too. Superficially trends, access to smart phones, and the ever-present fear of being judged dominated conversation, but they also talked about bonding, gender, and secretly pursuing individual interests despite peer pressure.

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1 Introduction

Adolescence can be a complicated time of limbo between childhood and young adulthood. For many adolescents, this is a period of increased freedom as they have less direct supervision of their daily activities, but also a time of continued restriction. Their lives involve balancing the de-facto limitations of youth such as age-restriction policies while pursuing their own interests. During this time they often explore and reject different identities and interests as they struggle to figure out who they are and how they fit in with others (boyd, 2014; Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 2003; Strasburger, Wilson, & Jordan, 2013). Their lives can be busy as they balance activities and responsibilities related to school, family, peers, and interests (boyd, 2014; Suoninen, 2013)[1]. They belong to multiple social groups, often simultaneously, and with varying degrees of agency and power. A youth who is a leader in one context might be relatively voiceless elsewhere, and must switch to the appropriate role for a given situation. For example, an adolescent may be able to organize a social outing with peers, but she then must rely on the power of others for transportation and funding.

This study is based on the idea that the best way to learn about adolescents is to talk with them. The general frame of the study is around media and popular culture because, as Suoninen (2013) points out, it is impossible to separate youth culture from pop culture. The stories young people hear, read, play in games, and watch are interwoven in youth culture (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 2003; Dover, 2007; Kampf & Hamo, 2015; Suoninen, 2013; Vahlberg, 2010).

Sometimes taste in media informs social choices. Mutual interest in a computer game can be the spark that begins a friendship, and dislike for a film might discourage an adolescent from participating in a group outing. More often, it works as an underlying structure for reinforcing group belonging and even excluding outsiders (Griffiths & Machin, 2003; Kampf & Hamo, 2015; Suoninen, 2013). Being able to participate in discussions means understanding and being able to use common references.

[1] Suoninin: Original publication 2001, from the revised 2013 edition.

Media also occupies a large amount of a young person's time. According to a 2010 Kaiser Family Foundation survey, young people in the U.S. spent an average of 458 minutes with media every day. This is more time than they spent in school (Vahlberg, 2010). While this is not representative of all children worldwide, most Western children are also part of the digital and media world, with youth digital access in developed countries at near saturation point (Third, Dawkins, Keltie, & Pihl, 2014). In Iceland specifically, 96.4% of households report having a personal computer with internet access (World Economic Forum, 2015). Astonishingly, there are also 108.1 mobile phone subscriptions per 100 people in Iceland, and 74.7% of those are broadband subscriptions (World Economic Forum, 2015, p. 171). The digital age has arrived and become part of Icelandic life.

In today's globally connected world young people need not restrict themselves to local media experiences. International media agreements and internet access mean that young people in Iceland have access to a sort of global pop culture, which they can share with each other locally and virtually (Buccitelli, 2013; Poster, 2002). Relationships also extend into the digital realm. A child in an Icelandic school could very well have friends in other countries with the same taste in movies, television, music and games. Most young people participate in social media and social networking (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Livingstone, 2008; Micheli, 2016). According to a Capacent Gallup poll of Icelandic young people between ages 4 and 16, all of them have internet access, and all but one of the 954 respondents had used social media in some way within the past month (2013). Such networks simultaneously widen their social opportunities and put them at risk of negative interactions and relationships, such as cyberbullying (boyd, 2014; Burnham & Wright, 2012; Page, 2012, April 4; Reay, 2012; Rowling, 2016; Staksrud, Ólafsson, & Livingstone, 2013). Thanks to livestreaming events, video/voice platforms like Skype, and collaborative online games even event participation no longer relies solely on local proximity. Access to global media also gives access to global cultural trends such as participatory memes like the #IceBucketChallenge and even debate about the U.S. presidential election. "Thus large-scale forces can impact on children's lives locally" (Mayall, 2012, p. 352). The complex world of interconnected relationships existing in physical and digital space contains reference points and touchstones which adolescents share.

At the same time, youth also attend school and location-based activities. This mix of opportunities to forge relationships also presents moments where children may fail to connect, or find social exclusion. Bullying still exists inside and outside schools. Lack of support and isolation can cause academic and physical problems (Furrer & Skinner,

2003). Young people need the support of social groups and to feel accepted, and feelings of isolation often lead to negative concepts of self and poor coping skills during stressful times. (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Noble-Carr, Barker, McArthur, & Woodman, 2014).

Who a young person sees as her peer group naturally depends on location and options, but not only. Her sense of self and identity also influences what relationships she forms or does not form. Likewise, a sense of belonging assists feelings of positive self-esteem which in turn help young people create positive identity constructions and feel secure when interacting with the world (Noble-Carr et al., 2014). Media access and knowledge assist young people in their navigation of social landscapes. This study investigated how.

1.1 In favor of highlighting youth voices

Historically, writing about the experiences of young people has been missing the voices of those young people, but this trend is now changing. Authors such as Dunn, Niens, and McMillan (2014), Griffiths and Machin (2003), Alanen, Brooker, and Mayall (2015); O'reilly, Ronzoni, and Dogra (2013) and others have been advocating for and adding to the body of youth-centered perspectives in research about young people.

Adolescents have specific developmental needs (Groundwater-Smith, Dockett, & Bottrell, 2015). This is not an argument for socio-cognitive theory, but this instead refers to their social and cultural status (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2015). As minors, they do not have access to some rights and privileges of citizens. They can purchase some goods, but not all, they can travel, but not drive, and they can partake of public infrastructure, but not vote. They are subject to laws they neither created nor can actively change. Their expressions of independence are limited by age as they are yet under legal age see certain movies, buy age-restricted games, or earn money to support their interests. Their search for belonging and continual refinement of tastes and preferences is restricted by both the institutional and social structures around them. Young people in Iceland, as they are elsewhere, are under tremendous pressure to conform to social norms, and feel isolated and even fearful when they do not (J. I. Kjaran & Jóhannesson, 2014). They experience bullying and exclusion, and there are cool kids and outcasts. Exclusion can be active, but it also takes the shape of subconscious pressures such as expectations of what interests, clothing, and activities boys should enjoy, and what girls should enjoy (J. Kjaran & Kristinsdóttir, 2014; J. I. Kjaran & Jóhannesson, 2014). Young people who do not share these tastes or behaviors then feel excluded by default (J. Kjaran & Kristinsdóttir, 2014; J. I. Kjaran & Jóhannesson, 2014). Schools are spaces where young people experience the results of political processes every day. These processes can be overt, such as voting, or

subtle, such as shifting public opinion. Thus, large portions of their lives are influenced by factors which they have little power to influence in return. By observing how selected young people describe the sharing or rejection of experiences and tastes, this study may add to the understanding of how youth construct their ideas of belonging and exclusion.

Acknowledging the relationship between popular culture and youth culture has shown to have academic benefits (Dunn et al., 2014). This study will explore other aspects such as the social effects of popular culture with the hope to learn more about the experiences of young people. How one sees the world also affects and informs relationships on the personal level. Patterns seen on a larger scale may come from somewhere within a person as a reaction to something without. Bourdieu explicitly describes institutions as conservative forces which cement existing patterns of inequality, esteem, contempt, and value (Bourdieu, 1976a, 1976b). Because young people spend as much (if not more) time interacting with media as with school (Vahlberg, 2010), this study extends the concept of institution to include commercially produced media and, by extension, pop culture. Seeking a youth-empowered perspective on belonging, agency, and media will hopefully add to the burgeoning body of work on this topic and provide new insights regarding the lives of adolescents. The results of this study may also provide material for others who wish to conduct related research.

This project seeks to listen to how adolescents describe their experiences and tastes in media, and how this relates to the social groups to which they belong and the groups to which they do not belong. As Griffiths and Machin (2003) point out, the best way to find out how young people integrate media into their culture is to talk to them. Additionally, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which was both signed and ratified by Iceland, guarantees children the right to freely express themselves on matters concerning them (U.N. General Assembly, 1989). Therefore, this study proposes to create a space for adolescents to describe the interwoven landscape of social and media experience in their own words.

1.2 Research questions

1. How do adolescents aged 12-15 describe agency, belonging, and empowerment?
2. How do these adolescents describe the benefits of agency, belonging, and empowerment?
3. How do these adolescents describe a lack of agency, belonging, or empowerment?
4. What connections to these descriptions can be found in select media that they describe experiencing?

1.3 Thesis structure

The first chapter introduced the context and purpose for this study, as well as the research questions together with a brief explanation of the reasoning for the method of research for this study and support for youth participation in research.

The second chapter will be an overview of existing literature on media studies involving young people. It begins with a discussion of the philosophical background, followed by research on popular media use in youth culture, and concludes with an introduction to research about young people and social media use.

The third chapter is about the research methodology and the ethical implications of this study. Working with young people requires particular sensitivity to their needs from the planning stage to completion of the research. Because the ethical considerations are central to the methodology, both will be discussed together.

The fourth chapter presents the results of this study. This is where the media types and viewing methods will be identified along with a brief description of the media selected for review. The dominant themes found in the participants' descriptions will also be presented along with examples of each and how the participants answered the research questions in their own words.

The fifth chapter is dedicated discussing the findings. This is where I present my interpretation and findings through the lens of this study's theoretical and philosophical background and the research questions.

The sixth chapter contains the conclusions. Here there is also a discussion of suggestions for further research and possible applications of this study's findings.

2 Literature Review

Bourdieu's framework of field, habitus, and capital offers a useful tool for examining interactions as people maneuver through what Alanen et al. (2015) call "everyday negotiations"(p. 4). Indeed, as research involving young people has moved from viewing children and young people as subjects and incomplete humans to acknowledging that they have rights, culture, and agency (Alanen et al., 2015; O'reilly et al., 2013; U.N. General Assembly, 1989), Bourdieu has gained popularity as a frame for understanding complex interactions without necessarily reducing them to false dichotomies such as nature vs. culture or subject and object (Alanen et al., 2015; Zembylas, 2007).

In this section Bourdieu's concepts will be explained further, followed by a review of youth-centered research on media and popular culture, and how young people use them as symbolic capital. In recent years, social networking has become widespread among young people (Lambert, 2015; Livingstone, 2008; Micheli, 2016). This section will also consider current research on the intricacies of young peoples' use and competence with social networking services, and how this relates to symbolic capital.

2.1 Bourdieu

To elaborate on the framework, a definition of the terms field, habitus, and symbolic capital is necessary. In Bourdieu's words, "…a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions"(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). Field describes space, which in Bourdieu's world is a concept encompassing both the physical and the social (Alanen et al., 2015). To use a metaphor, if social interactions are viewed as a game, then the field is where the game is played. This can be a literal field, as in football where the rules apply while on the pitch, or it can be a space made by shared connections such as culture.

Habitus is often described as a tool for bypassing the subjective/objective argument by creating a conversation between them as way of describing relationships (Alanen et al., 2015; Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002). To put this in other words, habitus is the system of values, attitudes, and thoughts which has been learned and internalized, and which then informs our actions – actions which often then reinforce the structures which taught us this system of values, attitudes, and thought. A common way of visualizing habitus is to describe a fish in water, or a person within her normal habitus versus a fish out of water, or a person in a foreign habitus. One's internalized expectations are most clear when they are not met. Habitus also informs what actions and behaviors are possible, though it does not necessarily restrict agents (Reay, 2004c). While one is more likely to behave in a way which fits within one's accepted framework for reality, habitus

does not eliminate free will. It does, however, combine with field to create *doxa*, or a "set of core values and discourses" (Webb et al., 2002, p. xi). This is an unconscious acceptance of a concept of how things work, what is possible, and what is not (Webb et al., 2002).

A side effect of habitus and the resulting doxa is symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Webb et al., 2002), which is defined as "violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 167). This is not necessarily violence in the physical, brutal sense, but rather violence in the form of denial of resources, limiting the prospects of an agent, or treating an agent as inferior. However, rather than recognizing these acts of violence, they are perceived as simply part of the natural order of things, and thus correct and appropriate (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This is a process called misrecognition (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). A simple example of this might be a child being selected last for a game, and accepting that it is appropriate because she is less skilled, rather than questioning whether this lack of skill is actually important or even possibly the result of habitual exclusion.

Bourdieu's concept of capital is different from its common, financial use. Capital is always symbolic and exists in three forms: social, economic, and cultural. It is the "accumulated labor… which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. para. 1). It is important to note that this *accumulated labor* includes all activities, thus simple acts such as watching a film or having a conversation add to symbolic capital in the form of invested time, intellect, and social connection. As capital is the means by which agents gain, distribute, and transfer power, the body of capital possessed by an individual significantly influences what paths are open to her (Bourdieu, 1986). Some forms of capital, such as fashionable clothing or an academic degree are relatively easy to identify, while others, such as knowledgeable appreciation of popular music or an extensive network of friends are more difficult to spot.

One of the features of symbolic capital is that it can be converted from one form to another (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, economic capital converts directly into spendable currency, and can become institutionalized in the form of investment regulation and property rights (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital is less straightforward. Bourdieu defines social capital as:

> "aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual

> acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, membership in a group" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 19).

This group membership offers credential, which may be converted into economic or cultural capital in a more round-about way (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, one might have access to better employment chances, or improved educational opportunities through one's membership. However, social capital in particular must be tended, maintained, and reinforced, as group membership may be de-facto lost through lack of relationship (Bourdieu, 1986).

Cultural capital further divides into embodied, objectified, and institutionalized states (Bourdieu, 1986). In the embodied state, it is that cultural knowledge which is contained within a person. It is accumulated throughout a lifetime, and cannot be transferred through any passive means. Bourdieu likens embodied cultural capital to a suntan or the form of the body-builder, as it is the cumulative result of one's own experiences (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital in the objectified state consists of cultural artefacts, such as a painting or a DVD. However, these things are meaningless without the embodied capital which, (informed by the habitus of that particular field) is able to ascertain the value of it (Bourdieu, 1986). An example of cultural capital in the institutionalized state would be an academic degree. It is a recognized method for objectifying embodied capital and making it easy to identify those agents who possess it (Bourdieu, 1986). In adolescent culture, this could be other certifications such as ranks of achievement within a game, thus signifying to others expertise within the field of that game.

Researchers investigating empowerment, agency, and opportunity, among children, especially with regard to later educational success, may find cultural capital of particular interest (Brooker, 2015; Griffiths & Machin, 2003; Jeffrey & McDowell, 2004; Leonard, 2005; Reay, 2004a). Brooker (2015) even argues that cultural capital is the "most potent form of symbolic capital"(p. 37). While Bourdieu typically refers to elite culture, scholars such as Diane Reay have expanded the concept to include the everyday (Reay, 2004a). Both embodied and objectified, the process of acquiring cultural capital begins in early childhood (Reay, 2004a). This is part of how patterns of inequality perpetuate, as those with access to the most advantageous cultural capital (as informed by habitus) know how to assist the following generation in gaining access to that same capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Reay, 2004a). The value of cultural capital is subjective, and so agency and empowerment are held not by those with the *most* cultural capital, but by those with the *right* cultural capital (Brooker, 2015; Reay, 2004a). While habitus might seem a more logical focus for agency, one must remember that it cannot be directly observed, and

must instead be interpreted (Reay, 2004c). Thus, symbolic capital and especially cultural capital as observed provides material for such later interpretation.

This study proposes to focus on the interactions of young people between the ages of 12 and 15. It is important to keep in mind that according to Piaget and Inhelder (1969), this is the time when children move from concrete operational thought to formal thought, which is characterized by a "liberation from the concrete in favour of interest oriented toward the non-present and the future"(p. 130). Combined with the more advanced linguistic ability of adolescents, it is anticipated that youths between the ages of 12 and 15 may be able to express some meta-awareness. Their ability to recognize multiple factors as influential in systems (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969) means they are equipped to skillfully articulate interactions which they have observed or experienced. Though this work does not follow the development point of view, Piaget's work provides a practical starting point for an age range.

2.2 Young people and media: a mutual relationship

Popular media is such an integral part of children's and youth culture that it is impossible to completely separate popular culture from children's culture (Griffiths & Machin, 2003; Suoninen, 2013). To clarify, in this section the term media refers to any audio, visual, or textual materials which can be viewed or heard by choice including, but not limited to, television, movies, online videos, video games, books, comic books, radio, streaming music online, and content found on social networking platforms (Dunn et al., 2014; Marsh, 2004; Prensky, 2001; Suoninen, 2013).

Media research has often focused on the family as a unit for media consumption, assuming that most media is used in domestic settings (Suoninen, 2013). However, adolescents and teenagers often prefer to use media either alone or with friends, and consider screen-oriented media appropriate for social enjoyment (Suoninen, 2013). Favorite television programs are often watched with friends, and especially so in peer-oriented cultures like the Nordics (Suoninen, 2013). Even more than watching media, talking about media and media content is central to peer group relationships (Suoninen, 2013).

Media knowledge and access help young people improve their group status, whether in the form of possessing videos which can be traded or being knowledgeable about media (Suoninen, 2013). This rich source of cultural and social capital affects peer-group relationships and how young people relate to non-media related events (Suoninen, 2013). They use media for background knowledge or to provide context for more complex, philosophical discussions (Suoninen, 2013). The integration into culture is quite

complex, and requires vast and varied knowledge to navigate the layers of meaning and references (Suoninen, 2013). Access to media also provides opportunity for social distinction, such as being able to host a video night with friends and offer inclusion, shown in being invited to participate in such an event (Suoninen, 2013).

Media taste also provides a way for youth culture to draw distinctions. Young people participate in fan cultures, though they are often reluctant to identify with any single subculture (Suoninen, 2013). Instead, they tend to view the media belonging to subcultures as part of a personal, virtual identity-building tool and use references to and media associated with these subcultures as social lubricant to assist in movement between social groups (Suoninen, 2013). Sometimes their choices will reflect boundary testing or subversion of adult values, such as an interest in horror films as a group activity (Suoninen, 2013).

Television especially plays a strong role in how young people relate to each other and their world. In a 5 year study with 4 to 11 year olds in Wales, Griffiths and Machin (2003) found that children integrated television-based knowledge into other knowledge, and used it as a reference point for describing experiences. For example, when watching an advertisement, they framed the plot using references to a popular soap opera (Griffiths & Machin, 2003). That all the young people in the room would understand the reference was mutually assumed. Griffiths and Machin (2003) argue that children are not interested in television for the content, but for how it "allows them to join in, be party to common knowledge, to be in on the latest thing"(p. 149). Specific knowledge provides both the opportunity to gain prestige and the pleasure of being able to exclude others if desired (Griffiths & Machin, 2003). Part of the assumption that all present share specific knowledge is the inability of those who do not to participate.

This is not to say that young people view media with an uncritical eye. They are skilled at considering potential plot trajectories and making hypotheses about what could happen, and at considering a character's motivation for decision making (Strasburger et al., 2013). They are able to consciously re-evaluate their ideas and change them if new information makes this necessary (Strasburger et al., 2013). As young people develop their knowledge about the social, physical, and interpersonal realities around them, they also work to fit new knowledge into existing schemas (Strasburger et al., 2013). Adolescents especially tend to ruminate on how to present themselves to others, what others are perceiving of them, and how it fits with a particular social crowd or not, as well as how to use various forms of media as tools in this process (boyd, 2014; Strasburger et al., 2013; Suoninen, 2013). The common worry that young people are unable to filter what they see and that they are passive consumers of content (Hill, 2011)

falls apart when discussing media with young people (Griffiths & Machin, 2003; Suoninen, 2013). Young people need not accept a story as true to find that it resonates personally, is amusing, or is worth re-telling.

Tobin (2000) also investigated how children critically evaluate media. His book, *"Good Guys Don't Wear Hats": Children's Talk About the Media*, uses the dynamic of bad guys and good guys to ask children questions. The title comes from one quote, in which a young participant attempts to explain what a good guy looks like (Tobin, 2000). Over the course of five years Tobin repeatedly watched a scene from *The Swiss Family Robinson* with groups of school children at an elementary school in Hawaii, then interviewed the kids. His semi-structured, focus group interviews consisted of relatively straightforward questions such as "Were there good guys and bad guys?" and, "How could you tell?" (Tobin, 2000). The interviews were video and audio recorded, and his close readings of the transcripts focused on themes about race, sex, violence, and class (Tobin, 2000). His goal was to build on the work of other researchers, including Buckingham and Sefton-Green (2003) whose more recent work is included in the research for this study.

Children and young people usually do not discuss phenomena in the same language used by social scientists and researchers. For this reason, Tobin (2000) uses a literary criticism approach to discover the deeper meanings in their quotes. For example, when he asks one girl to explain how she recognizes the bad guys, she remarks that they have "Chinese eyes" and uses her fingers to distort her eyelids (Tobin, 2000, p. 2). While this comes across as overt racism, Tobin slowly teases out the layers of meaning to explain how in this setting, the young girl (who is Japanese Hawaiian) does not mean that people of Asian descent are evil, but that they often play stock villains in movies (Tobin, 2000). Similarly, the children's assertions that the people with clean clothes are the good guys, and that the bad guys don't have women show how they use media to discuss middle class values and gender roles (Tobin, 2000).

Tobin (2000) uses this good guy/bad guy frame to learn what young people have to say about traits that are viewed positively and negatively in society. Because his choice in film pits a group of generically other antagonists against a white, middle-class family the discussion covers gender roles, colonialism, class disputes, and other complex topics (Tobin, 2000). Some of the children take things very much at face value, but their descriptions of events still reveal their own habitus and value system based on how they describe *good* and how they describe *bad* (Tobin, 2000). Good guys are clean, have houses, use technology, and retaliate rather than attack (Tobin, 2000). Bad guys are unwashed, have non-white features, behave aggressively but unintelligently, and have no

family attachments (Tobin, 2000). These statements are completely descriptive of the film, yet the fact that these are the features the children use to describe the differences between the characters shows that they are significant to the children's interpretation of events (Tobin, 2000). Other children are much more critical. For example, one girl brings in the colonial tensions on Hawaii by proposing that maybe the family is being attacked because they are trying to build a house on land that isn't theirs (Tobin, 2000, pp. 110, 111). In this way Tobin's study also takes into account that children of the same age may interpret media on different levels. Tobin (2000) acknowledges that this method of interpretation means adding to what the children have said, but asserts that, "To make sense of the transcripts from Koa Elementary School, I've read something of myself and what I know of the world into the children's talk. To do so is to treat children's speech with the care, dignity, and benefit of the doubt we accord to the works of poets and scholars" (p. 139). He attempts to give voice to his participants while tuning that voice to the language of social researchers.

Moving away from how adults interpret children's talk about the media, how young people actively use and influence media themselves is still a burgeoning area of study (Kampf & Hamo, 2015; Strasburger et al., 2013; Suoninen, 2013). Kampf and Hamo (2015) spent a cumulative five years observing children aged 4 to7 to see how they reference media in free play. They found that children used narratives in commonly known television shows to structure play in three different ways: by recreating a narrative faithfully, by building a fantasy world based on the characters and setting of the show, or by interweaving interpersonal interactions with the television characters and setting (Kampf & Hamo, 2015). In this way shared media experience acts as both a common base for play and a social balsam for transgression.

Media knowledge can also be used as a method for exclusion. In the same studies, Kampf and Hamo (2015) found that children could use dislike for media as a social tool as well. In one interaction they observed a child loudly proclaim hate for a particular show and the associated trading cards. The other children quickly chimed in and elaborated on how distasteful the show was, attaching the term *them* to fans of the show and *us* and *we* to fellow detractors (Kampf & Hamo, 2015).

Not only can interest in the wrong media be grounds for exclusion, but ignorance of media as well (Þórðardóttir, 2012). In a study of preschool children Þórðardóttir (2012) found that assumed or real ignorance of cultural reference points was grounds for exclusion from games. Additionally, the children who showed the most social success in interactions were also those with better knowledge of popular culture figures

(Þórðardóttir, 2012). Thus, media knowledge and fluency already affects prestige in children as young as 4 years old.

In addition to utilizing media in play and storytelling, young people also draw on media for other forms of symbolic capital. Buckingham and Sefton-Green (2003) investigated the relationship between young people and Pokémon, a popular media phenomenon which includes a wide array of audio-visual material, games, reading material, and merchandise. They found that young people were able to exploit the complexity of Pokémon in a vast number of ways. Possession of and access to rare cards and valued merchandise often helped set apart social leaders, early adopters, and trend setters within social groups (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 2003). Additionally, the embodied social capital of the game helped youths gain status regardless of what game paraphernalia they possessed (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 2003). The concept behind Pokémon is that there are a number of creatures (called Pokémon) which the game player must find, capture, and train to battle other Pokémon in order to advance in the game. Youths who were able to offer expertise in this process or specialized knowledge about the creatures or game characters were able to earn the esteem of their peers (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 2003).

What set Pokémon apart from other media in its early days was that it was a multi-market form of media which included television shows, movies, trading cards, characters on clothing, video games, dolls, toys, comic books, and many other forms of media or media-related items. This overlap of textual cultural capital (such as stories) and fad-based cultural capital (the latest toy, etc.) gave young people over a range of ages and interests access to cultural capital through Pokémon (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 2003). While the decision to create an adaptable product marketed to young children and teenagers was financially driven on the part of Nintendo, the result was that children as young as four could capitalize on knowledge, experience, and items that retained symbolic value through their teenage years and beyond (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 2003). Pokémon also avoids strong gender or cultural stereotypes by featuring children as protagonists and focusing on exploring, finding, and nurturing animals as the main plot scheme. This made the appeal of the game less polarizing for children and lowered gender or racial inhibitions toward participation (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 2003). This was effectively the opposite of what was observed by Tobin (2000). Instead of using media to discuss gender, class, and racial divisions, young people are able to use Pokémon as a relatively safe source of cultural capital.

Before a young person can access the content of media, he or she must become competent in the methods for media access. Marsh (2004) discusses the emergence of techno-literacy in young children in England. Studies on childhood literacy often focus on print literacy, and ignore other media which are just as important for integration into youth culture, such as the ability to operate a phone, a television, a computer, and other common items of technology (Marsh, 2004). In this study, Marsh reviews a survey given to parents of children between the ages of 2 years 6 months and 3 years 11 months. She found that many of the children were active participants in television viewing, and they engage in dialogue and activities with and about the characters and actions (Marsh, 2004). Likewise, the children were also participants in video game play. This was a more gendered activity than television viewing, as the father was usually the parent who introduced the children to video games by playing with the child present, with the child as a gaming partner, or being present with the child as primary player (Marsh, 2004). Despite the gender imbalance, girls also participated in playing video games.

In addition to familiarity with the story lines within visual media and video games, the children were also familiar with how to operate the technology. If given a video game controller, they understood to manipulate the joystick and press the buttons to affect what they viewed on screen (Marsh, 2004). Likewise, they were also familiar with mobile phones and how to manipulate them (Marsh, 2004). Marsh (2004) observed that there has even been crossover between technology and other areas of child culture, as common acronyms found in text messaging now appear on Lovehearts, a popular, heart-shaped sweet with a short written message written on it, thus exposing them to technology-based communication vernacular. Most of the children also owned toys which simulated technology, such as toy laptops and mobile phones (Marsh, 2004). Given the ages of the children in this study, they would now be adolescents themselves.

Today's adolescents are not the first generation to be surrounded by digital technology from early childhood. In 2001 Marc Prensky coined the term *digital native* for young people in school and entering university. He divides the population between those born and schooled before the internet era, or *digital immigrants* and those born afterward. Roughly put, those born after the early 1980s have had access to digital media and the ability to connect with others through technology their whole lives, and are thus native citizens of the digital world (Prensky, 2001). He further argues that this has changed how young people learn and interact with the world and each other (Prensky, 2001).

Yet, despite the various competencies of young people, many schools still prioritize textual literacy (Dunn et al., 2014; Marsh, 2004; Prensky, 2001). This renders the

expertise that young people have built thus far unimportant from an institutional point of view, regardless of the child's or her peers' opinions on that matter (Marsh, 2004). This begins in preschool (Marsh, 2004) and continues to later grades, despite increasing support for recognizing and integrating the media and popular culture literacies of students in school (Dunn et al., 2014). This lack inclusion or reference to youth cultural capital can create a schism between curriculum expectations and what young people experience and do outside of class (Dunn et al., 2014; Prensky, 2001).

Dunn et al. (2014) found that allowing children to bring references to popular culture into their school work helped students find school activities more meaningful and engaging. This also helped bridge the gap in cultural capital between the students and their teachers, as they were able to share information they found meaningful with their teachers and engage in dialogue on a more power-balanced level (Dunn et al., 2014). The teachers did not necessarily need to be experts in youth culture. Giving permission for students to include popular culture in assignments and asking them about characters and media was enough to show a change in student motivation and engagement (Dunn et al., 2014)

There is a growing body of research to support the view of children as active consumers of media from a young age (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 2003; Dunn et al., 2014; Griffiths & Machin, 2003; Kampf & Hamo, 2015; Marsh, 2004; Suoninen, 2013; Tobin, 2000). Youth use popular media as a tool for meaning making and communicating among themselves and with adults (Griffiths & Machin, 2003; Kampf & Hamo, 2015; Marsh, 2004; Tobin, 2000) Young people with improved access to and expertise about media tend to also occupy more empowered positions among their peers (Kampf & Hamo, 2015; Suoninen, 2013; Þórðardóttir, 2012). Additionally, inviting young people to bring their interests into the school environment is in line with youth-empowered philosophies (Dunn et al., 2014; Prensky, 2001).

2.3 Social networking and social capital

Social networks and content sharing platforms are also part of the current media world. To name an example, Facebook is a social networking website which was launched in 2004. It is currently the most popular social networking site worldwide (Abbas & Mesch, 2015; Micheli, 2016). Internetworldstats.com reports that Facebook has a 72.9% penetration rate in Iceland (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2016). Facebook is available through a web browser or through an application (app) for smart phones and tablets. More recently other social networking platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat have also gained popularity (Micheli, 2016). These are available as apps. Social media

culture includes young people in Iceland. According to a 2013 survey of 4 -16 year olds, 100% of the 954 respondents access the internet with at least one device (2013). The survey was conducted in partnership with Samfélag, fjölskylda og tækni (SAFT). Of the 954 respondents, 43.7% access the internet with their own computer or laptop, and 38.4% with their own smartphone (Capacent Gallup, 2013). 628 of the respondents also said they access the internet multiple times a day. When asked how often they use social media such as Facebook or Tumblr, 598 respondents said daily or almost daily, and an additional 113 replied at least once or twice a week, for a total of 77.5% of respondents (Capacent Gallup, 2013). Additionally, 372 respondents said they use messaging media such as Snapchat, Facebook chat, or Skype at least once a day, with an additional 168 using messaging media at least once a week (Capacent Gallup, 2013). Only one respondent did not use social media, and one did not use messaging media, but there was no information on if this was the same respondent (Capacent Gallup, 2013). 606 of the respondents had their own profile on Facebook (Capacent Gallup, 2013). This shows a high rate of social media participation, which is even more startling when realizing that of the young people surveyed, 525 of the respondents were age 4-10 and only 429 were between 10 and 16 years old. Considering that Facebook officially only allows users age 13 and over to have a profile (Facebook, 2016), this reveals that many Icelandic youth begin using Facebook earlier than the age restriction technically allows.

Social networks provide a forum for users, including young people, to access, grow, and use social capital though interaction with content and other users (Abbas & Mesch, 2015; Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Lambert, 2015; Malik, Dhir, & Nieminen, 2015). In terms of Facebook, there is only one official form of social connection: friend. Either someone is your friend on Facebook or not. The following studies investigate the nuances of relationships and social exchanges beyond the binary of friend vs. stranger.

In 2008 S. Livingstone published a study on how select teens in the UK use social networking for self-expression, and how they balance intimacy and privacy in this pursuit. Later in 2014 L. Berriman and R. Thomson expanded on this study to investigate how teens in the UK choose to manage participation and privacy in social networking. Both studies found that teens' participation in online social networking is a self-aware pursuit, and they consciously decide what to share and with whom (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Livingstone, 2008). The combination of real-time interaction and archival properties inherent to electronic communication makes social networking a unique platform for socializing and sharing information (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; boyd, 2014; Livingstone, 2008; Staksrud et al., 2013).

One of the challenges of social networking for young people is that it overlaps fields which normally would be separate (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; boyd, 2014; Marwick & boyd, 2014). Danah boyd (2014) calls this *context collapse*, a term which Berriman and Thomson (2014) have also adopted to describe this phenomenon. For example, posting a photo with a caption can open a conversation which includes anyone who is within the permission rights set by the person who posted. That group may include friends, school mates, family members, distant acquaintances and even strangers. What once would have been a private conversation becomes more like a town hall meeting among people with varying degrees of relation (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). Young people often find this overlap uncomfortable, such as when their parents interact with said young person's friends on social media (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Livingstone, 2008). These are groups which have different rules or expectations for communication.

Likewise, conversations which happened in the past can be brought back at any point due to the archival nature of text-based networking (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). For example, a parent might find and comment on a photo posted several months ago, bringing back an interaction which was previously finished. Or, more nefariously, a former boyfriend or girlfriend might make messages or photos that were previously private and between the couple public after an argument, exposing sensitive material to others for comment and distribution (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Livingstone, 2008).

The ability to interact quickly and easily with others while maintaining a physical distance poses both risks and opportunities (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Livingstone, 2008). As mentioned, once content is posted the user has very little control over what happens to it, how others use it, or how it is shared or altered by others (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; boyd, 2014; Marwick & boyd, 2014). Someone can always take a screen shot of a post or otherwise save it and then share it with an audience the original author did not intend. However, this is the price of the freedom of a relatively egalitarian and far-reaching platform for connection and self-expression, and young people generally accept and work with these risks (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; boyd, 2014; Livingstone, 2008; Marwick & boyd, 2014; Staksrud et al., 2013).

Accepting the risks does not mean teens are not concerned about privacy; it means that they conceive of and practice privacy differently than in the pre-social media era (Marwick & boyd, 2014). Rather than withdrawing from social media, young people use a combination of social cues and technical ingenuity to exercise control on who sees and reacts to information they post (Marwick & boyd, 2014). This does not always have the

desired results, though, making trust an integral part of online interaction (Marwick & boyd, 2014).

In her study of young people and social networking, Livingstone (2008) found that teens put time and effort into constructing social media profiles that present them as they wish others to see them. These profiles contain any combination of self-portraits and photos, information about the teen's interests, a list of friends, musical and cinematic tastes, quotes, and other images and information the teen considers relevant for self-portrayal (Livingstone, 2008). Livingstone states that "although it indeed appears that, for many young people, social networking is 'all about me, me, me', this need not imply narcissistic self-absorption" (2008, p. 400) Instead, it is more about constructing a face which simultaneously informs others of and conforms to the "norms and practices of their peer group" (Livingstone, 2008, p. 400). This digital face can be altered according to trends within a friend group or even deleted altogether as one teen did when cutting social ties with a friend group with whom he no longer wished to interact (Livingstone, 2008). This free construction and re-construction of identity harkens back to Haraway's 1991[2] *Cyborg Manifesto* (Haraway, 2008). In her manifesto, Haraway highlights the rise of the cyborg, or "…creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, or most important political construction, a world-changing fiction" (Haraway, 2008, p. 291). This cyborg is a being that is simultaneously real and imagined, and which can be constructed and deconstructed based on any combination of perceived values, but which is also irrevocably integrated into the network of social pressures around them (Haraway, 2008). Similarly, social media users create profiles of themselves which are not digital representations of their physical being, but social agents meant to present that which the teen has chosen to put forward (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Livingstone, 2008). This can sometimes lead to misunderstanding when profiles are viewed by individuals who are not members of the target audience (boyd, 2014). Crossed lines of this nature are a side effect of the aforementioned context collapse.

[2] The author is aware that other versions of *A Cyborg Manifesto* predate the 1991 publication in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. However, for the purpose of this literature review, this is the version of the essay being used.

Livingston's study focused on identity presentation and intimacy. Berriman and Thomson (2014) expand on Livingston's work to examine how young people use their self-presentation on social media for different purposes and with different levels of competence and confidence. Within the interviews, the teens gave insight into how they use social networking platforms as tools for exerting autonomy and agency as well. By controlling the privacy settings of their profile and what they post, the participants were able to manipulate who would have initial access to what information (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Livingstone, 2008) Social media generally offers three options for privacy: private, friends only, and public. Content which is privately posted is available to the person who posted it only. That which is for friends only is available to anyone in the user's contact (friend) list. Content which is public can be viewed by anyone, regardless of relation. However, to negotiate these choices, the teen must be technologically competent enough to use the security features of a social networking platform correctly, and not all are (Livingstone, 2008; Staksrud et al., 2013). Some teens expressed frustration or concern about not being completely sure that their chosen privacy settings would provide the amount of control they desired, but most circumvent this issue by controlling the amount and the content of their participation (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Livingstone, 2008). As one teen describes her experience, "I usually do something and I think I'm really cool, and then I'll look back and think 'That's really stupid.' So I try not to post too much online, in case I regret it" (Berriman & Thomson, 2014, p. 590).

Participatory media is also a way for young people to engage corporate entities (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). A young person who writes stories based on existing fictional characters (fan fiction), creates art based on existing franchises (fan art), or releases regular YouTube videos can gain corporate sponsorship if her work becomes popular enough (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). Youth creative online presence and networking habits are done with an awareness that they are interacting socially and professionally, and thus also establishing credibility as content creators (Berriman & Thomson, 2014) Alternatively, young people can also cultivate themselves as content by sharing writing (blogs), art, and videos about themselves and their daily lives (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). In this case, online and offline activities overlap, as the person attempting internet celebrity status is using her own face and life as capital (Berriman & Thomson, 2014).

Berriman and Thomson illustrate the different ways in which young people use social media by placing their reported activities in quadrants based on two scales: high participation vs. low participation, and high visibility vs. low visibility (2014). A teen who is a high visibility, high participation user is generally savvy about the technical and social

aspects of a platform, and adept at using it to generate and exchange social capital (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). On the more negative side, a teen who is a high visibility, low participation user is usually having things posted about her, rather than by her, and is often a victim of online bullying (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). This can include unflattering photos, private conversations being made public, or instances of others taking advantage of poorly managed privacy settings (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). Other teens may have a high participation level, but a low visibility level due to careful cultivation of a specialized group of followers (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). These teens are usually focused on building an online portfolio of work showing expertise in a specific area, such as video game tutorials (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). This use could be seen as a social media specific form of embodied capital, as teens tend to see amount of participation and the collection of friends or fans that a social media user has as legitimating features (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Livingstone, 2008). The final category is a low visibility, low participation user. This would be a teen who posts very little content and has very little posted about him or herself. She might choose this due to, for example, limited access to social media, limited expertise, or even a conscious desire to avoid creating an online presence (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). As one 14 year old girl puts it, "Facebook is for school […] I don't really go on it 'cos it's really boring now […] usually school fights happen through Facebook and stuff like that" (Berriman & Thomson, 2014, p. 591). It should be pointed out that a low participation, low visibility user can only remain so if no one chooses to antagonize her through social media (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). Also, location within these four quadrants is not fixed. Because social media is participatory and functions strongly on both online and offline social capital (depending on one's contact group), participation amount and visibility level are both highly volatile (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). Additionally, there is a degree of social intelligence required, as technical skill alone does not prevent teens from negative online interactions (Staksrud et al., 2013). In fact, Staksrud et al. (2013) found that increased technical expertise was related to increased risk of online abuse, though this is more likely to be a reflection of increased online participation associated with expertise.

Lambert (2015) writes about this fluidity of intimacy and publicity in a symbolic capital framework in an ethnographic study of adults in Australia. Much of her study and the work she references is aimed more toward adults (Lambert, 2015). However, some of her findings help to conceptualize how social media functions in terms of symbolic capital. Firstly, there is the aspect of public performance of connection (Lambert, 2015). Lambert classifies this as a public exchange of capital, intended to not only reinforce the relationship between the participants, but also to demonstrate group belonging to others

(2015), a trend boyd (2014) also observed in young people. However, these demonstrations can also be too intimate. The participants found posts which they considered overly private, such as public exchanges of affection between couples, distasteful, and Lambert found upon review that posts of this nature also received little to no response, regardless of the size of the audience (2015). This editing or desire for others to edit based on social norms was reflected in Berriman and Thomson (2014) and Livingstone (2008) as well.

Adding someone as a friend does not necessarily indicate an intimate relationship. The participants of Lambert's study found it odd when someone with whom they were *friends*, but with whom they had little contact would comment or interact on a level outside the established level of intimacy (2015). However, all Lambert's participants described making use of access to a *friend*'s posts to learn about his or her life and interests without interacting – a pursuit shared by the participants in Berriman and Thomson (2014; 2015) Both groups also refer to this activity as *stalking* (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Lambert, 2015).

Lambert proposes a new form of capital called *intimacy capital*, which she defines as "a critical concept which recognises the cultural and socio-technical competencies required to negotiate intimacy and thus have rewarding and 'safe' exchanges on Facebook" (2015, p. 13). While intimacy capital is not part of the theoretical framework of this work, it is an interesting concept when considering the ways in which adolescents network and share information. Social networks provide a forum for demonstrative intimacy on a scale which was not possible previously, and these displays of capital exchange do contribute to the overall habitus and economy of capital of those who witness the exchange as well as those directly involved (Lambert, 2015). Those with the most intimacy capital, or those who are the most skilled at managing what is available to whom and how those people will behave with this information, could be seen as the most successful at this form of interaction (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Lambert, 2015).

Social media also by nature favors those with more stable socioeconomic status by relying on access to technology, infrastructure, and paid services such as broadband and mobile internet (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; boyd, 2014). As mentioned earlier, Iceland has a high density of private homes with internet access, and especially young people in the greater Reykjavik area are certain to have access to at least a home computer or laptop with an internet connection. However, Micheli (2016) suggests that even as internet access becomes more equal, a socioeconomic divide will become apparent among digital natives regarding *how* they use the internet. She carried out a mixed

methods study of teens, class, and social network use in Italy. Her survey was sent to 10th grade students in the Lombardy region of Italy. The 2327 students within her sample were divided by gender, parents' occupational status, and parents' level of education. Additionally, semi structured interviews were conducted with 56 purposively sampled teens in the 9th and 10th grade.

She found that 89% of teens owned a personal profile on Facebook, and this was neither influenced by parental education nor occupational status (Micheli, 2016). Likewise, these factors had no statistically significant influence on the frequency with which participants exchanged messages, commented on friends' posts, or posted content (Micheli, 2016, p. 571). However, privacy was a point of difference. Teens from families with lower socioeconomic status and less education tended to have public Facebook profiles and post more public content (Micheli, 2016). This could be seen as riskier behavior (Micheli, 2016) descriptive of Lambert's framework of capital (2015), or it could be interpreted as a capital building strategy based on attempting to reach a wider audience (Micheli, 2016). The links between class, education, and other Facebook behaviors such as deciding who to *friend*, which is arguably a form of capital building based on expanding a network of weak social ties, were much more complicated (Micheli, 2016). The interview portion of the study helped make sense of these differences, and also gave information about the participants' stated intent for behaviors which appeared similar. For example, the teens who were from what Micheli labeled the *elite* group emphasized that they used Facebook for 'beneficial' and 'constructive' purposes such as looking for or sharing information about topics of interest such as music, history, literature, or sports, or communicating in group discussions about schoolwork (Micheli, 2016, p. 573). They also showed a difference in attitude. The elite teens categorized Facebook activities as positive or constructive, and negative, or irresponsible, and used this as a way to contrast their own social network use against (unnamed) incompetent peers (Micheli, 2016). They also were critical of social networking, despite regular use. Some of their complaints included that it is 'addictive', that it 'wastes time', increases pressure to 'fit in', and that it collects information about users (Micheli, 2016, p. 574). Their eagerness to establish distance between themselves and social networking could be seen as demonstrative of their aversion to platforms and content which are equally available to other classes (Micheli, 2016).

To contrast, teens Micheli labeled *lower-income* emphasized the social aspects of Facebook, and found the opportunity to make new acquaintances and friends and maintain contacts important (Micheli, 2016). They also reported finding new friends through Facebook, a behavior described as 'sleazy' by the elite teens (Micheli, 2016, p.

575). The lower-income teens regarded a Facebook presence as a legitimating feature, and would often look for a person on Facebook to gather information about him before initiating an offline relationship (Micheli, 2016). This was especially important for dating, a topic which the elite teens either avoided, or were highly critical about (Micheli, 2016). The lower-income teens were also much less critical of social media use, and even used terms like 'addiction' in a positive manner (Micheli, 2016).

The overall result is that social media networks may actually be an opportunity for less privileged youth to build social capital independent of parental or family networks and resources (Micheli, 2016). However, it is still too early to state this conclusively. Additionally, lower-income teens were "less likely than their 'elite' peers to make use of [social network services] in capital-enhancing ways and to protect themselves from online risks" (Micheli, 2016, p. 578).

The barrier for participation is even lower on social media sites such as YouTube, where one does not even need to create a profile or account to view content. This form of social media is based on viewers creating, uploading, and sharing videos free of charge. Having an account affords similar benefits to Facebook, such as creating a profile page, being able to post content, commenting on content, and similar, but simply watching videos is unrestricted. According to Chau (2010), teens frequent YouTube for entertainment, to watch videos, and to find out what other teens are talking about. Additionally, YouTube offers young people a method for self-directed content viewing, as they can enter keywords which interest them and find related videos (Chau, 2010). A popular category in these searches is "how to" videos, or videos which visually teach the viewer skills (Chau, 2010). These skills include make-up guides, skateboarding, cooking, and creating and uploading videos to YouTube, to name a few. Videos also prominently display view counts, how many people like them, and options for sharing on social media, which adds to the participatory culture (Chau, 2010). Light, Griffiths, and Lincoln (2012) even argue that the accessible, participatory nature of YouTube has led to young people using this as a platform for the spread of modern folk culture in the same way that the combination of anonymity and visibility influenced the rise of graffiti artistry. YouTube offers a low-barrier option to view creative works, connect with others over them, and share one's own work.

In her 2014 book, danah boyd argues that social media has replaced locations like the local shopping mall as where teens meet, hang out, and socialize. Though they also still engage in location-based activities, their social landscape transcends physical boundaries to occupy socially created space which they can access from any location (boyd, 2014).

To explain how these virtual spaces function, she uses the term *networked publics*, which she defines as places which are "constructed through networked technologies" and "the imagined community that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice" (boyd, 2014, p. 8). Some young people find the pervasive and time-consuming nature of social media disturbing, or even liken it to addiction, but they also find that refraining from social media also results in a social disadvantage (boyd, 2014). Boyd is also careful to point out that addictive behavior is not a result of technology, but of other factors, with the desire to socially connect strongly influencing social media use. When restricted from traveling to meet friends and engage in activities, young people often turn to social media to find an alternative or augmented way to engage with peers (boyd, 2014). As previously mentioned, social media gives teens an independent means of building social and cultural capital.

Viewed through a Bourdieu's framework, the role of media in youth culture is more than just entertainment. Popular culture makes up a significant portion of young people's cultural capital (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 2003; Dunn et al., 2014; Suoninen, 2013). Young people utilize references to popular culture and media to relate to each other and to work with challenging concepts. They can use this knowledge to reinforce social capital, whether it be in the form of belonging or exclusion. The right knowledge in the right context helps young people advance their status in their desired peer group.

The rise of social media has given young people a new way to exchange capital. Interactions which happen in person can be continued online, and these online interactions also serve to reinforce offline relationships. However, social media interaction is also risky, and adolescents must find a balance between privacy and participation.

The previous pages have outlined some of the significant research on the subjects of young people, media, and symbolic capital, with special emphasis on youth empowering studies. As this research intends to follow in this tradition, the methodology has been inspired by some of these studies. The next chapter will describe the methodology and address ethical issues regarding this work.

3 Methodology and ethics

In this chapter there will be a discussion on the methods used for data collection, organization and analysis, as well as the justification for the chosen methods. Here the ethical considerations related to this study will also be addressed. Because this study involves working with a vulnerable population the methodology and ethics are closely bound.

3.1 Design

The goal of this research is to learn how young people describe their interactions with media and each other with attention to concepts of agency, belonging, and power. As such, the focus on depth of information makes qualitative research an appropriate choice (Creswell, 1998, 2012). Specifically, the research design took the form of a case study, with semi-structured group interviews as the chosen method of data collection. To prepare for this study I spent an afternoon with a group of young people. We watched *The Lion King* together and discussed it. Krueger (2002) Creswell (2012), and Berg (2009b) all recommend practicing conducting group interviewing before conducting a study. Though no data was collected during this afternoon, it was an important step in preparing for and testing the feasibility of this study.

The case study design follows the form of a holistic, or single-unit analysis case as outlined in chapter 2 of Yin (2009). Though the 12 participants were divided into groups for interviewing purposes, they are all from the greater Reykjavik area. The size and inter-connected nature of the surrounding community mean that most of the participants still had incidental contact with each other. Additional media reviewed is included as contextual information for comparison with themes presented by the participants.

Data collection occurred in seven semi-structured interviews. Six of these were focus group interviews and one was a one-on-one interview. Focus group interviews offer the advantage of allowing the participants to interact with each other, a potential source of important information (Creswell, 2012). They also help reduce the perceived power distance between the interviewer and participants, helping to encourage dialogue (Krueger, 2002). The solo interview gave the participant the time and privacy to express ideas and opinions which he might not have voiced in a group setting (Creswell, 2012). Semi-structured interviews allowed for the structured planning of questions while remaining open to deviating from the prepared questions should the participants raise different points or need clarification. They also allowed for further elaboration or even

deviation from the question order (Berg, 2009a). In addition to interview questions, the interviews also included watching short clips of media suggested by the participants in the preceding interview.

3.1.1 Interview procedures

The two groups met separately in locations of the participants' choosing. The first of these groups chose to meet in the home of one of the participants. The first two interviews occurred in one location, and the third interview occurred in the home of a different participant. The participants and I arrived at the location at roughly the same time, and the participants spent time playing video games, talking, and watching video clips online while waiting for all participants to be present. The participants and I then arranged subsequent interviews together. All meetings took place in February and March of 2016.

Interviews with the second group of participants took place at the university, as the participants expressed that this would be more convenient for them. The first interview began with introductions, followed by the recorded portion of the discussion. The second interview began with a short card game to help create a more casual atmosphere. However, during the interview one participant expressed that she "(doesn't) like talking in front of groups", but she decided to continue with her participation. This statement was taken seriously, and a re-negotiation of interview arrangements took place. Ultimately the decision was to split the group in order to offer the participant and two others who were also her friends a more private forum. The remainder of the group arranged for a different meeting. At short notice it became clear that most of the participants might not be able to attend. However, one participant was present and enthusiastic. He was interviewed individually in hope for creating a deeper understanding of the topic.

All interviews were video and audio recorded as suggested by Berg (2009b) and Krueger (2002) as meaningful interactions can be verbal or non-verbal. The participants were made aware that they would be recorded before meeting, and assisted in equipment set-up and testing prior to the interviews. All interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

3.1.2 Media

After the interviews media which was mentioned by the participants was reviewed to gain familiarity. Two items of media were then chosen based on how current they were in respect to the interview time period, the number of participants who expressed

interest in them, and expressions of importance that their peers be familiar with these items of media.

The focus of this research is the descriptions of the participants, not the content of the media. With this in mind, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and season 1, episode 13 of *Pretty Little Liars* ("Know Your Frenemies") were viewed specifically looking for events and experiences the participants either discussed, or which mirrored themes in the discussion. Familiarity with the media young people reference adds depth and insight to discussions with them (Griffiths & Machin, 2003; Kampf & Hamo, 2015; Tobin, 2000). Analysis of the media itself is irrelevant in this context, as the meanings this study is interested in are the ones created by the participants (Griffiths & Machin, 2003; Tobin, 2000).

3.1.3 Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed electronically immediately following the interviews. Following transcription they were then re-watched to gain a general sense of the discussion, as suggested by Creswell (2012). The data was then coded and the codes reduced to themes which will be discussed in the results portion of this thesis.

Berg (2009b) asserts that information gathered from individual interviews cannot be considered identical to that gathered during group interviews. However, the solo interview did not produce any unique codes. Likewise, no unique codes occurred during the small group interview. The codes were then re-grouped into larger units of meaning, which have been labeled conversational threads, which were then aggregated into themes, as suggested by Creswell (2012).

3.2 Participants

The participants were selected purposefully through a network of acquaintances in Iceland. This study sought the input of adolescents between the ages of 12 and 15. Because the interview language would be English, only participants with excellent English skills could be considered, with *excellent* being defined by either attending school in English, speaking English within the home, having lived abroad and used English for daily life, or regularly taking part in social activities with English as a lingua franca.

Fourteen adolescents volunteered, and twelve actually took part in the interviews. Each participant has at least one parent who identifies as Icelandic, and all participants consider themselves fluent in both English and Icelandic except one, who feels more comfortable with English. They were divided into two groups which were partially self-selected. Group 1 consisted of three girls and two boys: James, Helen, Jon, Lilly, and Ana

(pseudonyms). They are all between the ages of 12 and 14, and are a group of friends who attend the same school and frequently spend time together socially.

In addition to being friends with each other, most of the participants in Group 1 had also met me previously. The participants and some of their friends had met with me for the practice interview which was conducted in October. They were aware that unlike the previous experience, this study would involve discussion rather than watching films.

Unfortunately, Helen was unexpectedly unable to attend two of the three interviews. Because four of the participants did attend, it was decided to proceed with the interviews rather than reschedule.

In order to observe and work with a different social dynamic, Group 2 was put together of participants who did not all know each other. There were five girls and two boys: Rosa, Kate, Tami, Isabell, Sara, Oskar, and Neil (pseudonyms). Kate Tami and Rosa know each other and are friends. Isabell and Sara also know each other. Oskar and Neil are friends. All the participants are between 12 and 15 years old.

Because the participants in Group 2 did not all know each other, a longer meeting was arranged and we played a card game as a group before the second interview. This was both to give them more time together socially and to encourage them to interact independently with each other rather than through me as a moderator. However, they remained more tentative with each other. As mentioned previously, this lead to a mutual decision that I would meet one more time with Rosa, Kate, and Tami alone, as Rosa expressed that she was uncomfortable talking in the large group setting, but still wanted to participate in the study.

It was accepted from the onset that pseudonyms would be necessary to protect participant anonymity. It was unexpected that the participants in Group 1 would casually know participants in Group 2, and vice versa. All the participants are active in youth activities in the Greater Reykjavik Area. Thus, for further identity protection the participants' precise ages, schools, and in some instances, the specific hobbies in which they are involved have been withheld.

3.3 Ethical considerations

3.3.1 The ethics of working with young people

Working with minors means working with a vulnerable population. Above all else, this work is informed by four basic ethical principles: respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice (Carter, 2002; O'reilly et al., 2013). To summarize what

this means, autonomy refers to ensuring there is informed consent and respecting the personal autonomy and choices of the participants and all those related to them and this study. Beneficence means to consider who potentially benefits from this research, and how. Non-maleficence means to consider who may find this work harmful or be harmed by it, to minimize this risk, and to communicate all potential risks openly and honestly. Justice means being aware of all vulnerable groups involved or affected by this study and to attempt to ensure actions are equitable (Carter, 2002; O'reilly et al., 2013).

The participants in this study live in a relatively small community. Additionally, as English speakers some also have contact with immigrant communities. Being aware of intersecting factors of vulnerability, the explicit consent (or assent, as the participants are under the age of majority) was sought during all stages of research. This included gaining permission from the required authorities, from the involved parents, and from the participants themselves. Often young people do not feel they have the authority to disobey or withdraw from adult-led activities (O'reilly et al., 2013). Thus, non-verbal cues were taken as seriously as verbal statements of desire to withdraw from the study.

The identities of the participants will be kept confidential. They were not asked for personal information or about sensitive topics. Any information which would identify them such as references to specific, documented activities have been omitted or made more generic. They and their parents have the right to review any recorded material. All necessary precautions regarding data storage and destruction have been taken following the conclusion of this study.

3.3.2 Focus groups as youth empowerment

Much of the previous literature about young people and media has lacked youth perspective. This trend is changing, and authors such as Dunn et al. (2014), Brooker (2015), Griffiths and Machin (2003), O'reilly et al. (2013) have been advocating for and adding to the body of youth-centered perspectives in research about young people. Still, many youth-centered studies have either consisted of non-interactive observation of young people, such as Buckingham and Sefton-Green (2003) and Kampf and Hamo (2015), focus-group interviews about media chosen by the researcher, as seen in (Tobin, 2000) or a combination of the two such as in (Þórðardóttir, 2012) and (Griffiths & Machin, 2003). Thus, in order to be more inclusive of youth voices, interviews with young people have provided both the primary data and the direction and list of

potential secondary sources. Not only were young people interviewed on given topics, but the content of subsequent interviews was based on the participants' contributions in the first interview, all clips viewed and discussed were at the participants' suggestion, and additional media analyzed was chosen based on statements by the participants. They are the dominant voices in describing their experiences.

3.3.3 Separation of youth voice and interpretation

This study sought to provide space for young people to let their voices be heard directly. As Alanen et al. (2015) point out, input from children on the experiences of childhood have been gaining importance in sociological research. More and more, research is moving from being *about* children to *with* children and thus acknowledging that young people are not objects for study, but participants in society (Dunn et al., 2014; O'reilly et al., 2013). The rights of young people to freely express themselves creatively and on matters affecting themselves are outlined in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (U.N. General Assembly, 1989). Thus, this study hopes to add to the increasing body of child-centered knowledge in academia.

Though this research seeks to highlight youth voices, data interpretation is necessary. As Ratner (2002) states, "One of the advantages of recognizing subjectivity is to reflect on whether it facilitates or impedes objective comprehension. Distorting values can then be replaced by values that enhance objectivity" (p. 7) Creswell (2012) gives three categories of themes: ordinary themes, unexpected themes, and hard-to-classify themes. The main investigation of this study is how young people use media and how this relates to belonging, agency, and exclusion with Bourdieu and especially symbolic capital as the philosophical background. While other arrangements of themes could be justified from the data, the four themes identified are data driven, meaning they emerged from analysis of the data, rather than describing concepts first developed and then compared with the data (Schreier, 2012). As such, the ordinary themes of expertise and relation were expected, but not pre-determined. Taste was a more surprising theme, but not in its presence so much as how it featured in the transcripts. Creswell (2012) defines hard-to-classify themes as "themes that contain ideas that do not easily fit into one theme or that overlap with several themes" (p. 249), an apt description for disposition. Thus, it should be remembered that these four themes are not meant as objective and unchanging truth, but as tools for interpreting and understanding what these 12 adolescents had to say. Creswell (2012) defines this as "similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database" (p. 245).

Ratner (2002) warns that imprecise hypotheses, lack of evidence, and arbitrary analyses, "allow the researcher to impose her theoretical constructs on the data"(p. 15). At the same time, all information is contextual, and even the presence of a researcher taking notes and asking questions most likely influenced what the participants talked about and perhaps even what they chose to say. In this sense, we were co-creators of the results. Thus, it is important that all themes identified be supported by excerpts from the interviews. Equally important, clear distinctions between observed data and researcher interpretation have been made, with justifications for this interpretation made explicit to minimize the risk of confounding the participants' contribution with researcher interpretation.

3.3.4 Possible confounding information

Moderating a focus group means finding a balance between giving the participants the space and freedom to speak and acting to direct the conversation in a direction which is relevant to the research question (Berg, 2009b). In this instance, the interview questions primarily asked about movies and television. The participants discussed these subjects. However, especially young participants are often eager to be helpful and therefore offer answers to questions that are not particularly relevant to them (Tobin, 2000). During the discussion the participants brought up other forms of media which were not in the original question frame. In the tables below the various types of media discussed are listed along with how many times they were mentioned by name. A comparison of how often the participants mentioned these types of media and how often the interviewer mentioned them will help illustrate which forms of media were introduced by the question frame and which were discussed exclusively by the participants. The tables are divided to make it possible to compare them with the relevant question frames (found in the appendix).

Table 1: Media keyword count Group 1 (Sessions 1-3)

Keyword	Boys	Girls	Inter-viewer	Total kids	Total all
Movie	52	25	36	77	113
Show/episode (non specific)	20	12	17	32	49
TV/television (specific)	1	5	4	6	10
Netflix (specific)	10	11	3	21	24
(Game/Video game	11	0	0	11	11
YouTube	13	4	4	17	21
Video (not game)	55	12	17	67	84
Book	4	9	5	13	18
Music / Radio	0	0	0	0	0
social media	2	5	0	7	7
phone (smartphone)	19	9	4	28	32

Table 2: Media keyword count Group 2 (Sessions 1 and 2)

Keywords	Boys	Girls	Inter-viewer	Total kids	Total all
Movie	30	12	30	42	72
Show/episode (non specific)	2	4	21	6	27
TV/television (specific)	1	0	2	1	3
Netflix (specific)	0	0	0	0	0
(Game/Video game	11	9	3	20	23
YouTube	0	1	2	1	3
Video (not game)	6	1	4	7	11
Book	4	14	12	18	30
Music / Radio	0	0	1	0	1
social media	0	1	2	1	3
phone (smartphone)	0	0	3	0	3

Table 3: Media keyword count Group 2 (one-on-one interview)

Keywords	Boys	Inter-viewer	Total all
Movie	10	5	15
Show/episode (non specific)	2	1	3
TV/television (specific)	1	2	3
Netflix (specific)	3	0	3
(Game/Video game	19	4	23
YouTube	7	0	7
Video (not game)	9	2	11
Book	0	2	2
Music / Radio	0	0	0
social media	0	0	0
phone (smartphone)	0	1	1

Table 4: Media keyword count Group 2 (small group interview)

Keywords	Girls	Inter-viewer	Total all
Movie	21	4	25
Show/episode (non specific)	9	3	12
TV/television (specific)	3	0	3
Netflix (specific)	0	0	0
(Game/Video game	5	3	8
YouTube	2	2	4
Video (not game)	10	1	11
Book	16	0	16
Music / Radio	24	5	29
social media	10	0	10
phone (smartphone)	2	0	2

4 Results

This chapter addresses the results of the interviews and media viewing. The participants discussed their personal tastes, the trends in their peer groups, and how information about what is currently popular spreads. While movies, television, and music are still popular, online videos and social media have also become part of the cannon of youth culture. Smart phones are the technology to have for access to the more desirable social circles.

Four dominant themes were recognized in the data: expertise, relation, taste, and disposition. These will be elaborated upon in more detail following an overview of the media described by the participants.

The main investigation of this study is how adolescents use media, and how this relates to belonging, agency, and exclusion. The results are interpreted through a framework informed by Bourdieu with emphasis on symbolic capital. The themes identified were anticipated to some degree, but not pre-determined. This study builds on previous work on how media knowledge influences relationships between children and young people.

The following chapter gives a brief description of the media the participants mentioned using. This is followed by an overview of the themes found in the data along with further definition of these themes. It concludes with a discussion of the results. The excerpts from the transcripts have been left intact with the grammatical and pronunciation idiosyncrasies of the participants intact, as well as unfinished words and use of slang.

4.1 Media types and technology

The interviews with the adolescents make up the main body of data for this research. Much of the discussion focused on the content of what the participants watched or how they interacted with their peers. With the occasional exception, they assumed that everyone in the room would be familiar with the platforms and devices they used to access, share, and discuss media. In their interviews Kampf and Hamo (2015) also found young people rarely discussed contextual information which they expected others to be familiar with. Such omissions also indicate the acceptance of a way of being as true on the unconscious level (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). For a digital native, describing the landscape of media and the internet may seem as strange as explaining how to use any

other banal artefact of life. For the benefit of the reader, this section will outline the media platforms and types they discussed.

All the participants use Facebook, which is a social networking website that opened in 2004. As of November 15, 2015 there were 240,000 Facebook users in Iceland, or 72.9% of the total population (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2016). In addition to using Facebook for social networking, the participants also use the Facebook chat feature for instant messaging. For example, some of them used Facebook instant messaging to arrange the time and location for the interviews. Use of Facebook was so commonplace that they found non-Facebook users more remarkable. Here Jon describes a fellow student who does not have a Facebook account.

> JON: There's this kid in our class, um… who refuses to get Facebook. And everyone's on Facebook, and it's like, you never have... (shakes his head)... He doesn't use Facebook, but he has a lot of friends.

The classmate mentioned by Jon was the only person any of the participants brought up who did not have a Facebook account, and Jon's opinion of the idea of not having a Facebook is punctuated by his body language. The participants in this study did not express preferences for platforms, but did confirm that they do not exclusively use Facebook. Many of the participants use Instagram, with six of them specifically referring to the platform. Instagram is a platform primarily for sharing photos. To use it, the user installs it on a smartphone or tablet as an application, or *app*. The user can then take pictures and post them for others to view and comment on (Instagram, 2016). Instagram also allows users to *follow* another account, which means that when this account posts content, it shows up on the user's main page, or *feed*. The accounts they follow may belong to friends, to users who post pictures and statements they enjoy seeing (but who are not personal acquaintances), celebrities they find interesting, or businesses or organizations. Some accounts are content aggregators which specialize in looking for new content related to the interests of their subscribers or followers. Users interact by *liking* posts, commenting on them, or both. Instagram averages over 80 million photo uploads and 3.5 billion likes per day (Instagram, 2016). Here Helen describes her peers using Instagram in a social setting:

> HELEN: It's really, you know, if you don't have a smart phone, you're kind of like, left out cause all the girls in the class are like, on Instagram (miming typing with her thumbs)

Some of the participants also use Snapchat, which is an app for messaging with pictures or video. The example below is descriptive of how Kate uses the app with her friend group:

> KATE: On Snapchat I talk to my friends. And send photos.

Snapchat allows the user to alter, write on, and send pictures to a friend or group of friends. Snapchat also allows users to group photos together to create a *story* or create short videos. Unlike Facebook or Instagram, messages sent through Snapchat only go to a person or group of people chosen by the user, much like a text message (Snapchat, 2016). Also unlike other social platforms, the messages can be made available for a limited time, after which they expire and can no longer be viewed. Snapchat markets itself as the way to communicate with 13 to 34 year-olds (Snapchat, 2016). For further explanation, this humorous video editorializes Snapchat using popular media: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKSr6h5-fCU

In addition to social platforms, the participants also discussed the media they experience and share. They talked about movies, books, and television shows. However, the participants also brought up videos, by which they meant audio-visual materials which are available to watch online. Common platforms for video viewing are YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Vine. Vine is a similar platform to Instagram, but predates Instagram's video function and limits video time. The participants did not agree if the limit was six seconds or eight seconds. The participants also discussed watching Vine compilations on YouTube. This refers to several Vines, usually on a common theme, put together as a longer video.

> JAMES: You're going to need really good internet connection to watch most of the things that we watch. Like, viral videos or six second videos which is also known as Vine, which is also pretty popular now. I know two of my friends have it, and one of my cousins.

Lake Kate, James describes the use of technology, social media and the enjoyment of media content. Platforms can also be crossed. A video uploaded on one platform can be re-posted on another. Thus, Vine compilations are available to watch on YouTube and Facebook, etc.

When watching movies or television, the participants usually used streaming services such as Netflix. This is a service which, for a fee, allows the user to watch films or television shows at a time he or she chooses. Use requires an internet connection.

This is similar to a cable television model of delivery, but with the convenience of a DVD for viewing when and as often as desired. Most of the participants mentioned using streaming services. In the following example Anna, James, Lilly, and Jon describe how they prefer to watch movies.

> Interviewer: (to Anna) And what about you? Do you watch movies either online or on DVD or
> ANNA: Just Netflix. Netflix. I used to do YouTube
> JAMES: Netflix
> JON: That's a lot of Netflix
> LILLY: I do everything.
> ANNA: But only Netflix, and sometimes Hulu if Netflix doesn't work.
> JON: You have Hulu and you guys don't use it?
> JAMES: Hulu? Wow.
> LILLY: I just do everything, and I still use DVDs!

Additionally, the participants talked about playing video games and, in the instances where we met at a participant's home, they also played video games together prior to the interviews. Video games can be played on a console, or device built for playing video games such as an X-Box or a Play Station. Alternatively, it is also possible to do this on a computer or a laptop. Both these activities were observed prior to the interviews. Often video gaming involves a collaborative element. This can be in person or done remotely. Through an internet connection a person playing can team up with other players who are online at the same time using programs integrated into the console software or separate programs, such as Skype to converse with other players while they play, as described by Oskar below.

> OSKAR: Uh, no. I play it with my friends. I usua.. like Counterstrike I'll play with like, five or six or seven friends.
> OSKAR: Because I use Steam to play the games and Skype to… or, actually I use a few programs to play games. With Steam I play with Origin. That's where I get, that's where I'm gonna get that parkour game.. and the internet. And then I'll just use, like Skype or teamchat or something to talk.

Some of the participants also use online video platforms to watch others play video games. This can be done live on platforms such as Twitch.tv or it can be a recorded video which is posted on a video hosting site like YouTube. Usually the video shows the

person playing's video game screen and includes her voice as she narrates what she is doing. Sometimes it also includes a video of the person playing as she plays. Some of the more popular game players do this professionally and earn money through advertising, based on the number of followers and viewers they have. In this example, three participants talk about this phenomenon:

ISABELL: Isn't that the point? Of videos like that on YouTube – trying to make people buy stuff that they didn't even know existed.
NIEL: A lot of gamers don't do that. They just play the game.
OSKAR: They just play it and then make.. they make money by doing it, but they do it for the fun of it also.
NIEL: yeah
OSKAR: It's like, ah, an extremely fun job. It's like if you.. it's like playing a video game and you get money for doing it, so.

James participates in this culture and uploads videos of his own. He mentions this when the group talks about media they like, but that is not popular.

JAMES: I don't. I just put my gaming videos I think are good. (laughs)

The participants also referred to specific media to explain other media. In these two examples Anna refers to the *Divergent* series to explain something in the *Harry Potter* series, and James refers to the director Michael Bay to describe dramatic special effects which Jon adds to a video he created:

ANNA: There's sort of rivalry between each other. But like, some of them, like for instance I don't think Gryffindor and Hufflepuff hate each other. I think they're just sort of… they're pretty alike. It's like the Abnegation, Dauntless thing.

JON: I actually, I used to do school projects. And they're like… school projects are boring, so I make them fun somehow. Like, by adding just a few explosions.
JAMES: (at the same time) Michael Bay

Some media was mentioned often enough that familiarity with it greatly facilitates understanding the results. As in the example above of *Divergent* and *Harry Potter*, these media franchises were not described in detail in context. Some were dystopian fiction featuring an autocratic society in which the young protagonists must survive adult-created ordeals. *The Hunger Games*, *The Maze Runner*, and the *Divergent* series are this sort of fiction, and they are available as books and films. *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter* both follow the typical hero's journey format in which the protagonist learns he/she is chosen to lead the forces of good to triumph against evil in a fantasy setting in space or in a world of people with magical abilities, respectively. These are both franchised with books, films, comic books, action figures, and other paraphernalia. Mature cartoons which blend satire, visual gags, and comedic dialogue included The Simpsons and Family Guy. Film and comic book franchises featuring heroes with special abilities included Batman, Superman, Deadpool, and Marvel (A comic book publisher). Video games mentioned were *Minecraft*, *Call of Duty*, and *Halo*. Other specific examples of media were also mentioned, but with less frequency. The titles named here were the ones the participants discussed without explanation, as familiarity was assumed.

All the participants had access to a laptop or desktop computer with internet connection at home. All the participants except for Anna also had, or previously had smart phones. Jon, James, and Helen all stated that they previously had smart phones, but had either broken or lost them. Except for Lilly, all the participants with smart phones also interacted with them at least once during the interviews.

To gain a rough overview of what types of media were discussed during the interviews, a keyword count was performed on the transcripts. The search terms were *movie, show/episode, TV/television, Netflix, game/video game, book, music/radio, social media, and phone (smartphone).* (See tables 1-4 in chapter 3 and table (?) below) This is only a descriptive picture of how often the participants discussed these types of media or technology. For example, a participant talking about *Minecraft* might only say the word *game* once. However, the distribution gives a general sense of the weight and shape of different media types and sources in the body of conversations.

Table 5: Media keyword count

Media type	Times mentioned
Movie	150
Show/episode (non specific)	49
TV/television (specific)	11
Netflix (specific)	24
Game/Video game	55
YouTube	27
Video (not game)	93
Book	47
Music / Radio	24
social media	18
phone (smartphone)	30

To reiterate, the technology and media discussed in the previous pages was all mentioned by the participants, but not explained by them. For example, when talking about what it is like to be without a smart phone, social media platforms are mentioned without any description of what they are used for:

> HELEN: It's really, you know, if you don't have a smart phone, you're kind of like, left out cause all the girls in the class are like, on Instagram (miming typing with her thumbs)
> JAMES: (at the same time) oh my god
> HELEN: or snapchat (miming texting on a smart phone)

When asked specifically about Snapchat and Instagram, the participants gave only a vague description:

> Interviewer: So, why do you guys have snapchat and Instagram? What do you do with it?
> KATE: On Snapchat I talk to my friends. And send photos.
> TAMI: And you can look at everybody's photos.

The context of the discussion is already about smart phones. However, the participants' explanation of how they use Snapchat and Instagram relies on the assumption that the interviewer knows something about how smart phones and social media apps work. It is possible to "look at everybody's photos" in Snapchat, but that

activity is more likely done with Instagram. Similarly, it was not possible to "talk" to friends on Snapchat at the time of this interview. It was a text-based communication service only, though Snapchat added a voice calling feature in March 2016 (Bell, 2016).

The next section addresses the two items of media which were chosen to accompany the interviews.

4.2 Media

The conditions for media selection were that it should be something as many of the participants had seen as possible, and it should be current. The reason for choosing current media was in the hope it would be something the participants had self-selected, rather than something they had grown up watching.

At the end of the first two interviews, it was explained to the participants that part of this research would be to review media familiar to the participants and their peers. The participants offered several suggestions, but were not able to reach consensus about two items of media which I should watch. Some of the participants suggested films such as *Dumbo*, *The Lion King*, and *Jurassic Park*, based on the notion that everyone would have seen these movies.

> LILLY: Lion King
> Interviewer: Other than the Lion King. We talked about that.
> HELEN: Jurassic park
> ANNA: Star Wars!
> HELEN: Jurassic Park, right?
> JON: Yeah, We all know Jurassic Park

Some of the participants also suggested Deadpool, which was also mentioned in all interviews.

> JON: (covering R's mouth) That's great. Deadpool Let's see the Deadpool trailer.
> JAMES: Deadpool the trailer, Deadpool the trailer!

Deadpool is a movie which was about to be released and which was being heavily marketed at the time. It was particularly popular with the boys. However, by the end of the interviews only one of the participants had actually seen the film.

Looking at what current media the most participants overall had seen, two examples came forward: *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and *Pretty Little Liars*, which will both be briefly introduced shortly. *Star Wars* had recently been released, and all the participants were familiar with the franchise and considered the new movie's marketing discussion inescapable. 9 out of 12 participants had also seen the film. The following are examples of discussion about *Star Wars* from the interviews:

> OSKAR: I mean, when Star Wars came out everyone was watching it, so…

> JAMES: Everyone watched Star Wars. Did everyone watch Star Wars here?
> JON, LILLY, ANNA: (raise their hands to show they watched Star Wars)
> LILLY: I've seen every single one
> ANNA: Me too!

Pretty Little Liars was less well known, but Lilly, Tami, and Rosa all asserted that all the girls in their schools follow the show. 6 out of 12 participants said that they had watched this show and 5 follow it regularly.

> HELEN: I mean, a lot, like, there's only two girls I think in my class who doesn't watch Pretty Little Liars.
> ANNA: That would be…
> HELEN: That would be (fellow student, name omitted) and you
> ANNA: I watch it.

As previously stated, media analysis is not within the scope of this project. In this section I will give a brief summary of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and of *Pretty Little Liars*. This is to provide the reader with context during the discussion section in which themes from the transcripts will be compared with examples from the selected media.

4.2.1 *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*

This is the newest movie in the *Star Wars* franchise, which spans from 1977 when the first film was released until the time of this study, with further films to be released in the future. All of the participants have been exposed to references to *Star Wars* films and characters their entire lives. The first trailer for the new film was released in November 2014, allowing for more than a year of marketing before the release.

The new film follows a similar plot to the 1977 film *Star Wars: A New Hope*. It is set 30 years after the events of the original film, and it continues the story. An autocratic, militaristic organization called the First Order is threatening the galaxy with destruction using a super weapon. A small force called The Resistance is fighting to defend them. The movie begins with a key piece of information being stowed with BB-8, a small, likeable robot, then continues to introduce the protagonists amidst chaos and destruction caused by the First Order. The young protagonists (Rea and Finn) come together to escape, and eventually meet up with the protagonists from the original Star Wars movie (Han Solo, Leia, and Chewbacca), then join forces for an impossible mission to save the galaxy from the First Order, a fascist military organization led by Kylo Ren, a dark warrior and the son of Han and Leia.

The film received overwhelmingly positive reviews. The crowd-based rating website Rotten Tomatoes gave the film a 92% positive score, a number reached by an aggregation of 343 approved film critics (Fandango, 2016b). It received an audience score of 89% positive, which is averaged from the ratings given by 208,116 users as of April 3rd, 2016 (Fandango, 2016b). However, the film was also controversial in casting and plot choices. The two protagonists, Rey and Finn, are played by a young woman and a black man, respectively. Right-wing opinion blogs such as returnofkings.com and nationalreview.com framed these choices as political, and evidence of feminist, social justice motives on the part of the franchise. Social media and discussion forums also filled with parodies and critiques of these casting choices like this YouTube film, "Star Wars Parody: Social Justice Wars" https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=9gEfAQFgrpM .

To be clear, the participants in the interviews did not discuss the political controversy surrounding *Star Wars*. It is presented here to illustrate how the most recent *Star Wars* film is similar to previous films, and how it differs. The film followed the traditional plot, but it made unexpected choices about characters and agency within the film.

4.2.2 Pretty Little Liars

Pretty Little Liars is a weekly series which first aired in 2010. It is still running, and as of 2016 is in its 6th season. The plot follows four friends and school-mates, Aria, Emily, Spencer, and Hanna. It begins one year after the disappearance of their friend Alison, now presumed dead. The death is assumed to be a murder, and a mysterious character named A moves the plot by sending text messages to the girls that make it apparent that A knows their darkest secrets. Secrets are a recurring theme. Aria returns to school

to find her summer romance is her new English teacher. Emily is dealing with the realization that she is gay. Hannah is both helping her mother hide the fact that they are bankrupt and fighting an eating disorder. Spencer is from a high status family and under pressure to keep face at any cost, even if that means cheating in her classes. The four friends work together to try to figure out who killed their friend, discover the malevolent A's identity, and maintain their status as the cool crowd at their school.

The episode reviewed for this work was episode 13 of season 1, "Know Your Frenemies". In this episode Hannah's mother has just stolen a large sum of cash from her job at a bank. It is meant to pay that month's bills but the money disappeared after a party at Hannah's house. Now A is messaging Hannah to do as she is instructed to try to get the money back. This includes going to a café and ordering half a dozen cupcakes, then eating them all before going to the bathroom to purge them. In the meantime, Emily's mother forbids her from seeing her girlfriend, and openly disapproves of her daughter's homosexuality. Aria's ex-boyfriend sees her kissing her English teacher (and current boyfriend) and tries to blackmail the teacher into giving him a better grade on a paper. Spencer finds a video of their dead friend, Alison, on her last night alive. Spencer's new brother-in-law is also in this video, and she suspects he may have killed Alison.

The protagonists at first try to hide their struggles from each other, but eventually turn to each other and find the support they needed. Aria finds Hannah eating the cupcakes and comforts her, then helps her meet A's demands without destructive behavior. Aria, Spencer, and Hannah arrange a secret meeting for Emily and her girlfriend so that they can say goodbye to each other. Hannah, Aria, and Emily comfort Spencer and help her in her search for the truth. Overall, a recurring plot structure in this show is that bad things happen when a person tries to overcome difficulty alone, and that confiding in and trusting friends brings more positive results.

The show is set in a small town and the protagonists are in high school. Many interactions take place at school or school-related activities. Though the show takes place in 2010 (when smart phones were relatively new), the protagonists are in constant mobile phone contact with each other. The setting and basic elements of the show such as clothing, family relationships, public social interactions, and free-time activities are presented as non-exceptional.

Pretty Little Liars received an 81% positive score from critics overall and an 82% positive audience score overall from Rotten Tomatoes (Fandango, 2016a). The series has an official website at www.pretylittleliars.com and an official YouTube channel with

additional content without a required subscription https://www.youtube.com/user/PrettyLittleLiarsFAM. The participants did not mention the website or the YouTube channel, but these are both free options should the reader be interested in looking at samples of the show.

4.3 Explanation of themes

The majority of the participant interviews had a strongly conversational tone. Participants shared information, agreed and disagreed with each other, and reminisced about shared experiences. The initial impression was that the group consisting of friends was more talkative, and the group put together from adolescents from diverse schools was more tentative. However, the content of the interviews formed coherent data set. During review of the interview transcription, 14 major conversational styles or threads arose.

- *Affirmation:* When a participant gave verbal or gestural approval of what another participant said (such as a fist-bump).
- *Empathy/identity*: When a participant expressed emotional connection with a fictional character.
- *Endorsement*: Media suggestions the participants take seriously and conversely, endorsements which are ignored.
- *Expertise*: When participants contributed to the conversation using expert knowledge or expressed disbelief at another participant's lack of specific knowledge
- *Fandom*: When a participant expressed an ongoing interest or love for a specific item of media or franchise.
- *Gender*: Discussion of differences between boys and girls, including expectations of boys and girls.
- *Humor*: Use of humorous statements or actions to re-direct conversation, contribute, or gain attention.
- *Novelty*: Expression of newness or unexpectedness of media, or of age or predictability.
- *Power struggle*: When two participants compete to dominate the conversation. This could be through a disagreement or through intentional diversion of attention away from another participant.
- *Taste*: Statements of personal taste without any further attribution or generalizations about someone else's tastes.
- *Relation*: Discussion about group belonging or exclusion, or group attitudes toward an individual.

- *Reversal*: Sudden changes in opinion. This usually occurred after a lack of affirmation or negative affirmation.
- *Situation*: The location, technology, company, and circumstances of media consumption.
- *Subversion*: Transgressive or provocative statements.

These threads, while diverse, also overlap in meaning. For example, fandom has elements of preference and identity. When a participant was showing expertise, sometimes this was to be part of the conversation socially, and sometimes it was out of enthusiasm for a beloved work (fandom). Affirmation was always context dependent, and was shown by participants either approving or withholding approval, which could be based on taste, relation, or expertise, for example. Humor, power struggle, and affirmation were closely related in this way, and showed different aspects of interaction between the participants. Endorsement often overlapped relation, but it could also overlap taste and novelty. The table below explores the overlaps between conversational threads. Any time a thread could be interpreted in more than one way, I placed an X in both possibilities. This helps visually conceptualize the layers of meaning within the participants' interactions (See Table 6).

Table 6: Conversational thread matrix

	Affirmation	Empathy/Identity	Endorsement	Expertise	Fandom	Gender	Humor	Novelty	Power Struggle	Taste	Relation	Reversal	Situation	Subversion
Affirmation	X		X				X		X		X	X		
Empathy/Identity		X			X	X				X	X			
Endorsement	X		X	X	X			X		X	X	X		
Expertise			X	X	X			X	X		X			
Fandom		X	X	X	X					X				
Gender		X				X					X			X
Humor	X						X		X		X			
Novelty			X	X				X						
Power Struggle	X			X			X		X		X	X		
Taste		X	X		X					X				
Relation	X	X	X	X		X	X		X		X	X	X	
Reversal	X		X						X		X	X		
Situation											X		X	
Subversion						X								X

Comparing these conversational threads with the research questions, certain groupings emerged. These became the four themes for analysis of the data. The conversational threads above are already an aggregation of the codes found within the text, and they further combine into four overarching themes: expertise, relation, taste, and disposition.

- Expertise: This is where expertise, the knowledge-based aspects of fandom, endorsement, novelty, and the technology-based aspects of situation overlap. Expertise is about knowledge. This can be omnivorous, and about the breadth of media which the participants expect each other to know. It can also be depth of knowledge about specific media, or knowledge and access to technology used for viewing and sharing media.

- Relation: Here is where affirmation, endorsement, fandom, power struggles, relation, and situation overlap. Relation shows the relationships the participants experience with their peers and the world as they see it. It also relates to who the participants share experiences with and who excludes them.
- Taste: This theme is where empathy/Identity, fandom, the community aspects of relation, and taste overlap. By community aspects, the identifying features are intended, not the emotional connections between fans.
- Disposition: This theme overlaps the others, and relates to statements which illustrate the values held by the participants. Gender, affirmation, humor and subversion are the conversational threads that often highlight the assumptions held by the participants, but this can happen in any interaction.

These four themes will be further defined in comparison with the data over the following pages. To illustrate how the conversational threads recombine into the main themes, the definitions and examples will refer back to them by name and in *italics* for clarity. However this is for explanation purposes only. Subsequent to the definitions, the themes will be used to explore the research questions without overt reference to the conversational threads.

4.3.1 Expertise

Expertise in this context is defined as a display of knowledge. It can be specialized, in which case it would be a display of knowledge framed as either objectively true or true within the cannon of media being discussed. Buckingham and Sefton-Green (2003) observed that young people could use knowledge about popular media to position themselves as experts and contribute to conversations. Like the example with their adroit Pokémon players, the participants sometimes drew on in-depth knowledge to take part in the discussion. See the example below, where the participants discuss *Star Wars* fan theories. This discussion requires that they would have not only seen the movies, but also found out what others are saying about the movies through discussion, reading, watching videos, or other popular culture research methods, and is an example of the conversational thread *fandom/expertise*.

> JON: So there was this huge theory that Jar Jar, the alien, was the almighty dark lord of everything, and he had, like, the force and was the most powerful sith in the whole entire world.
> ANNA: Would he be the sith that they were talking about, that could bring people back to life?
> JON: Sure.

ANNA: that's….
JON: I expected to see Jar Jar…. But okay.
Interviewer: What do you mean sith that could bring… ah, sorry. That's off topic. (laughs)
JON: (laughs)
ANNA: That's how they he was convinced by the other guy to join the dark side.
JAMES: He wasn't dead in Revenge. He was burning. I think.

The above conversation is an example of the participants displaying expertise about the *Star Wars* films. The movie in discussion is the most recent film, but the character Jar Jar is from episodes 1, 2, and 3 of *Star Wars*, which were released between 1999 and 2005. Therefore, participation in the discussion required more knowledge than just having seen the most recent film.

However, expertise can also be omnivorous, in which it would be a display of knowledge about the breadth of media available to be discussed. *Available to be discussed* is not an objective statement. Rather, it refers to the media that the participants would expect their peers to be familiar with, a concept which will be discussed in more detail in the section on disposition. The diversity and amount of media now available makes omnivorous expertise challenging to maintain. Omnivorous expertise includes traditional media such as movies, television, and books, and also includes online media which can be produced and uploaded by nearly anyone. For example, here some of the participants talk about media trends in their school in an example of dialogue marked with the conversation thread *expertise/novelty*. Lilly is describing an interaction in which one adolescent is testing the expertise of another by asking about new media. The dynamic of *everyone* talking about it paired with a judgmental statement shows expertise being used in a social setting.

LILLY: Matters, if there's, like, almost everyone in your class talks about it then you have to talk about it. And they ask you, like, "Have you seen this?" And you're like, uhhhh, so you have to like, when you come home, you have to, like, research.
JAMES: That's me with Deadpool right now.
LILLY: And then, everybody's like (Sits up and adopts an aloof posture) "You haven't seen this? It's awesome." (makes a dismissive face)

Additionally, expertise can be a display of knowledge about and competence with technology and platforms that give the participants access to media. Here Oskar's explanation shows how technical expertise (the use of social media) and omnivorous expertise (knowing what is trendy or new) are possessed by the same group.

> Interviewer: So, who at your school or even friend group seems to always know what's trendy or new?
> OSKAR: Everyone who's constantly watching, like, Snapchat or Instagram or something like that.
> Interviewer: And who's that usually?
> OSKAR: A lot of kids. Probably, like, around a hundred kids in the whole school. Out of seven hundred.

The participants also elaborate on the consequences, or lost expertise which come from not having access to smart phones or social media. The following is an example explaining a lack of expertise.

> Interviewer: Is there anybody, like, at your school or in your social group who seems to be the first one who knows?
> TAMI: Well, there's definitely those people that are last to know.
> (all laugh)
> Interviewer: Okay.
> KATE: The ones who spend less time on social media.
> TAMI: Yeah, those friends that have flip phones and stuff like that.
> ROSA: Yes (laughs)
> KATE: Yeah (nods)
> TAMI: Yeah. But like… then there's like, or, there, there's also the people that just have, like, phones and they don't really like, use social, social media. They just use it for, like, texting people and stuff.
> Interviewer: So then, how do other people treat them?
> TAMI: People…
> ROSA: Well, nobody else knows. Then everybody's very confused.

As Tami, Rosa, and Kate explain, the students who lack the necessary technology, smart phones, spend less time on social media keeping track of new material. They therefore have less expertise regarding current media trends. As in Oskar's example, technical expertise and access influences pop culture expertise. In this case, the

participants have described someone who lacks both. These two exchanges are examples of the conversation threads *situation/expertise*.

Expertise, whether specific or omnivorous, was a key tool for gaining access to social activities. The next section will discuss the activities and social circles the participants described.

4.3.2 Relation

Expertise has little value without other people. Relation describes the networks of connection between the participants and other people. This includes relationships such as friendship, teacher-student, or the lack of relationship as with strangers. Relation also describes the situational aspect of relationships. It answers the question: *with whom?* For example, here Tami, Rosa, and Kate reminisce about the first time they watched the *Hunger Games* together.

> TAMI: It was like, we wa, I think we, we watched the first one actually at your house (points at Rosa) I remember.
> ROSA: Yeah.
> KATE: Yeah.
> ROSA: I thought it was really scary, though. It. And you… not at all. (laughs)
> TAMI: (laughs) We were, like, eleven or something.
> ROSA: (laughing) yeah.
> TAMI: It was… it was fun. Watching with it together.
> KATE: (looking at Tami) yep

Watching a movie together became something the girls could describe as an enjoyable moment in their shared past. This is an example of the overlap of the conversational threads *relation/situation*. The situation aspect is that the girls watched a movie together in Rosa's home, which defines the questions of where and how.

Relation also shows how expertise can have value. The participants occasionally expressed frustration at lack of shared knowledge. Here, Neil describes watching a movie to gain expertise, which is contrasted by Oskar relating that his friend's lack of familiarity with Star Wars is a problem for him. While Neil's emphasis is on knowing what is happening, Oskar emphasizes the relationship aspect of sharing a movie with a friend. Here Oskar also talks about understanding what is going on, but his reference to his feelings toward his friend puts this understanding in the context of media as a shared experience. In this case, Oskar is not happy with the result.

Interviewer: Why might someone choose to see this movie?
NIEL: (unintelligible)
NIEL: 'Cause it's the latest one in a series. Because if you see the, if you see that one, and you don't see the other movies, you kind of, you need to … you see the movie, you kind of… if you see all the movies except that one, then see the next one, you won't know what's happening.
OSKAR: That's why I hate my friend, cause he hasn't seen any of the Star Wars movies. And he just saw this one, and he doesn't even know what's going on. It's weird. It's like… he saw this one and he's like, "Ahhh. Okay." (sounds disappointed)
Interviewer: Why does it matter whether someone knows what's going on?
OSKAR: So that they understand what's going on.

Because Oskar emphasizes the importance of having seen the *Star Wars* films and understanding what is happening, this is an example of the conversational threads *fandom/relation* and *endorsement*. Oskar has seen the other *Star Wars* films and has also said that he has played the *Star Wars* video games. When asked why he wanted to see the latest *Star Wars* movie, his reply was, "I like the Star Wars franchise." He is a fan, and the emphasis on knowing peripheral information is a typical example of *fandom* from the transcripts. His friend watched the film at his suggestion, which is a typical example of *endorsement.* However, the result is a negative example of *relation*.

Relation can also shape how participants contribute to a conversation. When asked about what shows are currently popular, the participants started brainstorming. James offered a suggestion.

JAMES: But what was that one thing it was a dragon medieval time….. Game of Thrones
JON: I don't watch that
LILLY: Who does?
JAMES: I watched it once. I don't watch it anymore.

After Jon and Lilly's dismissal of the show, James withdrew his suggestion. He also withdrew from the conversation for a moment. The lack of affirmation essentially shut down whatever contribution to the conversation James had planned to make. Rather than continuing to describe a show no one else showed interest for, he matched the

disinterest of the others. This example of negative *affirmation* is also an example of the conversational thread *reversal*.

James did not always back down to others' opinions. When asked what made Star Wars a good movie, the following exchange took place:

> JAMES: Lasers, yeah.
> LILLY: The music.
> JAMES: The force.
> JON: The story.
> JAMES: The force.
> JON: The story. I say the story.
> JAMES: The story and the force.
> JON: The story.
> JAMES: Both… and behind the force. How are people picked for the force.

In this exchange, Jon and James grow increasingly more intense until James relents and compromises. This is an example of the conversational thread *power struggle*, in that the tone has shifted from pleasant to adversarial.

Just as James used compromise to diffuse the above tension, he and other participants used the tactic *humor* to smooth over rough interactions. In the following example, the participants are talking about a television show, *Merlin*, which all but James had seen:

> JAMES: (dramatically with his head in his hands) What are you guys talking about?!
> G, B, & ANNA: Merlin
> JAMES: (throws his hands up) I give up
> (laughter)

Because James lacks expertise to participate in the conversation, he is using dramatic statements and gestures to turn his lack of knowledge into a joke. In this way, he also gains inclusion. This is an example of the conversational threads *humor* and *relation*.

Sometimes maintaining a relationship was the prime motivation for partaking in a media viewing experience. For example, here James and Lilly give their reasons for watching *Star Wars*. James gives an ambiguous answer, which could be interpreted as expertise or as relation. His motivation stems from the excitement of others, and it is

unclear if this is an intellectual curiosity, or an emotional one. Lilly, on the other hand, is clearer in her reason for watching the movie.

Interviewer: Okay, so then why did you choose to see this movie?
JAMES: Because of all the hype and anticipation.
LILLY: Cause everyone in my family was going besides me.

Both James and Lilly cite a form of peer pressure as a reason to see *Star Wars: The Force Awakes*. For James, the motivation was more general, which he describes as *hype* and *anticipation*. These are examples of the conversational threads *endorsement/fandom*. For Lilly it was a much more concrete relationship choice. She could either go see the movie or be excluded from a social activity with her family. In this case she chose the action that would include her.

It is important to note that participants were able to disagree on matters of taste without injuring their friendships. Shared preferences in media are a possible basis for a relationship, but not exclusively so. The participants were also able to discuss positive relationships outside the context of shared taste. Here Tammi, Rosa, and Kate describe their diverse tastes.

TAMI: I feel like we all have very different tastes in music. (points at each of them in turn for emphasis)
ROSA: Yeah.
TAMI: Like, very, very different. It's like,
KATE: Mm-hmm (nods)
TAMI: So it's like, when we're having sleep overs and stuff, it's like, who wants to put on music? And it's like,
KATE: (at the same time) And everyone goes the phone but they're like, no, she's not putting on music..
TAMI: (at the same time) now (shakes her head) usually everyone's like, everyone's like, "No, Tami's not putting on music," like.
ROSA: Well, we don't want to listen to Taylor Swift. I'm sorry.
TAMI: It's like, way different. We have like. We have, like, if there were three totally different categories of music, they'd be like, the categories that we listen to. Like, we have like, just, way different.
ROSA: (laughs)

The girls' discussion of differing music preferences is framed in the context of a sleep over, a situation which contributes positively to their relationship as friends. This overlap of the threads *relation/situation* disagreeing with the conversational thread *taste* will addressed at a later point in this chapter.

The codes relation and expertise therefore overlap in that expertise can be used as cultural capital to reinforce relationships. To add to that, the participants also have personal preferences and interests. These preferences can relate to media or to relationships. The next section, taste, defines this third theme in greater detail.

4.3.3 Taste

Taste in this context is a rich term for the traits, qualities, attitudes, actions, and media types the participants expressed a preference for. This theme strongly overlaps the conversational threads *empathy/identity* and *preference*. In the era of social media, the tastes a person publicly expresses become part of the face that person wishes to present to others (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Lambert, 2015; Livingstone, 2008). The aspects of identity which are included in Taste therefore have to do with how the participants describe using media to describe themselves, associate themselves with a group, or describe or associate others. This definition purposefully eschews psychological implications in order to remain within the scope of the theoretical framework.

Taste can be expressed as overt appreciation for a given thing. For example, when the participants were asked what shows they enjoy, Anna responds quickly and with enthusiasm:

> Interviewer: So, do any of you have a favorite movie or a favorite show?
> ANNA: (raises her hand)
> JON: Uhhhhhh
> Interviewer: You don't have to raise your hand
> JAMES: (at the same time) (Raises his hand)
> ANNA: Harry Potter, Harry Potter! (Claps her hands and bounces in her seat.)
> Interviewer: You like Harry Potter?
> ANNA: I have to say that.

Anna is the first to respond, and her appreciation for *Harry Potter* is physically embodied in her enthusiastic gestures as she informs the group of her preference. Her statement is also an example of the conversational threads *taste* and perhaps *fandom*.

Likewise, Isabell also expresses enthusiasm for the *Harry Potter* series:

> ISABELL: I've been sorted into Ravenclaw. J. K. Rowling made a quiz that's on a website called Pottermore, and I've taken the test multiple times, and I'm always sorted into Ravenclaw.

Here she describes a website called *Pottermore*, which is the official fan website for the *Harry Potter* series of books and films. The stories take place at a magical boarding school where the children are divided into four houses based on their traits. Ravenclaw is one of those houses. *Pottermore* offers a quiz visitors can take as part of the process of signing up for a fan account which also gives users access to additional media and information, as well as sending marketing information to users via e-mail (Rowling, 2016). In this example of the conversational thread *fandom* Isabell describes a process in which she and other fans of the *Harry Potter* franchise can experience the sorting ceremony and join a house at Hogwarts, much like the characters in the books.

She also refers to the houses in *Harry Potter* to describe her personal values later in the interview.

> ISABELL: Most people say Gryffindor or Slytherin, they say, like, the houses that, if you read the books, they're the best. But I think that Hufflepuff is really good. They're like, kind, and helpful, and I think that matters more.

This example of the *empathy/identity* conversational thread shows how a piece of fiction can be used to explain a more complex idea, and also how a statement of preference can be self-revelatory. This practice was not limited to the female participants. In the following example, Neil describes his favorite character from *Star Wars.*

> NIEL: In Star Wars, all the Jedis are OP. You can't kill them. Han Solo is un-killable except the last one. That's the only thing I like about him. He has done everything, almost everything in the movie.
> Interviewer: Can you explain what you mean by OP?
> NIEL: You can't kill him. He's unstoppable.

OSKAR: Like, Over Powered. He's just like… Same thing in like, the new video game Battle Front. Like, they're they have so much health. You can kill all the normal guys in one swipe if you run into them. It's like..
Interviewer: So are you saying he's more relatable because…
NIEL: He's so small, and he could be hurt really easy, but he's come all the way from everything, and not died once. 'Cause like, a lot of jedis has died, but not him.

Oskar is showing specialized expertise by explaining vocabulary in the dynamics of a *Star Wars* video game; vocabulary which Niel has also attributed to the context of the movie. However, the description of Han Solo's fragility and resilience clarifies why Niel admires him, and also exemplifies the conversational thread *empathy/identity*.

The participants also expressed that personal interests are a risky topic because they are personal. This can affect relationships that they form. A website like *Pottermore* is a less risky environment for discussing *Harry Potter* because the premise of a fan community is that it is based around a common interest. A school campus is based on locality, so the initial phase of revealing one's tastes and interests can be tricky. The following is an example of some participants explaining the risks involved in expressing taste. This topic came up repeatedly in the interviews.

Interviewer: Do you think you can usually figure out more about a person based on what they like?
ROSA: (nods her head)
ISABELL: But it's always personal to talk about what you like and you don't like.
OSKAR: It depends.
Interviewer: Well, why wouldn't somebody just be honest about what they like and don't like?
OSKAR: Because it's personal.
Interviewer: Because it's personal.
ISABELL: Yeah. And because you're afraid of being judge, or people will judge you cause you like something, and make fun of what you like. Or at least, I don't really like when people make fun of the things I like.
KATE: (nods her head)

Several concepts are being presented at once in this example, which shows how relation and taste can intersect. Taste can be a feature which brings young people together, but the first revelation is an act of vulnerability.

Affiliation can be less explicit than participation in an official fan group, as seen in the *Pottermore* example. For instance, James frequently states that he prefers to spend time online rather than watching movies or television. He momentarily switches into net-speak while describing the internet, which is an example of the community aspect of *relation*:

> JAMES: It's posted on the interwebs..ah, internet. The awesome sites. The place of imagination. The place of the creeps. And many more.

Taste describes the statements that represent the participants' attachments and preferences from a self-driven perspective. Examples included participation in a fan group, concealing an interest for the sake of self-protection, talking about favorite characters, and adopting mannerisms of a community. Regardless of the expression of taste, most of the participants asserted that these expressions of preference are personal. The underlying factor of what preferences are of value as cultural capital, however, is another matter. This will be further defined in the following section on Disposition.

4.3.4 Disposition

Disposition intersects the other three themes, but cannot be completely subsumed by them. It is a *Hard-to-classify theme*, which is defined as "Themes that contain ideas that do not easily fit into one theme, or that overlap with several themes" (Creswell, 2012, p. 249). It refers to the general attitudes and expectations the participants show, and which they regard as understood between them. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) refer to communication as physically embodied, and as such the attitudes and values held by a person are shown in their disposition. Reay (2004a, 2004c, 2006, 2012) also uses the term to describe the body of attitudes held by a person. It is not a synonym for habitus, but an important part of a person's doxa.

Of the themes identified, this is also the most context rich, and overlaps all conversational threads heavily. However, disposition cannot be fully expressed by any one of the other themes. Instead it becomes evident in how the participants talk about (or do not talk about) other things. For example, in taste certain media is simply understood to be preferable to other media. This became clear while discussing how

some of the participants know whether a movie is good or not, as illustrated in the following example:

> HELEN: Yeah, you know, if people say, you know, around you say that it's a good movie, then (shrugs) you, it's,
> ANNA: (at the same time) Star Wars is Cooler than Barbie!
> HELEN: then it's a good movie.
> JAMES: Definitely
> ANNA: Definitely

In this interaction, James and Anna agree that *Star Wars* is cooler than *Barbie*. This could be classified as *gender, endorsement,* or *taste*. Helen relies on the recommendations of others, which could be *endorsement* or *relation*. Some media is clearly preferable to other media, but the qualification for this is less transparent.

The participants also equated popularity with desirability. With user-generated media content such as YouTube, popularity is also easily quantifiable. The number of views a video has or the number of followers a content creator has validate the popularity of that content. Here Oskar talks about this phenomenon when explaining how viral videos, or videos which achieve popularity through social media, work:

> OSKAR: They go on YouTube and write 'best vine compilation' (mimes typing) or something like that and then they see that and they're like, (in a silly voice) (mimes typing on a smart phone) "Oh, that's a nice trend" (normal voice) and then they tell their friends (back to silly voice) "Oh my god, look at this new video" (mimes typing on a phone) (back to normal voice) And then it spreads around (makes circular motions with his hands) and then everything spreads around the internet and..
> Interviewer: So, and that's how it… how it gets passed around?
> OSKAR: I think so. Because those vine compilations have, like, 20 million views each video. It's like… and then people make copies of that same thing and then more copies and more cop.. like that Gangnam Style thing and Harlem Shake. It's like, YouTube even made an Easter egg. If you write on YouTube " do the Harlem Shake" the YouTube bar will start doing the du du dud du dud.. dududu (mimes it with his hands) and then it'll do the Harlem shake, and then all the videos will go everywhere. It's like…. That's when you know a trend has gone too far.

This interaction contains information about what technology is being used, how the other students are using that technology, an assumption about their attitudes toward content, and ends with the justification that the videos in discussion have *20 million views*. The connecting theme of all this is the normalcy of the situation, or the disposition of the agents involved. The juxtaposition of a high number of views and something going *too far* shows that there is a judgement being made.

These judgements can be about what media is preferable, and thus a source of cultural capital. For example, the conversational thread *novelty* often paired with the thread *endorsement*, leading to the implication that new things are preferable to old things. For example, here some of the participants give suggestions for content:

> Interviewer: Anything else you think I should look into?
> LILLY: Vines, vines
> JON & JAMES: No, Nooo.
> JAMES: No. Vines are just annoying now.
> JON: They're old.
> JAMES: They're just copies of other things.

Taken together, this also shows that Oskar's statement about the Harlem shake is also an example of *novelty*, in that Oskar is linking the idea of going too far with extreme cultural saturation. Like vines, the Harlem shake has lost its novelty.

Another example of the theme disposition is in humor. For example, here Jon and Lilly overlap the conversational threads *humor* and *gender* to make a joke based on stereotypes before advancing to absurd answers:

> JAMES: What favorite color I would say then
> JON: Pink.
> LILLY: Yeah… blue.
> JON: Pineapple

The assumed values can also be a source of power through transgression. Young people will sometimes engage in taboo activities as a form of empowerment, as Suoninen (2013) observed with teens gathering to watch horror movies together. Here, in the discussion about favorite shows, Jon says that he enjoys the show *Breaking Bad*. This is a transgressive statement, and exemplifies the conversational thread *subversion*, but only if everyone present is familiar with the maturity level of the show, which Jon alludes to by calling it *brutal*, but does not explain.

JON: Hmm, yeah. (nods and looks at Helen) Breaking Bad.
Interviewer: Oh, you watched that?
JAMES: Oh, nice. (Leans toward Jon with an outstretched arm and closed fist, looking to bump fists with Jon)
JON: I watched the whole thing (smiles and bumps fists with James)
Interviewer: Okay.
JON: It's kind of brutal… it's.. (shakes head and gestures with his hand) you know.

Breaking Bad is a decidedly adult show about a high school chemistry teacher who, after being diagnosed with cancer, begins to cook and sell methamphetamine to raise money to support his family and fund his medical expenses. The show features graphic scenes of drug use, murder, torture, rape, prostitution, and organized crime. However it is also a critically acclaimed show (THR Staff, 2015), and is an established fixture in popular culture. James's reaction to Jon's statement combined with Jon telling the interviewer, "you know," shows that Jon expects this statement to be controversial, but James supports his choice.

This example shows the conversational threads *subversion* and *affirmation*, as *Breaking Bad* could be considered inappropriate viewing for an adolescent, but James offers Jon approval of his taste. This could also be a representation of *gender* in that the show is in line with masculine values, and it could be a display of expertise and taste as both themes and conversational threads in light of Breaking Bad's status as a long-running, critically acclaimed show. In this way disposition helps bring discussions together into one context and make sense of the assumed values being represented.

Disposition can also intersect relation and taste to show what the participants expect of others. When talking about media for girls and media for boys, some of the participants say that drama is a feminine genra. When aksed to explain, Tami and Rosa offer the following statements:

Interviewer: Okay. So, then you said drama is something mostly for girls?
TAMI: I think mostly.
Interviewer: Okay
ROSA: The girls can find more stuff to connect to the drama, cause there's so much drama like in girls' lives and you know, and boys' lives are more like, simple.

The idea that the lives of boys and girls are different, and that this will reflect in their interests and expression of taste shows an overlap of the threads *gender* and *taste*, while the implication that girls are interested in drama because of their own social struggles shows examples of *relation* and *identity/empathy*. Overall, this reveals the underlying disposition of the participants.

These four themes from the interviews help to conceptualize the words of the participants in the frame of Bourdieu's philosophical constructs. To summarize, expertise, relation, taste, and disposition are the thematic tools which will be used to tease meaning from the words of the participants. They will also be used to compare the content of the media outlined earlier in this chapter with the participants' discussion as a means of adding depth and context. The next section will deal directly with the research questions.

4.4 In their words

Here the research questions will be answered briefly from the analysis, accompanied by relevant quotes from the participants. The discussion chapter will be dedicated to interpreting these findings in relation to the theories, as informed by existing research.

The first step is to figure out how the terms agency, belonging, and empowerment translate into the world the participants experience. They did not use this vocabulary specifically. When asked if there are cliques within the schools, all the participants answered that there are not, though the concept is familiar from films and television. In the following example, some of the participants discuss cliques and the difference between media and their experienced reality.

NIEL: Don't know.
OSKAR: Not in our school, at least.
ISABELL: (shrugs and shakes her head)
ROSA: (looks at Kate)
TAMI: (looks at Kate)
KATE: (Shakes her head no)
Interviewer: No, not at your school?
Isabell & SARA: No, not really
ROSA, KATE, & TAMI: (shake their heads)
KATE: No, there isn't.

ROSA: No
Interviewer: But you've seen that sort of thing happen in movies, right?
ROSA, SARA, &NIEL: (nod)
ISABELL: mm-hmm
Interviewer: What do you think has changed?
OSKAR: Society.

They did not identify a group of cool kids, as one might see in a Hollywood movie, though they confirmed that they have seen this presented in media. Oskar suggests that the reason for this is a change in society. However, when asked what he meant by this, he did not answer.

The participants were also reluctant to simplify or generalize. When asked about heroes and villains in fiction, most of the participants preferred characters who occupy grey areas. Here Oskar and Isabell elaborate:

ISABELL: I kind of like things that aren't just black and white. Like, both are good, and both are bad. And everyone like that is bad, and everyone like that is good.
Interviewer: So, how do you usually tell who's on what side, then?
ISABELL: You don't know until something happens.
OSKAR: You see who has sunglasses and who doesn't.
Interviewer: Okay… who wears sunglasses.
OSKAR: Neither.
(all laugh)
OSKAR: or both!

Jon also discusses the complexity of characters. He brings up the anti-villain here:

JON: The shows I watch there's always a bad guy, and then the anti-villain.
Interviewer: What's an anti-villain?
JAMES: Anti
JON: (Interrupting) An anti-villain is something that's basically, it's not a good guy,
JAMES: (at the same time) anti….. like a vigilante… it's called vigilante
JON: but it's against the bad guy.
JAMES: That's a vigilante

JON: No, vigilante means you, you, um illegally try to stop crime. That's a vigilante
JAMES: Ohhhhh
JON: Anti-villain is trying to stop this evil, but has the, it's still like a bad person in a way
Interviewer: Can you give me an example?
JAMES: Lex Luther?
JON: Um, sure. I guess um, like,
JAMES: (at the same time) Deadpool
JON: Breaking Bad. Let's say that. Then there's a team of Walter White and Jesse. They both are making drugs for, like, a good cause in like, in a way. He's trying to cure his cancer with the money. And that's sort of a good cause for his family and everything. Trying to save some money so that when he dies, they're not gonna be in a bad place. But they still do bad things, like, they kill people sometimes,
JAMES: Make drugs…
JON: Yeah, make drugs (laughs)
JAMES: Make
JON: Which ruin people's lives and, you know, but they're still, like, the good guys in the show.

The above examples clarify that these adolescents do not believe there are cliques within their schools, and they do not describe people as simply good or bad. They describe behavior as situated, which Isabell describes when she says, "You don't know until something happens." Jon also describes situation based values, in the concept of a protagonist who makes drugs and kills people.

In both examples, the participants describe complicated characters who are neither good nor bad. The characters do not belong to one particular group, just as there is no cool group or uncool group identified by the participants. They describe their social landscape differently from that. In this section, the research questions will be considered with quotes from the interview transcriptions as support.

4.4.1 How do youths aged 12-15 describe agency, belonging, and empowerment?

Upon closer reading, the participants do describe agency, belonging, and empowerment, but indirectly. One topic which came up again and again was access to resources. They frequently described access to the internet, how to use it, and the

devices required in this activity. In the following example, James gives advice on the necessary tools for becoming acquainted with the media that he and his peers watch:

> JAMES: You're going to need really good internet connection to watch most of the things that we watch. Like, viral videos or six second videos which is also known as Vine, which is also pretty popular now. I know two of my friends have it, and one of my cousins.

The most important thing is to have "really good internet connection." In another example, James also describes the necessity of wireless internet.

> JON: Videos don't make who you are.
> JAMES: Well, they don't make who you are. They just be.. ma.. it just makes people think that you don't have (waves his hands as he tries to explain).. Alright, so if you don't have wi-fi or snacks (waves his hands more).. no friends. That's it, basically.
> LILLY: Wi-fi or snacks?
> JAMES: (counting on his fingers) No wi-fi, no snacks, no friends.
> LILLY: Ohhhhh

Both of the above quotes are examples of technical expertise, with the titular quote, "No wi-fi, no snacks, no friends" connecting expertise and resources with belonging. Wi-fi allows adolescents to connect to the internet, which is their tool for gaining cultural capital and currying social capital. Some of the participants also talked about smart phones. As previously mentioned all the participants except Anna either used to or currently own a smart phone.

> Interviewer: Do any of you also have smart phones?
> (all nod/raise hands)
> Interviewer: All of you? Or, I should ask, do any of you not have a smart phone?
> (no response)
> Interviewer: All right. So why… what do you use your smart phone for?
> ISABELL: Calling people. Well, I also have a Kindle on there so I can read.
> TAMI: Texting.
> ROSA: Social media
> KATE: (nods in agreement)

TAMI: Looking something up.
ISABELL: Sometimes I go on the internet.

The other group responded to the same question as follows:

JAMES: I lost mine.
HELEN: (raises her hand) I ha
LILLY: I've actually had a smartphone for a long time.
JAMES: I had a smartphone.
ANNA: (clapping her hands)
JON: I wish I had…

Looking something up or *going on the internet* sound like casual purposes. However, looking at how they talk about how school mates and friends use phones presents a different picture. Participation in this culture requires access to technology. Here the participants talk about what it is like to lack a smart phone at school:

HELEN: It's really, you know, if you don't have a smart phone, you're kind of like, left out cause all the girls in the class are like, on Instagram (miming typing with her thumbs)
JAMES: (at the same time) oh my god
HELEN: or snapchat (miming texting on a smart phone)
JON: (at the same time) not in my class
ANNA: (at the same time) that's all they ever do (raises hands for emphasis)

The dominant theme in these excerpts is expertise, as the conversations all regard access to and use of technology. Social media, however, is not an ends in itself. Most of the participants also described how they use social media to identify and learn about the latest trends. Here Tami, Kate, and Rosa talk about the process of keeping up with information:

TAMI: (at the same time) Why, I mean, why? Why do you do that? I dunno, I was just super confused. It's like, yeah. There's always like, a new dance
KATE: (at the same time) yeah
TAMI: (at the same time) dance move that everyone thinks is so funny and is like, there's always that like,

KATE: (nods her head) yeah
TAMI: every three months, two months or something.
KATE: (nods her head emphatically)
Interviewer: Well how do you keep up with it?
ROSA: Well..
TAMI: Basically on the internet.
KATE: Yeah, like
ROSA: Yeah.
KATE: When you go on, like Instagram or something you just see it everywhere.
TAMI: Yeah.
KATE: (at the same time) There's (mimes scrolling on a touch screen)
TAMI: (at the same time) Yeah, there's suddenly that new thing that everyone does.
ROSA: That one day that, Damn Daniel was like the biggest thing on Earth.
KATE: (nods her head)
TAMI: Yeah, yeah, and Alex from Target.
ROSA: Oh yeah.
TAMI: I don't what that was. That was really weird.
Interviewer: Mmm-hmm
TAMI: There's..
(all laugh)
ROSA: Yeah, like…
TAMI: Most of the times it's not actually movies. It's just, like, these weird things
ROSA: (at the same time) Just random stuff, yeah.
TAMI: that people notice, and everyone talking about them.
KATE: (at the same time) Like a random video that..
TAMI: Yeah, like Damn Daniel, where just like, this kid's just like, pointing at someone's shoes. Just…
KATE: yeah
ROSA: And then he went on Ellen

As these participants say, the best way to stay informed about the latest trends is through the internet. For context, *Damn Daniel* and *Alex from Target* are references to

Vines and YouTube compilations. The participants do not know the origin of these trends, but they do know how to find them:

> TAMI: And how did everyone, like, see that video? I don't get it.
> ROSA: I don't know, I just… somebody posted it on the internet and like.
> TAMI: Yea no no, Yeah, I think the friend who posted it was like, sort of vine famous, but not really though
> ROSA: Ohhh
> TAMI: Or something. Just had, like 20 votes and was on vine..
> Interviewer: So then who seems to always know what the newest trend is?
> TAMI: Ummm…
> ROSA: Well, I feel like big Instagram accounts, just like, always the … just like the day that something big comes out, they have, like, all of the memes and stuff.
> KATE: Yeah. (nods)
> TAMI: Yeah, cause there's always those, um, those funny (makes air quotes) or those Instagram accounts that post memes
> KATE: (at the same time) Yeah, those Instagram accounts that post memes.
> TAMI: that don't have like, they don't post selfies or anything like that, they just want, post like funny, like stuff..
> ROSA: Yeah, just like, text posts, memes, and stuff.
> TAMI: Yeah, like, stuff like that. And then like, they, everyone starts posting and then, um on Facebook you can find videos of people doing that and talking about it, just like everywhere.

To interpret these examples through the themes, Tami, Rosa, and Kate are talking about using social media to increase their knowledge about videos, memes, dances, and trends. These are both examples of expertise. The two main topics are technology, the maintenance of a comprehensive body of omnivorous media knowledge.

The participants use terms like *everyone* and *everywhere*, which are non-specific. However, to see memes and videos on Facebook and Instagram, they need to be in that poster's network. The number of votes, posts, followers, or other forms of online statements of taste appear to lend legitimacy to media in the eyes of the participants. Additionally, appearing on a recognized television show like The Ellen Show confirms popularity. These statements reveal the underlying disposition which informs which Instagram accounts the participants follow and what media they choose to watch.

Keeping up with social media is a balancing act, though. Adolescents expect their peers to be well informed, but most of the participants expressed negative opinions about peers who spent too much time on their phones. For example here they talk about the people who know about trends first, but they do not praise these classmates:

> JAMES: Like, the people who keep up, are the people who have those things. I just spread it. I just send it to people.
> JON: Yeah, that person who's always on their phone in the middle of class.
> JAMES: I do not do that!
> ANNA: (Fellow student, name omitted) – (name again) is always in the phone now.
> JAMES: Oh my god yes. Since he got that phone he's always on it.
> JON: like (mimes typing on a smartphone with a transfixed expression)
> ANNA: in class.
> JAMES: After class.
> ANNA: During class.
> JON: Before class.
> JAMES: It is.. it's super… some of it is, no like (classmates, names omitted) they're friends. They're sitting in a group. And they'll just… instead of talking to each other, cause they're right around, they'll just text each other (mimes texting). Right across! (motions from his eyes to an imaginary person across the table).
> JON: I find that very special.

James is careful to point out that he distributes information, but others find it. Spending *too much* time on the internet is seen as a negative pastime. 'Special' in popular vernacular is a euphemism for mental disability (Urban Dictionary, 2016)[3], and is considered a negative term. Tami and Rosa offer more explanation on the topic:

[3] While the Urban Dictionary is not an academic source, it is considered an authoritative source when referencing popular culture vernacular (Kaplan, 2013).

TAMI: Yeah, they're yeah they're, it's like true in some ways. Like there are people out there that like, don't have a social life at all.
ROSA: (laughing) yes
TAMI: They're just too much on their phones. But like, it's like… like, I do like, as long as you are, like, hanging out with your friends and doing your homework and doing, like, everything you need to do, then I think it's okay to use social media and be on the internet.

The important thing with smart phone and social media use according to Tami and Rosa is balance. Jon, James, and Anna all do not have smart phones, and they do not say anything positive about smart phone use. Tami and Rosa both have smart phones, but also state that they can be used too much. Social media awareness and connection requires adolescents to have reliable internet access, which is facilitated by a mobile data plan or at least wi-fi and a smart phone, but being a conspicuous user counts negatively. The trick is to be effortlessly informed, and omnivorous, yet discerning. The internet user should be in control, like James who spreads information, and not controlled by the device, like the person Jon, James, and Anna complain about.

If the construction of agency among young people requires access to technology, then use of agency requires the ability to discern what expertise will be of greatest use. The media available is nearly limitless. In the following example some of the participants talk about what is generally popular among their peers:

Interviewer: Well, you know, there can be more than one. Is there anything else that you would recommend?
JON: Well, with my class, at a certain ag.. a lot of kids don't really watch movies or shows. It's just mostly, like, YouTube or just things from the internet that are just going viral.
HELEN: Yeah, vines.
JAMES: Vines.
HELEN: And memes.
JON: With society today, it's just, um. Everything has to be done really quickly (chops hand for emphasis). They don't really have time to watch a one and a half hour movie. Like, if Lord of the Rings would come out today, you know, kids wouldn't want to watch it. Like, yes, three hour movie, hmmmm.
LILLY: In my class

JON: (interrupts) But you know, where
ANNA: (interrupts) Or they wait until their internet has gone down, and that's the only thing they can do.
JAMES: Cause when your internet's gone, it's just… game over

In this example, the participants claim time is scarce, and that duration is a factor in media preference. Again, they emphasize omnivorous taste, but have added a caveat to their selection: that it must be fast. Also, they again state the importance of internet access.

The right taste also means preferring media which is new or surprising over something older or more predictable. The following are examples of the participants discussing their taste in particular:

Interviewer: Is there anything that you don't like about your favorite shows?
JAMES: Mmm, yes. They sometimes get repetitive. And easy to predict.
JON: No.
JAMES: For me.
JON: No, not my shows. They're perfect.
LILLY: (at the same time G speaks) Some shows are exactly the same.

And:

LILLY: (at the same time) Sometimes they always, have the same things going on every episode.

These examples show boredom with predictability, as compared with Rosa's description of *Star Wars*, which she enjoyed:

ROSA: I don't know. There's always like, shocking twists and stuff and you know.

To be clear, most of the participants also made a distinction between what their peers watch and what they themselves enjoy. Jon says that kids today would not have time to watch *Lord of the Rings*, but he is a kid today, and he has watched it. Below, Isabell and Sara explain why they like *Harry Potter* and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, respectively:

ISABELL: I.. well, there's the plot. I like the plot, and the characters.. and um, (looking at Sara) The thing about Harry Potter is you're always finding out new stuff you didn't know about, so it never really stops. Strange facts you didn't know about, or anagrams of names. Like, Voldemort means flight from death in French. Stuff like that.

Interviewer: So, why would you say that one? Because that answer came really fast.
ISABELL: I don't know. It's just, cause… it
SARA: It makes you think.

This shows a difference between personal taste and the expected taste of their peers. Sara and Isabell both put value on media which is interesting and intellectually challenging.

Group popularity is a fleeting thing. When asked about popular viral videos, these participants suggested *Gangnam Style*:

HELEN: I think that everybody here has watched the music video for Gangnam Style
JAMES: Oh Jesus
LILLY: (Raises her hand)
JON: That's like saying, "Have you seen the sun?"
ANNA: (laughing) Yeah
JON: That works, yeah. That's your answer. I think we're gonna go with Gangnam Style.

As part of the following interview, we watched the music video. When the video appeared on screen, the participants were unenthusiastic.

JON: Oh please no..
JAMES: (lays his head in his lap and covers his head) Uuuuhhggg No, NO!
LILLY & ANNA: (laughing)
LILLY: It's gonna be stuck in your head the rest of the day.
JON: His new video is so, way better.

All of the participants have seen *Gangnam Style*, but the video is now old. The general disposition is that everyone is expected to have seen *Gangnam Style*, but the video is no longer valuable to discuss or watch.

In addition to novelty, taste is gendered. Most of the participants have seen *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. In the following conversation about *Star Wars*, the topic of gender in media comes up:

JON: (sighs) But it's still.. I think anybody who comes to this question, who has seen Star Wars and a Barbie movie, what did you like more? Barbie, or Star Wars?

JAMES: Like, the characteristics

JON: I think ninety-nine point nine percent of the time, they would say Star Wars.

HELEN: Well, depends on their age.

ANNA: Unless they're forced to watch Star Wars

JON: (to Helen) that's true

ANNA: And they're like, six year old girls that

HELEN: And gender

JON: And money

Interviewer: And gender?

JON: Gender doesn't change anything.

JAMES: That's not exactly gender.

HELEN: Yeah, but, like, but a mostly.

ANNA: Gender stereotypics that like keep like

HELEN: Yeah most little kids, like you know, it's like stereotypics, like most boys like Star Wars and most girls like Barbie

LILLY: It's…

Interviewer: Okay, so what would be typical of a girl movie?

HELEN, LILLY, ANNA: Barbie!

Interviewer: But what about Barbie! Explain this to me.

JON: Bad plan

LILLY: Because it's just so pink and perfect.

ANNA: It's just so pink.

The participants all agree that *Star Wars* is cooler than *Barbie*. They also agree that *Star Wars* is a 'boy movie' and Barbie, which none of the participants value, is for girls.

It should be noted that both Lilly and Anna have already said they have both seen all the *Star Wars* movies, yet they agree that this is media for boys.

Not all the participants were as certain about gender lines, though. After being asked if there is some media for boys and some media for girls, these participants claim there is not:

ISABELL: (shrugs and shakes her head)
NIEL: You can go to anything.
KATE: (shakes her head)
ROSA: (nods her head)
Interviewer: Anyone can go?
SARA: Probably, but I don't know.

When asked what they mean, they elaborated that there are no restrictions on who can watch what media, but the reality is a little more complicated than that:

ISABELL: There's probably some things were everyone can, but it will be mostly boys or mostly girls,
ROSA: (nods)
SARA: (nods)
ISABELL: and if it's, like, mostly girls and then a boy enters, everyone is going to be like what are you doing?
SARA, TAMI, & ROSA: (laugh)

The participants have clarified that there is a gender divide in media, but it is a matter of taste and disposition. Anyone can go to any movie, but one is not free from the judgement of others. The participants explain gender expectations further in the following excerpts:

Interviewer: So what sort of stuff usually happens in a girl show?
HELEN: Fashion
ANNA: Fashion
LILLY: Pink
HELEN: Pink
Interviewer: Are there good guys and bad guys?
ANNA: Fairies..
JON: (at the same time) Yeah, there's … there's just a problem

ANNA: (at the same time) And mermaids
LILLY: (at the same time) There's just mean girls
JON: (at the same time) And an easy solution which is
ANNA: (at the same time) Mean witches
JON: Which they avoid
Interviewer: mean witches, okay
JAMES: (throws up his hands in exasperation)
LILLY: Just girlie stuff.
ANNA: They wear brown and green. Seriously. Every single villain in the Barbie movies, they wear brown, green, and black. And their lair. Their evil lair is like that too.
Interviewer (laughing and looking at her brown sweater and black jeans)
HELEN: No, but, like, they've actually seen that and there's also a pattern, always that in Barbie movies that good guys always have blue eyes and blond hair, and bad guys always have green eyes or brown and dark hair.
JON: Barbies program children: you must look like this. You must have blue eyes. You wear pink. You like Barbie stuff. (Makes hand moves like he is hypnotizing someone)

And

ISABELL: (muffled answer) I think so, like celebrity gossip… stuff like that.
Interviewer: Is that a game or a show or?
ISABELL: No, it's just gossip about celebrities.
Interviewer: Oh.
SARA, TAMI, ROSA, KATE, & ISABELL: (laughing)
Interviewer: So, it's not like you can role play being a journalist or something?
TAMI & ROSA: (laughs)
ISABELL: No. It's not that fun.
ROSA: (whispers something to Tami)
ISABELL: No, it's just, um, uninteresting things about people I don't know's lives.

According to the participants, media for girls centers on fashion and gossip. As Jon puts it, there is a problem and an easy solution. Isabell specifies "…uninteresting things about people I don't know's lives." Helen and Jon even point out that these shows promote racist stereotypes that privilege blond hair and blue eyes. The overall reaction to media for girls is that it is not desirable. Girl things are *pink* and *boring* with no real action.

When asked if there is media for boys, the participants' answers are less clear:

> Interviewer: Then if there are shows that are for girls, are there boy shows?
> JAMES: Ehhhh
> JON: No
> JAMES: It's goes with
> JON: No
> JAMES: people's opinions
> JON: (emphatic at Jon) No
> JAMES: eh
> JON: NO
> JAMES: No, I uh, I'm going somewhere…
> LILLY: (laughs)
> JAMES: I am off track now
> HELEN: Wasn't there like, Ben.. some series like
> LILLY: Ben 10
> HELEN: Ben-ten
> ANNA: oh yeah
> JON: They had a girl in it, which was a witch, but, they had a girl in it and she was a main character
> LILLY: And she was kind of like a boy
> JAMES: (making air quotes) main character
> JON: And she was a witch
> JAMES: Secondary character you mean
> LILLY: (snaps her finger and points and Jon) Transformers
> JON: Transformers (looking thoughtful)
> LILLY: And whatever that back
> HELEN: I watched Transformers.
> JAMES: Michael Bay. Yes.
> ANNA: There, all those different car… wheel… track… stuff

LILLY: The cartoons
JON: The thing is, with society today, it's basically um, now you can actually do whatever you want without being judged… most of the time.
JAMES: Most of the time
JON: most of the time.

Both boys in this example assert that there is no media specific to boys. However, Helen and Lilly are able to come up with examples. One is an animated series with a male protagonist, *Ben 10*, and the other is *Transformers*, a franchise about giant robots that transform into cars and fight other, evil robots. Jon says that these days you can "do whatever you want without being judged… most of the time." However, this appears to favor media the participants identified as for boys.

Types of media also appear to be gender segregated. Some of the participants saw video games as more for boys.

TAMI: Video games, I think, or some kinds of video games.
Interviewer: How do you know?
TAMI: I don't (laughs)
KATE: (laughs)
OSKAR: I think there's…
NIEL: I think when Nintendo, the first game console came out, the (Audio is garbled, approximation: The parents didn't know what it was, and stores had to decide where to put the game on the shelf in the toy isle, and so they put it on the isle with the toys for boys.)
Interviewer: So it's just where it was originally put in the store?
NIEL: Yeah.
OSKAR: And most, like, shooter games now, or, at least I think so, like, say Back Ops 3, how many girls do you think play that?
Interviewer: I honestly don't know. Anyone?
ROSA: (Nods toward Kate)
KATE: (mouths the word "what?")
ROSA & TAMI: (point at Kate)
ISABELL: (shakes her head to indicate she doesn't know)
OSKAR: I think there's more, like, boys that play like shooter games and stuff like that.
ROSA: I prefer like, shooter games. They're a lot less boring.

KATE: Yeah, me too.
TAMI: I don't like them (shakes her head)
ROSA: They're a lot more fun. The way that.. like (gets talked over) Princess games… wooo (in a bored voice)
TAMI: Woo hoo.
ROSA: Yeah. A princess. I'll save you now. (in a bored voice)

Kate suggests that video games are for boys, but then later she and Rosa both state that they like the games they suggest are for boys. Niel proposes that this gender stereotype arose from a marketing choice. Oskar questions if girls play shooter games, and Rosa says that these are the type of game she prefers.

As seen in the previous examples, the participants associate gossip, fashion, and social conflict with girl media despite Rosa and Isabell showing overt boredom at these topics. Action, violence, and adventure are boy media, but nearly all the participants enjoy these movies, shows, and games. There is a bias in taste toward masculine choices, with media perceived as intended for girls less desirable than 'boy media'.

Age also factors into what media the participants consider valuable. In the Barbie versus Star Wars discussion, age was also mentioned as justification for the superiority of *Star Wars*:

ANNA: Just, cause Barbie's made for younger kids and like,
JAMES: Or creepy adults
LILLY: And teens, we like to watch movies for like, much older than they actually are.

Here Lilly and Anna differentiate between media for *younger kids* and media which is interesting for teens. Lilly says that teens prefer things which are perceived as intended for older audiences. For example, the participants all mentioned that *Deadpool* is a highly anticipated film. This film is rated R in the U.S. and is age restricted in Europe for 15 or 16, depending on the country (IMDB, 2016). The statement about creepy adults was not further qualified. The next interaction shows another example of the participants valuing mature content:

JAMES: I know a good movie that I can recommend to a friend. What was it? (puts hands on his head) I watched it yesterday! Ahh! The Last Witch Hunter.
Interviewer: The last *witch* hunter?

JAMES: Yes.
Interviewer: Okay
HELEN: Isn't that, like, age restricted, like 16 or something
JAMES: What? No.. it's 12. Age restricted 12
JON: (to Helen) Shush shush shushhhh….
LILLY: Wasn't it on the tv yesterday?
JON: It's PG probably.

Helen questions the age restriction of the film. Jon tells her to shush, then insists agrees with James that it is appropriate for viewers over 12. Either way, this matches Lilly's statement that teens prefer media for *older* audiences, which is a matter of both taste and disposition.

While having a smart phone was described as advantageous, not all the participants owned one. Rather than accepting this as a disempowering fact, one participant described how he and his friends exercised empowerment through control of a situation, turning lack of a smart phone into an exclusive. Over the course of the interviews, he frequently described as talking to someone face-to-face (rather than through a device) as "acting like a human being." Here he describes how he and his friends disempower smart phone users, giving preference to non-mediated communication:

> JON: Actually, as friends we're just, going out like to, like the mall or something, we just have, like, no phones. Nobody have their phones. Everyone just put them in their pockets, and we're just talking like normal people. And we have this circle of trust thing, where nothing goes out of the circle of trust.

In adolescent society, agency and empowerment are constructed through expertise. They have described the importance of digital access and literacy combined with the knowledge and experience necessary to discern what will have value to others. New media is preferable to old media, and being at the front of a trend is preferable to finding out at the end of a fad. Gender also plays a part, as media categorized as feminine holds less value. Age too is a factor. Things deemed childish are uninteresting. Belonging was less clearly defined, but nebulous terms like *everyone* and *everywhere* partnered with descriptions of trends. Belonging is a result of sharing expertise, which will be addressed in more detail as a benefit.

4.4.2 How do adolescents describe the benefits of agency, belonging, and empowerment?

In this section the benefits of the above expressions of expertise will be explored, starting with expertise in social media. To begin, Tami, Rosa, and Kate offer this advice for adults:

> TAMI: I feel like grownups are, like, too critical of media.
> ROSA: Yeah.
> TAMI: I feel like they think it's sooo bad. They think it's like, I feel like grownups think media is like, or like, social me teenagers use social media way too much and that it like, ruins your brains and then it'll make us, like, crazy but you know. It's not that bad and we don't use it that much. We just like, sometimes can (becomes inaudible under Kate)

Tami makes a statement that grownups have a different attitude toward media than she has. When asked to elaborate, she, Rosa, and Kate continue:

> Interviewer: Okay. Anything to add?
> ROSA: Umm… I just would like to say, I like how there's a lot of like, people trying to get equality. Like, social media's always talking about feminism like, equality for everybody and stuff, and that's just like, I like that part of social media.
> Interviewer: Mm-hmm.
> TAMI: That's like a huge, that's like a huge thing
> ROSA: yeah
> TAMI: On social media now. That everyone's like… I like that though
> KATE: Yeah
> TAMI: It's like everyone's (talked over by Rosa)
> ROSA: Yeah, it's also good to like, grow up in it, cause like it's so much harder like, if you grew up in, like, "oh no, they're not as equal as us" to like get used to that everyone's the same.
> TAMI: Yeah
> KATE: Yeah
> ROSA: But then if you grow up with that then it's so much easier just to accept it.

TAMI: Yeah, like, dur, like, people that posting like, you know, you shouldn't be homophobic or racist or like, yeah, feminist stuff, just like, I think that's like a really good part of media.

Access to social media for these adolescents is more than an opportunity to find entertainment. They also are accessing and gaining information about politics. Rosa especially expresses positive feelings for being able to grow up with access to feminist popular discourse, and Tami adds anti-homophobic discourse and anti-racist discourse to this list. They also see this as an advantage they possess over adults, who they believe will have trouble acclimating to modern values.

Their political knowledge is not limited to philosophical ideas, either. At school they also talk about international politics with their peers:

ROSA: Also, like, um, there's a lot of, um not hype, just everybody's talking about the uh, election, uh, in America, you know, for president, um..
Interviewer: Really?
TAMI: Yeah. It's all over the internet.
KATE: (nods) yeah
ROSA: It's been for so long. And like, some people just choose to ignore it because they're not in America, so they don't really care, you know, what happens.
Interviewer: That's so embarrassing.
ROSA: (laughs) yeah
TAMI: Everyone just, I think it's mostly because of like, Donald Trump.
(all): Yeah.
TAMI: Everyone can't believe..
KATE: (nodding her head) Yep
ROSA: Yeah. Everybody loves Bernie Sanders, though, which is good.

These participants find value in being able to use social media to research social and political events, which then allows them to participate in discussions. Again, the non-specific *everyone* is mentioned. Additionally, Tami points out that something is "all over the internet," which implies that her concept of social connection exists both on and offline. Because she has a smart phone, reliable internet access, and an idea of appropriate taste she is able to participate in social interactions in both settings.

Lilly also finds this beneficial. She talks about doing *research* if she has not yet seen or heard of a trend:

> LILLY: Matters, if there's, like, almost everyone in your class talks about it then you have to talk about it. And they ask you, like, "Have you seen this?" And you're like, uhhhh, so you have to like, when you come home, you have to, like, research.

Jon and James, on the other hand, use their expertise to exercise their ability to snub media.

> JON: I ignored clocking, planking, all those weird things… like that. That I found really weird.
> JAMES: Oh, twerking. I gave up on that.
> JON: I never really enjoyed, um…. cat videos or much..

They are both aware of the trends they mention, but like *Gangnam Style*, they have chosen to express dislike for these sorts of videos. This expression of taste is also a way of constructing agency and belonging through purposeful ignoring.

The internet also enables young people to transcend geographical boundaries. Some of them expressed exasperation at the restrictions of local technology in comparison to the information available online, as seen in the following example:

> TAMI: There's like, a new song that everyone's hyping about on the internet and then suddenly, like, three months later it comes to Iceland.
> KATE: Yeah, they just had, like, a few weeks ago, like Heart Wants What it Wants by Selena Gomez – a brand new song! And it came out, like, a year ago!

This conversation happened while discussing radio preferences. Tami and Kate both express frustration at the lag between international trends and Icelandic recognition of these trends. Fortunately for them, they have internet access and the ability to find information which is not locally available.

Broadened communicative possibilities are also advantageous. In an earlier example, the participants complained about fellow students siting around a table using smart phones to communicate rather than conversing out loud. However, text based communication enables forms of exchange which some of the participants enjoy.

LILLY: In real life you can't do a winkey face. You cannot do a winkey face.
JAMES: yeah. They
JON: They, they can't do this (does an exaggerated wink)
JAMES: they can't really do, like LOL or stuff like that.
(ANNA: remains reclining against the couch – not only not talking much, but also physically withdrawn from the conversation)
JON: They're more used to, um, probably typing than talking, so it's way easier to watch a video while you're typing at the same time.
ANNA: (at the same time) All that snapchat…
JON: And doing whatever.
LILLY: And you can't say, like, IDK if you don't know anything. You just… then you just won't understand. But if you write, they'll understand. You also shorten the words, like
JAMES: abbreviations
LILLY: mm-hhmm
JAMES: So, think of
LILLY: Or like, saying the word in half.
ANNA: (repeatedly poking James) There's a unicorn emoji. A u-ni-corn e-mo-ji! (emphasizes each syllable with a poke)
JAMES: What?!
LILLY: You can't just tell a person (raises her hand to her forehead with an extended finger and wiggles the finger to mime a silly unicorn).
JAMES: It's like (Also raises his hand with finger extended to also mime a unicorn) u-ni-corn. What, you don't have a phone?
JON: I don't have a phone, so, you know (presses his hands together and raises them to his forehead, then looks around) u-ni-corn

Here the participants talk about communication through emojis, or pictorial representations, such as a *winky face*. Jon also points out that it is easier to communicate through text than vocally while watching a video with others, and Lilly mentions economy of communication when she talks about shortening words.

Specific knowledge about media has advantages as well. In the next example, Oskar talks about the advantage of knowing about new media:

OSKAR: Yeah. I mean, if you know, like, if the new, like, Black Ops game or Call of Duty game comes out and you're like, "Oh yeah, you can do this and

that" then your friends will be like, "Oh, that's neat," that will maybe be an advantage. But if you're like, "Oh, like, Jack died in the Titanic," it's like… (spreads his hands to indicate "so what?") then you don't really have an advantage. It's like… Or like… (scratches his head) I don't really know.

He specifies that it has to be information that his friends want to know. In this case, being able to introduce his friends to desirable features in a game helps him earn prestige among others. In another interview, some of the participants displayed this exchange of expert knowledge while talking about the new *Star Wars* movie.

JAMES: Well, most people expected Jar Jar Binks to be the evil one.
(all laugh)
JAMES: which is true.
JON: There was this huge theory, that Jar Jar from the prequels – everyone hated him. He was so stupid, and he was so lucky somehow.
JAMES: annoying
JON: And annoying. And everyone hated him.
ANNA: (her sister) loooved Jar Jar
JON: So there was this huge theory that Jar Jar, the alien, was the almighty dark lord of everything, and he had, like, the force and was the most powerful sith in the whole entire world.
ANNA: Would he be the sith that they were talking about, that could bring people back to life?
JON: Sure.
ANNA: that's….
JON: I expected to see Jar Jar…. But okay.
Interviewer: What do you mean sith that could bring… ah, sorry. That's off topic. (laughs)
JON: (laughs)
ANNA: That's how they he was convinced by the other guy to join the dark side.
JAMES: He wasn't dead in revenge. He was burning. I think.
JON: Loads of comments.
JAMES: If I remember correctly.
ANNA: No, he got burnt after he joined the dark side.
JAMES: What?

ANNA: Yeah. He was fighting with, um, Obi Wan
JON: NERD!
ANNA: And
JAMES: wait.. (looks confused)
ANNA: And….
JAMES: What?
ANNA: Yeah

Participation in this interaction requires that the participants have seen the most recent *Star Wars* movie as well as the others. They refer to Characters such as Jar Jar and Obi Wan, who did not feature in the most recent movie, and also reference a fan theory which the participants would have read or heard by either talking to others or through research online. James says, "loads of comments," which would make sense in the context of social media in which individual contributions to a discussion are called 'comments.' Jon and James have so far dominated the *Star Wars* conversation, but Anna has expert knowledge, which she uses to gain talking time.

All the participants used expertise as a tool to participate in conversation, and it was the most common form of contribution. The following two examples show specialized conversation:

JON: Then there's Jon Shawn, where he reviews very old, bad movies or very old, bad videogames.
JAMES: Titanic – Titenic…
JON: Titenic, yeah.
JAMES: Titenic
JON: Where they made an NDS 2D video game out of it
JAMES: (at the same time) The plot uh
JON: The movie. Titanic.
JAMES: Plug n play. So, they're. Okay, so, you know the movie Titanic? The name is copyrighted, so these people made a game about it. They called it Titenic.
JON: With an E.
Interviewer: Okay… Titenic..
JON: And they still drew Leonardo diCaprio's face on the video game
JAMES: And
JON: And they legally got away with that.

ROSA: Well, now everybody's always dabbing. So.
TAMI & KATE: Yeah.
TAMI: True. There's always…
Interviewer: Always doing what?
TAMI: There's always
ROSA: (at the same time) Dabbing. It's like
TAMI: (at the same time) like that new
ROSA: (at the same time) Yeah. Like even though it's with M A
TAMI: (at the same time) (does air quotes) move that
KATE: (at the same time) Dance move
TAMI: (at the same time) And there was twerking, and then there's dabbing and then..
ROSA: (at the same time) Twerking will, I think, always be something
KATE: (at the same time) Yeah, but
TAMI: (at the same time) Yeah, but there was a time when it was like, huge, huge. (spreads her hands to indicate hugeness)

In both examples, the participants use jargon specific to the topic of conversation. In the case of Jon and James, their vocabulary includes gaming jargon such as *NDS*, *plug n play*, and also legal concepts regarding copyright. Rosa, Tami, and Kate use jargon related to different dance fads such as *dabbing* and *twerking*. Both these examples show fast-paced conversation based on the assumption that everyone involved knows the references they are making, and in both cases they are talking about videos and information that was accessed online. This is another example of technical expertise facilitating the gathering of content expertise, with the advantage of participation in a social setting.

Some of the participants explicitly describe this process, as Lilly did when she said she researches things others are talking about. Here Niel gives the reason he watched the *Harry Potter* movies:

NIEL: Well, the weird thing is, when I saw the movie, I saw the last one first. So I kind of knew everything what's going to happen, so I just pieced it all together and then I saw them, so I knew what was gonna happen.
Interviewer: So, why did you watch the others if you already knew the end?

NIEL: Well, cause it's just fun. Don't know the others, you can't talk about it.

Because he watched the movies out of order, his primary interest in watching them was to *talk about it* with others. This desire for a common topic for discussion works both ways. In a previous example, Oskar voiced his dissatisfaction with a friend for not being familiar with *Star Wars*. In the next example, Oskar and Isabell describe shared experience as a motivation for recommending media to others.

OSKAR: Sort of the same thing. My brother, he'll recommend a movie and I'll look at it, and I'm like, what is this? It's like, they're like… some movie that's like 18 years and older and it's like this bloody movie where everyone gets killed. I don't like that.
ISABELL: It's really terrible to watch those.
OSKAR: (throws his hands up to display confusion)
OSKAR: I think he's just recommending that movie because he likes it. He doesn't care what I think of it.
ISABELL: Often when you want someone to watch something, it's just because you watched it and you liked it, and you want someone to talk to about it.

Oskar's example with his brother is not a successful instance of taste and expertise, but he and Isabell reason that the desire to share something with another person can overcome attention to individual preference. This also can work both ways, referring back to Lilly's choice to watch Star Wars rather than be excluded from an outing with her family.

The agency afforded through expertise offers more advantages than inclusion, or belonging. It also offers the potential for financial capital. In the following example, Oskar and Niel explain how a YouTuber with interesting and popular videos can turn this into an occupation:

OSKAR: They just play it and then make.. they make money by doing it, but they do it for the fun of it also.
NIEL: yeah
OSKAR: It's like, ah, an extremely fun job. It's like if you.. it's like playing a video game and you get money for doing it, so.

OSKAR: It's also, like, if, like, say, like, the top YouTuber; PewDiePie, if he didn't have any subscribers and he get ten million views on each video, he'd get around, like, fifty dollars each video. But if he'd have ten million subscribers also, then he gets two times, or, like, I think it's five times more money because he has more subscribers. He's getting like, every month he gets like, 400,000 dollars, which is a lot of money. It's more than the president makes every year.

None of the participants mentioned if they currently earn money from broadcasting video games or uploading content, but James and Jon do talk about creating videos. In the following example, they are the YouTubers under discussion:

JON: I actually, I used to do school projects. And they're like… school projects are boring, so I make them fun somehow. Like, by adding just a few explosions.
JAMES: (at the same time) Michael Bay
JON: Some heavy metal.
LILLY: Junk.
JON: Kanye West is in there for (unintelligible) Add that all together, and it just becomes a perfect youtube video and I post it there. And yeah, I just put school projects into music videos.
JAMES: I don't. I just put my gaming videos I think are good. (laughs)
JON: It's ten out of ten.
JAMES: Eleven out of ten. I think they're good. That's all.

Here they both express personal satisfaction at being able to create and upload content. The phrases "ten out of ten" and "eleven out of ten" are rating systems, meaning perfect and better than perfect, respectively. Jon has found that he enjoys turning school projects into music videos, which he describes as fun. James makes videos of his video games, some of which he describes as *good*.

Belonging has mostly been indirectly referenced thus far, and has manifest as participation in conversation or activities. However, the participants do reference the state of belonging when talking about characters in fiction. In the following example, Isabell and Oskar comment on their belief that people prefer to be members of a group:

Interviewer: Why do you think that's[4] popular right now?
ISABELL: I think it's because people, when they're not given a group, people tend to try to sort themselves.
OSKAR: (nods his head)
ISABELL: Pretty much. I remember in Divergent they're all really worried about people who don't fit in any groups.
Interviewer: Anyone else?
ISABELL: Well, the main thing in Divergent is sorting people into things or sets, so when there came people they couldn't sort.. that was, um..

Isabell has also expressed personal interest in group affiliation within the context of *Harry Potter*. In an earlier example she recounted that she has taken an online test to find out which 'house' is the right choice for her. Other participants gave their ideas for why this concept of being sorted into groups might be important in the following example:

Interviewer: Okay, so with all the kids who were going up to put the hat on, what emotion do you think they were feeling?
LILLY: Happy.
JAMES: Not scared.
ANNA: Proud of their house.
LILLY: Nervous.
JAMES: Well, no, they're.. while they're up there they're nervous.
ANNA: Proud that they're in the same house as Harry Potter
JAMES: A nervous wreck, I'd say.
JON: Oh yes, and not Slytherin.
LILLY: Nervous, but happy.
Interviewer: How come?

[4] Reference to media which involves sorting people into groups

LILLY: Because they're happy that they're in the school, and they're probably gonna make it, like… but still, they're kinda nervous that they'll get put…
ANNA: (interrupting) It's sort of a way of saying, "We have Harry Potter! We're better than all the other houses!" (Raises an arm in triumph)
JAMES: and, basically, it's how they shame people.
JON: Who are not Gryffindor or Slytherin.
JAMES: If they're not Gryffindor of Slytherin

Being associated with a group can bring out feelings of pride and shame, according to this example. Some houses are preferable to others. When asked to explain, Anna compares the different houses to different classes, which is how her school divides the students:

Interviewer: But they're all at the same school. What does it matter what house they're in?
JAMES: No, they're in different schools and different learning.
ANNA: Yeah. It's sorta like their class.

Isabell echoes this idea of reputation through group affiliation in the following example:

ISABELL: I think they're nervous. Cause the whole house has a reputation, like everyone says Slytherin and Gryffindor are the best, and Hufflepuff is kind of, they're kind of looked down on. Cause people just think they're not that good.

The following quote further explains the importance of house affiliation:

Interviewer: Okay, so does what house you're sorted into choose who you're going to be?
JAMES: Yeah.
JON: No.
ANNA: sort of. Cause if you're sorted into Slytherin, all the other houses tease you, and so Voldemort, Voldemort would come along and say, "Hey, I offer you a chance to tease them back," and of course they're gonna accept him, cause they've been teased their whole life. Most of their school life.
JAMES: They want payback.

LILLY: Yeah.

Earlier the participants all asserted that there are not cliques within their schools, but the idea is familiar. They also show empathy for the characters in works of fiction, and attribute values to the characters' group affiliation. Anna even describes becoming vulnerable to negative relationships as a result of affiliation with the wrong group. To compare this with a real world example of teasing and group belonging, Tami, Rosa, and Kate describe how they tease each other, and especially Tami, for having undesirable taste in media:

TAMI: Okay, no, okay, cause like, I know they, they two have such different like interest than everything I do. They have like, way different interest in everything, like. They listen to different music. They like different movies. And every time we go, like, to like have, like want to watch a movie, like, I don't want to watch this Notebook and Twilight, and they're like, no, let's watch like, something else. And it's just like, it's way different. They're not like, they, they say stuff to me that's not, like, kind, you know, but like, they don't

ROSA: (laughing) We just make jokes.

TAMI: But yeah I don, I don't get mad at it or like, it doesn't offend me in like, any way shape or form, you know, it just like..

ROSA: It kind of did, but then you just got over it. We did it so much.

TAMI: (laughing) Yeah, you haven't even seen Twilight. You're just weird.

ROSA: Yeah I know. It's just like, I don't know. When I was younger then I heard everyone was talking about how much they hated it, so I just like

KATE: (at the same time) Yeah.

ROSA: grew up into hating Twilight.

TAMI: I don't know what's with that. Like. I don't know. I just read the book, and then I really like it.

ROSA: And then even the teachers make fun of you.

KATE: Yeah (laughing)

TAMI: True (laughing) And when they see me, like, reading the book they're like oh, they're just like (in a funny voice) "You're reading vampire romance." And I'm just like.. yeah.

ROSA: Didn't like (name) once take your book?

TAMI: Yeah. He once took my book away from me. Yeah.

ROSA: (To the interviewer) He's a teacher.
TAMI: It's like, I don't really like, I understand why peo, like, I don't get like, offended, like I'm never talking to you again, like why are you being so mean to me. You know, like. I, I understand why they do it and I'm, like, okay with it. It's just like, I know they're not like, trying to be super mean to me. I know they're not like, in a bully way trying to be mean. It's just like, you know, making fun of you. You know?
Interviewer: Mm-hmm.
TAMI: So it's like, it's okay. (laughs)
KATE & ROSA: (laughing)
TAMI: I've gotten used to it.
KATE: You also do it to other people, so.
TAMI: Yeah, that's, that's very true.

Tami recounts being teased, but says that it does not offend her. She also admits to engaging in teasing others. However, the dominant theme in this interaction is relation, and she, Rosa, and Kate have previously described positive memories they have together from several years ago. Within the security of this friendship teasing is seen as a *joke*. Tami also describes being teased by a teacher, but does not describe the event as traumatic. She and her friends laugh about the incident.

Tami's resilience may also come from finding belonging outside her local friend group. Just as the internet enables the participants to find information which is not locally available, it also broadens their social possibilities. Anna and Isabell describe interacting with other *Harry Potter* fans on *Pottermore*. In an interaction which preceded the above conversation, Tami also referred to a global community of taste:

TAMI: Well, there's always someone out there that also likes it, so that's like, but, do you mean like, what none of your friends like, but you like it?
Interviewer: Well, what do you mean by there's always someone else who likes it?
TAMI: Because, you.. you're not obviously, like, the only one in the world that likes it. There's always someone else that likes the same thing as you.

In the social media era, it is possible to find an appropriate forum for expertise, even if there is not a peer group locally available. While her Icelandic friends may not share her taste in music or books, Tami can find others online who do.

Oskar also describes enjoying the benefits of friendship. In his example, he and his friends share taste in media. Their relationship and interactions take place both on and off-line.

> Interviewer: So then, how did you pick your group of guys who you play games with?
> OSKAR: From friendships in school.
> Interviewer: Okay, so you already knew them?
> OSKAR: Yeah.
> Interviewer: And how did you know those guys in particular would play video games with you?
> OSKAR: Because I started, or my friends started playing video games. I started playing video games the same time he started playing, and then all my other friends started playing video games, and then we just came, like, this giant community of just, friends that are playing. Like, I have, like, more than like thirty friends on my Steam account who are, like, constantly playing video games.
> Interviewer: But you usually play with the same group?
> OSKAR: Yeah. It's… like, if I play, like, a competitive match and like, all five of us are gonna play, then I'll maybe play, like, with someone else, also.

To reiterate, Oskar and his friends play these games in their homes, and are connected to each other through the internet. His example shows a positive loop of friendship leading to recommended media, which Oskar also enjoys, and which he can participate in with his friends, thus strengthening the relationship. He frequently talks about video games, and he discovered this interest through a friend.

Adolescents find a sort of unrestricted freedom online which allows them to find and engage with media which interests them. They can also share this information with others and seek out communities with shared interests. Content creation is another source of personal satisfaction, and possibly a source of future income. The expertise gained though media interaction helps these young people participate in adolescent culture and build relationships, and relationships help them find new media. Thus, the information culture they describe is a mutually beneficial cycle in which agency, empowerment, and belonging are linked.

4.4.3 How do adolescents describe a lack of agency, belonging, or empowerment?

The most common negative experiences that the participants mentioned were being judged and lacking internet access. In this section these two experiences will be explored, beginning with loss of access.

Earlier, Helen described life at school without a smart phone. She could be physically present for a gathering, but she was still distant from the activity. As she described it, her friends sat and used their smart phones to interact with social media while she looked on. She describes this as a negative experience, and points out that her father does not share this opinion:

> HELEN: And then my dad was like, "You know, I think that was the best thing that happened to you this year, is you lost your phone" because of social media.

Helen is disempowered among her friends, and she lacks the agency to alter this. Her father's opinion is a reminder that she does not have the means to address her change in status. In a different interview, Tami, Rosa, and Kate talked about the difference between how adults perceive adolescents using social media and how adolescents actually use social media. Helen experiences this difference in a very real way, as she is now excluded from activities with her peer group. Being without a smart phone means being cut off from the information flow that Helen and her peers find valuable. Rosa, Kate, and Tami's description of those who only have access to older technology, such as a flip phone, shows that they do not expect someone without a smart phone to be aware of the most recent trends:

> Interviewer: Is there anybody, like, at your school or in your social group who seems to be the first one who knows?
> TAMI: Well, there's definitely those people that are last to know.
> (all laugh)
> Interviewer: Okay.
> KATE: The ones who spend less time on social media.
> TAMI: Yeah, those friends that have flip phones and stuff like that.
> ROSA: Yes (laughs)
> KATE: Yeah (nods)

TAMI: Yeah. But like… then there's like, or, there, there's also the people that just have, like, phones and they don't really like, use social, social media. They just use it for, like, texting people and stuff.

Because Helen previously had a smart phone, she also has experienced the connected culture Tami, Rosa, and Kate describe. Anna, on the other hand, has never had a smart phone. During the interviews she frequently mentions that she does not use social media very much. Her friends show that they are aware of her lack of expertise in the following exchange:

Interviewer: Well, what happens if you choose to ignore something that everyone is talking about?
JAMES: Oh, you're behind on everything.
JON: Nothing really happens.
JAMES: I feel like something's happened. Something's happened.
LILLY: (at the same time) No, you don't know what's going on.
LILLY: You'll be confused.
JAMES: Yeah.
LILLY: You'll have nothing to talk about.
JON: Not me. I'm fine.
LILLY: Everyone else is talking about the same thing. You're just, like, in the corner on the other side of the room, and like (puts her head down and folds her arms in her lap in a submissive position) (in a sad voice) "I have no friends. No one likes me."
ANNA: (sarcastic tone) Thanks. (laughs)
LILLY: (laughs and pats Anna's shoulder)

Lilly's description is received in good humor, and the following exchange of laughter and physical reassurance shows that she is not being malicious, but the image of a socially isolated person crouched in a corner shows how disempowering lack of expertise can be. Jon, on the other hand, states that he is fine. The difference is that Jon says that he has chosen to ignore trends. Ignorance is only disempowering when it is unwilling.

In the dynamic of socially connected versus non-connected, there is also a gender difference. In the following example, the participants involved make it overtly clear that social media based exclusion is more common among the girls at their school:

JAMES: Yeah. And they, they will silently judge you. Or they'll just talk behind your back.
Interviewer: Well, who does this?
LILLY: I dunno. (shrugs)
JAMES: People who are addicted to their phones. And I know most of the people in our class that do that.
LILLY: The girls?
ANNA: Yes.
JAMES: Yessss
ANNA: The girls are so…
JAMES: They were sitting around the table just like (makes a monkey face and mimes madly typing on a smart phone using his thumbs)
Interviewer: (to Anna) What were you saying?
ANNA: The girls are so.. like. During lunch.. I mean after lunch
JON: (at the same time) Ohh. (shakes his head) The girls. Ahhh, soo..
ANNA: They go into, they get, like a music room, and they like, some of them start playing piano while the rest crowd around their phone and watch, like, trailers or something like that. I don't know. I'm never there.

Anna emphasizes that she does not know what *the girls* are doing because she is *never there*. She is being excluded from both the activity and the knowledge being shared. The primary theme in this selection is relation, and there is a clear division between the people with smart phones and the people without.

In addition to the dynamic of exclusion versus inclusion, there is also the risk of judgement. As previously seen, the participants regard being judged negatively. The following exchange addresses this issue:

ISABELL: Yeah. And because you're afraid of being judge, or people will judge you cause you like something, and make fun of what you like. Or at least, I don't really like when people make fun of the things I like.
KATE: (nods her head)
Interviewer: And, do you think that ever happens, like at school?
ISABELL: Yeah.
SARA: (looks at Isabell and nods)
ISABELL: (looks back at Sara, smiles, and nods)

Interviewer: So is there anything right now that's really unpopular in your experience?

NIEL: Well, there's almost nothing that's unpopular. Everything is popular for one second. There's nothing. Something else… something else comes. And another thing. And another thing. Every second there comes something else.

ISABELL: There are just things that people don't know exist, that I really like. People tend to make fun of things they don't know what they are, and when you try to explain a lot of things it comes out sounding ridiculous, because, yeah.

Isabell has a smart phone and access to social media, yet she still describes being *made fun of* and *judged*. She finds this experience unpleasant. As she describes it, her reason for exclusion stems from non-conforming taste, rather than lack of expertise. In the following example, she explains why she has not seen the most recent *Star Wars* movie:

ISABELL: Um, well, I haven't seen this movie because I haven't seen any of the others that were released before this one, and I know it wouldn't be fun to watch, cause I wouldn't know what was going on. And I haven't watched the others, so I don't really know a lot about them.

SARA: (nods in agreement)

Interviewer: What other reasons might some people have for not going to watch the movie everyone is talking about?

OSKAR: Maybe they're just haters.

SARA: Maybe someone has, like prejudice, or something against it.

Interviewer: Does that mean the same thing? That they're a hater or that they have prejudice against Star Wars?

ROSA: (tilts her head to the side, then shakes her head to indicate "maybe")

ISABELL: Similar

Interviewer: Could you explain?

ISABELL: Well, I feel like some people are uncomfortable with watching things that happen in space, and Star Wars. And (unintelligible) (whispers) (unintelligible) somebody hates something you really like (unintelligible) hates something just to be different (unintelligible)

Interviewer: (to the group) Would you like to add anything?
(no reply, participants indicate no answer)

In this interaction, Isabell's body language becomes increasingly tense and her voice becomes softer, displaying discomfort. The reasons she gives for not watching Star Wars are lack of relevant knowledge and dislike of the genera. Her final comment is nearly unintelligible, and the group declines to discuss the topic further.

All the participants mentioned being judged as a negative experience. Oskar explains how judgement works among adolescents, but admits that he finds the act distasteful.

Interviewer: How do people do that?
OSKAR: Oh you like this and I don't like that, so I'm gonna judge you.
Interviewer: Like, they actually say that?
OSKAR: No. It's like, that's how they think it in their mind probably. It's like, it's like… if you don't, or if you don't… or, not really. I mean, it's like.. if you like something that like no one, I mean no one else liked then people would probably judge you or something. Which, I just think is dumb.
Interviewer: So what happens when people judge you?
OSKAR: You're judged.
Interviewer: And, what does that mean?
OSKAR: And…. (makes a thinking face and shrugs) I don't know.
Interviewer: So, how do people avoid being judged?
OSKAR: (sighs audibly) I don't know. I mean, it's not really much by me. I mean, if I, If I don't like, If I like, say, if my friend likes something and I don't think that's neat, I won't say, like (in a mocking voice), "Oh, you're a newbie. Don't like that. Like.." I'll just be like, okay, fine. I don't care.
Interviewer: Mmm-hmm.
OSKAR: It's like, if, if my three year old cousin would like My Little Pony I wouldn't be like (mocking voice) "Oh, you're a newb," or something. It's like, if he judged. If I, if I judge my cousin for liking Halo, then like, he probably wouldn't even care. He'd still probably play it. Because he's like a complete nerd at Halo. I mean, I like that game too, but….

Oskar gives inappropriate taste as a main reason for judging others in his examples of liking something that *no one* else likes and in the example of his cousin's interest in

childish media. He also calls a cousin a *nerd* at Halo. During the expertise based discussion on *Star Wars*, Jon also called Anna a nerd. Expertise deemed overly-specialized can be regarded negatively.

Isabell was interviewed in a group of adolescents who, except for Sara, were unfamiliar to her. In contrast, Anna was interviewed with a group with whom she is friends. Both girls describe exclusion and bullying. In the interview group with Anna, it was also observable that she was often spoken for, as in the following example:

> Interviewer: (To Anna) So what stuff do you share with other people?
> JAMES: Books, I think.
> LILLY: Well, she talks a lot about the Hunger Games to me.
> ANNA: I do?
> LILLY: And then some other books that you're reading…
> JAMES: It's just books and movies, I would say. And yeah..
> LILLY: And then…
> ANNA: Most of the movies are based on the books, though.
> Interviewer: Yeah?
> ANNA: (smiling) Yeah.

This interaction is friendly. Lilly and James both offer examples of media Anna talks about enjoying. However, the question was directed to Anna. Lilly and James have prevented Anna from speaking for herself, regardless of intent.

The disempowerment of others can also be actively malicious, as with bullying. In the following quote, Helen describes being photographed against her will with the intent of embarrassing her to others:

> HELEN: Yeah, like snapchat, like, sometimes you'll be trying.. and if I come near, they're sometimes trying to take pictures of me, like bad pictures (mimes taking a picture under Jon's face) hahaha, now I'm gonna send it to everybody.

Mobile phones offer empowerment, but this can also mean the empowerment to bully others. Helen cannot control what someone else will do with the unflattering photo. She has been violated and disempowered, and the humiliation will continue as long as the photo in question can be shared without her permission.

Disempowerment can also happen online. Some of the participants mentioned that people behave differently, and sometimes more viciously online than offline. Here they briefly address this issue:

> Interviewer: Going back to what you said about everybody watches different stuff, and if you talk about it you get judged, do you mean in person or online?
> HELEN, JON, LILLY: Both
> LILLY: Anything.
> JAMES: Ev… both. Just, anything.
> HELEN: And like
> JAMES: Mostly online
> HELEN: And people say a lot online that they wouldn't dare to say to your face.
> Interviewer: okay…
> JAMES: Yeah, cyberbullies
> ANNA: Mainly cause it's much easier to walk away.
> JAMES: yeah

The internet enables young people to converse with others without regard to location, but this can also be a disadvantage. It is much harder to escape form a negative situation online unless one is prepared to withdraw from the internet. Also, as Helen points out, social inhibitions are lower online, which sometimes leads to increased maliciousness. Expressing the wrong taste in school can lead to social isolation, but expressing the wrong taste online can lead to continued online harassment.

Lack of access to information and information gathering technology is a disempowering experience for the participants, which they describe as confusing. Because expertise is a tool for gaining inclusion, the beneficial relationship seen in the previous section can also be a mutually detrimental relationship. Lack of agency leads to feelings of decreased belonging, which lower a sense of empowerment. In this case, it is lack of access to the internet or social media, having the wrong taste, or being unable to exercise moderation which constructs disempowerment. Denial of participation and belonging exacerbates the situation.

4.4.4 What connections to these descriptions can be found in the select media adolescents describe experiencing?

For this section, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and *Pretty Little Liars* were reviewed. The relationship between the participants and the media they experience is complicated. Because they did not discuss the plot of either example in detail, this question will be answered in more depth in the discussion chapter. However, there were overt examples of some of the experiences the participants described.

The majority of the data related to these items of media can be found in the previous sections, as seen by the frequency with which the participants discussed *Star Wars*. *Pretty Little Liars*, in contrast, was discussed very little. This reflects the role both these examples of media appear to play in the interactions of the participants with their peers. *Star Wars* appeared to be relevant as a recent event, whereas *Pretty Little Liars* is an ongoing series.

As James said, "Everyone has seen *Star Wars.* Who hasn't seen *Star Wars*?" This film belongs to the expected body of expertise of adolescents at the time of the interviews. However, Isabell admitted to not watching it, and the conversation became uncomfortable. The content of the film came across as less important than being able to say that one has seen it.

In contrast, *Pretty Little Liars* was barely discussed, but Lilly asserted that all the girls in her class except Anna and one other watch it, to which Anna rebutted that she in fact had watched it too. The plot of the show was not discussed, but there were parallels between how the participants describe their activities and the content of the series. In the show, the main characters all have phones which they use frequently to stay in contact with each other. The phones are not entirely beneficial, though. The mysterious villain A uses text messages, e-mails, and other media to antagonize and harass the characters. This is similar to the balance of using social media for good reasons, and using social media *too much* which the participants describe, and also could be seen as cyberbullying, which James mentioned. That the majority of the conflict occurs between female characters is also similar to the participants' observations of girls engaging more in social media exclusion than boys.

Additionally, social exclusion and inclusion are both used to pressure other teens into compliance. In a scene where A has manipulated Hanna into eating a box of cupcakes, a group of boys seated near her make pig noises as she eats, adding to her discomfort. In another scene, a boy who has been accused of murder is lead through the school to collect his belongings. The other students yell insults at him, and he finds

that his locker has been vandalized. Friendship helps ease the experiences of exclusion, as seen by when Aria finds Hannah, defends her from the boys who are teasing her, and then comforts her. The young man who was teased does not have a friend who comforts him, and the last time he is shown he is hiding in an alley beside a trash bin, crying. These are not violent interactions, but the pressure of social exclusion and judgement are shown to be damaging.

Both items had in common that they adhere to the participants' description of gendered media. *Star Wars* was described as *for boys*. It had clear plot with protagonists, antagonists, a goal, and a resolution. *Pretty Little Liars*, on the other hand, had *mean girls* and consisted primarily of social conflict, despite the main plot being a murder mystery. It also had scenes where the characters discussed clothing (*fashion*) and gossiped with each other. Or, in the words of these participants:

> ROSA: The girls can find more stuff to connect to the drama, cause there's so much drama like in girls' lives and you know, and boys' lives are more like, simple.
> TAMI: (at the same time) They're like (unintelligible) yeah
> KATE: (nods) yeah
> Interviewer: What do you mean by that?
> ROSA: Well, like, girls are kind of always plotting again, against each other and you know, like, (sighs) just more drama.
> Interviewer: Mm-hmm. So then, what's typical for the boys' shows?
> ROSA: Usually more action.

Both media examples also adhered to the participants' disposition regarding expertise. In *Star Wars* the characters are all able to use any item of technology they find with no mention of prior training. In *Pretty Little Liars* the characters all dress well, have access to vehicles, and are proficient with computers and mobile phones. When there is a lack of expertise, it is used as a plot point. For example, in *Star Wars*, the characters team up specifically because one of the main characters needs a pilot. This lapse in expertise is used as a basis for forming a relationship. Similarly, the young man accused of murder befriended Emily by tutoring her in chemistry. The participants also described using expertise to gain access to social interactions.

Agency and empowerment in adolescent culture is constructed through expertise and judicious taste. In a culture where young people may not have physical access due

to age restrictions, the internet empowers them to find the information they find useful and relevant. This allows them to build a body of cultural capital which they can transform into social capital through interaction in person and through social media. The exchange is also a virtuous cycle of increased expertise through positive relationships, followed by more positive relationships based on shared expertise.

This virtuous cycle can become vicious in the case of exclusion or lack of access. An isolated adolescent does not have the benefit of her peers' support and expertise, and thus has less social and cultural capital to offer. Additionally, showing the wrong disposition toward information can actually diminish a youth's social capital by interacting in ways others see as inappropriate or unpleasant.

Of the media selected, *Star Wars* was more valuable as belonging to an adolescent's expertise than for the content. In contrast, *Pretty Little Liars* showed a dramatized microcosm of youth culture in which judgement and exclusion were as threatening to the characters as prison and murder. Both examples rested on a body of assumed expertise and access.

In the next chapter these findings will be placed in the context of existing research.

5 Discussion

Over the course of seven interviews, the participants answered questions, talked, laughed, joked, and argued with each other. The interviews all had media as the central topic of discussion, but the participants' contributions were about more than just media content. The conversations also included fear of judgement from others, debate about what is popular and how one knows, and descriptions of their daily lives. Their descriptions of agency, belonging, and empowerment were primarily implied, rather than overt. The themes of expertise, relation, taste, and disposition assisted in the interpretation which connects their words with the research questions. In the following section this interpretation will be taken a step deeper to be related to and placed in the context of Bourdieu's philosophical framework and the existing body of research.

5.1 Defining agency, belonging, and empowerment

Social media is central to the lives of adolescents in Iceland. The participants described using Facebook, Instagram, Vine, YouTube, Snapchat, and others. They also talked about friends and classmates doing the same. According to a 2015 survey of U.S. teens, Facebook membership among young people is common, but for actual interaction with their peers most teens prefer other platforms (Seetharaman, 2015, October 16). Likewise, Helen, Tammi, Rosa, and Oskar primarily mention Instagram, rather than Facebook, even though most young people in Iceland do have a Facebook profile (Capacent Gallup, 2013). Jon does describe a classmate who is exceptional for not having a Facebook account, but he does not describe what he or his peers do with Facebook in detail.

An online presence is necessary for participation in youth culture, but relatively public profiles such as on Facebook are built more as a calling card than as a communication channel (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; boyd, 2014; Livingstone, 2008). Likewise, the participants talked about having a Facebook account, but talked about using Snapchat or Instagram to message their peers. Social media as a tool for building and maintaining symbolic capital is relatively egalitarian in form as once the first hurdle of access has been passed, there are no inherent financial barriers to participation (Micheli, 2016). The participants in this study, being under age of majority, are then able to maneuver online with more freedom than they would have in life where age-restricted access to income, media content, and even operating a car limit their possible activities. This freedom is taken for granted, though. Rather than explaining

that they use social media and how, the participants refer to it in passing, or give cursory explanations such as, “I look at everybody’s photos,” or doing ‘research’. The lack of explanation implies the commonplace nature of the technology and media described (Griffiths & Machin, 2003; Kampf & Hamo, 2015).

The most powerful tool the participants described using was cultural capital, which was generally described within the themes of expertise and taste. This is unsurprising, as embodied cultural capital consists of the knowledge one carries and which has been obtained through experience over one’s lifetime (Bourdieu, 1986). Adolescents begin building their body of expected knowledge fairly young, and by pre-school often know how to operate devices such as mobile phones and laptops (Marsh, 2004). Þórðardóttir (2012) found that young children with the broadest range of popular culture knowledge were the most successful in play interactions. Having a wide enough knowledge base to be able to continue a conversation no matter which media comes into the discussion means being able to stay relevant in a social group (Kampf & Hamo, 2015). Being able to adeptly navigate social media platforms gives young people access to current trends and enables them to capitalize on this by sharing what they find within their network (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Livingstone, 2008). In this way, the economic capital of a smart phone grants access to the cultural capital that can be developed through online research and exchanged for social capital through interaction.

Just as important as access was the ability to discern the appropriate taste. The value of embodied cultural capital is subjective, and capital which lacks value within a given field is worthless, because it cannot be exchanged for other forms of capital, regardless of the extensiveness (Bourdieu, 1984). In the era of social media, the tastes a person publicly expresses become part of the face that person wishes to present to others (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Lambert, 2015; Livingstone, 2008; Marwick & boyd, 2014). Both groups of participants were initially asked about favorite media, and in both instances the first person to reply was also the person who in subsequent interviews described being bullied and excluded. In both instances, the participant expressed affinity for the *Harry Potter* franchise, for which all the participants present also expressed at least some level of enjoyment. If interview behavior is indicative of the social dynamics these two participants experience, then their social transgressions are not of taste, but of improper construction of face. Being powerful means being able to judiciously offer *and* withhold information.

The importance of the combination of expertise, appropriate expression of taste, and digital access is suggested by Marwick and boyd (2014) and Staksrud et al. (2013)

as well. Marwick and boyd found that pop culture references can be used to create complex messages which filter the audience, and which will deliver different messages to different audiences (2014). Staksrud et al. (2013) found that increased digital expertise was actually associated with higher risk of online negative interactions. As the participants pointed out, online discussions can be more dangerous in person. The key to success appears to be expert management of technical and cultural expertise, with technical knowledge offering access and cultural expertise offering protection.

This means that the process of gaining and maintaining social capital is arduous, and involves research on both media information and information about potential friends. Lilly and James explain this process as *creeping* and *spying* on others to learn what information will be of value for creating connection.

> LILLY: You creep them; spy on them.
> Interviewer: What?
> LILLY: You spy on them.
> JAMES: (at the same time) You spy on them.
> Interviewer: Could you explain that?
> JAMES: Stalking.
> LILLY: Just, stalk them. Just, like, go to their house. See what they're watching.
> JAMES: No, just eavesdrop. That's all you have to do. Eavesdrop.
> LILLY: Oh yeah, and also, stalk their social medias.

It is for this reason that young people put effort into what tastes they publicly proclaim. Expressions of taste can also be used to advertise what sorts of people they would like to associate with socially (boyd, 2014; Lambert, 2015; Livingstone, 2008; Marwick & boyd, 2014). These efforts also occur in person. To refer to Jon and his friends' "circle of trust," limiting what information can be made available online also helps adolescents reduce the potential risk of negative interactions.

An economy of symbolic capital based on access to digital information relies on access to the required technology. Smart phones are expensive. Some parents are not comfortable with giving their children smart phones. Lacking the expected resources not only limits an adolescent's ability to participate. It can also be damaging to their self-image and contribute to internalizing other perceived shortcomings as pathological, rather than circumstantial (Reay, 2006). The participants of this study all come from a background of relative privilege, and have access to computers, laptops,

free-time activities such as sports and music, vacations abroad, nice clothing, and secure homes. Still, they regarded a lack of smart phone as a disadvantage. They saw it as imposed by their parents, but did not cite financial reasons. Also, they were more interested in the activities possible with a smart phone, and did not express regret about lacking a flashy device. As Suoninen (2013) points out, an electronic device loses status as interesting for its' own sake once it becomes commonplace. Smart phones represent barrier-free access, and withdrawl from social media is a withdrawl from youth culture shared spaces (boyd, 2014).

The participants of this study are more than just digital natives. This paper argues that they are social media natives, as all were born after the first online social network was established. However, social media alone cannot grant access to belonging. The value of social media is that it allows young people to access cultural capital and build social capital independently (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; boyd, 2014; Micheli, 2016). For this reason, adolescents must also have a keen sense of what taste is appropriate. As previously mentioned, this assists in filtering audiences. It also functions as grounds for social bonding, and expression of the wrong taste can lead to exclusion, as seen in Isabell's complaint that others make fun of things she likes and in Kampf and Hamo (2015) where the children use media preference to decide who to exclude from play. The school yard has extended to social media. These pressures then help make sense of why recent studies have shown that the social media profiles of young people are more a reflection of their social group's interests and values than of their inner selves (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; boyd, 2014; Livingstone, 2008; Marwick & boyd, 2014). It also may give insight into why most of the participants in this study were reluctant to reveal their personal interests at first.

It might seem strange that such an arduous endeavor would be attractive to young people, but it must also be remembered that this is their social reality. To choose non-participation would be to choose isolation from their peers (boyd, 2014; Marwick & boyd, 2014). Adolescents generally have an online presence whether they want to or not thanks to the social media culture of their parents, family, friends, teachers, and other adults who have been posting information and pictures about them their whole lives (Marwick & boyd, 2014). Carving a space for themselves online which they can control is a way for them to re-assert agency (Marwick & boyd, 2014), and all the participants interviewed find online participation worthwhile.

This puts adolescents in a difficult position. As the participants described, participatory media means that there is a constant flow of new things, and anything can be popular, but only for a limited time. To cope, an adolescent must also be able to judiciously choose from media and select that which shows appropriate taste. Some young people are better at this than others. Bourdieu posits that the ability to discern useful material is learned from the family, saying that cultural capital is only for the "offspring of families endowed with strong cultural capital" (1986, p. 49). Is this still relevant in the social media era? There is something which differentiates young people who are skilled at media selection and young people who are not.

Among the differences observed, gender made a visible impact in communication. Firstly, in all the interviews with boys present, the boys spoke either as much as or more than the girls, despite being outnumbered. For example, in the following interaction, Lilly has trouble gaining talking time to answer the question:

> Interviewer: Is there anything that you don't like about your favorite shows?
> JAMES: Mmm, yes. They sometimes get repetitive. And easy to predict.
> JON: No.
> JAMES: For me.
> JON: No, not my shows. They're perfect.
> LILLY: (at the same time Jon speaks) Some shows are exactly the same.
> JAMES: (Interrupting) If you watch too many movies or shows…
> JON: (Interrupting)They ended. That's the worst part.
> LILLY: (interrupting) They always..
> JON: (at the same time) They just stopped

Jon and James appear to be engaging in a discussion with each other and talk over Lilly, despite her repeated attempts to enter the conversation. This dynamic occurred frequently in this group. Oskar and Niel were less dominant in the conversations, but still spoke nearly half the time, despite being two boys in a group of seven.

Perceived masculine traits such as rationality are generally viewed as more valuable than stereotypically feminine traits such as emotionality (Reay, 2004b). Likewise, media that focuses on emotional conflict or *drama* as Tami and Rosa call it is for girls, but *Star Wars*, which is an action film, is simultaneously for boys and for everyone. In another example of media for boys, some of the participants offer *Ben 10* as an example, then decide that it is not only for boys due to the presence of a female character. Lilly then

muses that the character is “kind of like a boy,” implying the relationship between agency and masculinity. Anna is able to participate equally in a *Star Wars* based conversation through use of expertise, but she is then shut down by Jon who calls her a *nerd*. Being able to dominate a conversation through argument and logic means more opportunity to gain prestige, and familiarity with masculine media offers more opportunity to exchange cultural capital for social capital. However, opportunity does not equal success, and Anna’s feminine intrusion into a masculine discussion was only tolerated to a limited degree.

Similarly, the participants described video games as media for boys. However, on the occasions that the interviews happened at a participant’s house, all the participants *including the girls* engaged in playing video games. Anna frequently said she enjoys playing *Minecraft*. Kate and Rosa said that when they play video games, they prefer shooter games. Video games have been associated with men and boys for decades now, and Marsh (2004) found that in practice, video gaming was usually introduced to children by their fathers, and not their mothers. There was no equivalently gendered feminine media, but feminine generas were listed. Isabell also pointed out that a boy present at something perceived as a girls’ event would be looked at strangely. The overall implication is that girls must be even more omnivorous than boys. Boys unfamiliar with feminine media are excused, but girls unfamiliar with masculine media are excluded.

5.2 Benefitting from agency, belonging, and empowerment

Belonging to a group and having friends is beneficial to young people in terms of happiness, health, academic achievement, and life satisfaction (Einberg, Lidell, & Clausson, 2015; Killen, Mulvey, & Hitti, 2013; Witvliet, van Lier, Cuijpers, & Koot, 2010). Likewise, feelings of empowerment and the ability to affect change and take control in their lives help young people to set and achieve goals and resist feelings of helplessness (Reay, 2006, 2012). Most of the participants of this study described a self-actualized relationship with media, in which they are able to pursue knowledge as they wish.

Previous studies found that young people use media to describe situations for which they otherwise lack vocabulary or context (Griffiths & Machin, 2003; Tobin, 2000). Tobin (2000) especially found that discussing media was a way to reveal children’s internalized values regarding race, class, and gender. Many of the participants, on the other hand, openly talk about gender stereotypes and racism embedded in media. Tobin‘s eldest participants were within the age range of this study,

but his interviews took place in the 1990s. Since then, media accessibility has exploded, affording young people a method for gaining information and vocabulary regarding larger social topics. Rosa even expresses concern over adults who lacked a similar opportunity, and are thus ethically backward according to her stated values.

In a similar vein, Jon, James, and Oskar all talked about copyright infringement. This could be because at the same time as the interviews, a popular YouTube channel called Fine Brothers Entertainment was embroiled in a controversial copyright battle[5]. Jon and James do mention this scandal by name at one point:

> JAMES: (angrily) cause of Fine Bros…
> JON: (covers D's mouth and shushes him)
> JAMES: (angry roar)

His anger at Fine Brothers comes from them attempting to copyright terms which would then limit the posting ability of other YouTube channels he likes. He is not of age to legally do anything about copyright, but he and Jon are angry at this attempt to restrict social media.

Other unexpected topics of conversation included the U.S. presidential campaign, the scandal of the FIFA football video games only now releasing games which include female players, improper use of hashtags for raising cancer awareness, and the amount of time between the international releases of new music and when the music can be heard on Icelandic radio. Icelandic young people in 2016 most likely are not more intelligent than Tobin's Hawaiian young people in 2000. The difference is that they have the ability to pursue information which they desire, and they do so. Their intellectual and cultural boundaries are vastly different from their local boundaries.

Moreover, connection also means that social contact is nearly unbroken. The free-flow of information between digital space and physical space is typical of digital natives (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Lambert, 2015), making the ubiquitous *everyone* the

[5] A short YouTube summary of the internet scandal can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NK9KJo8apfE

participants mention even less embodied. A well connected young person can be socially linked at all times with friends who are only a few thumb movements away. The result is that a video like *Damn Daniel* can be filmed and uploaded in the U.S., viewed by an adolescent in Iceland, and then shared with her friends worldwide, and then they can have a real time conversation about it, regardless of physical location. This is not only possible, but the lived reality of many of the participants of this study. Comparing this to the social possibilities of young people in Tobin's study, it is no surprise that the way young people talk about world events has changed, and at least some adolescents see this positively.

The process of exchanging social capital for financial capital has also shortened due to social media. A popular YouTube channel can become a source of income in which subscriptions and likes equal monetary remuneration. Internet fame can also lead to fame in other areas of media, as when the aforementioned *Damn Daniel* was invited to the Ellen show, something Rosa found worth comment. Bourdieu explains all capital as ultimately of financial value through the function of exchange (Bourdieu, 1986; Reay, 2004b; Webb et al., 2002), and this has become even more clear for adolescents who see internet popularity as a potential career path (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). Several participants mentioned the short path between internet popularity and financial gain, and at least James and Jon already participate in one form of potential symbolic capital transformation, depending on whether their videos become popular.

The third positive aspect within this study is belonging, which the participants describe as enjoyable. Isabell and Anna both participate in fan culture through *Pottermore*, which they describe enthusiastically. Tami, Rosa, and Kate spend time together and have sleep overs where they listen to music and watch movies. Oskar and Niel play video games together online and in person. All the participants described enjoying media together with others. Suoninen (2013) describes media co-viewing as an activity that can build relationships among young people. Especially young people in the Nordic countries tend to spend the majority of their free time with friends, and part of this time is spent enjoying media together (Suoninen, 2013). Suoninen's study did not include Iceland, but the participants' descriptions would not be exceptional to Suoninen's study.

The aforementioned overlap between online and offline communities can be especially beneficial to young people in Iceland. As boyd puts it, "Just as shared TV consumption once allowed teens to see themselves as connected through mass media, social media allows contemporary teens to envision themselves as part of a collectively

imagined community" (2014, p. 10). Iceland is, geographically speaking, an isolated nation. Isabell and Anna are able to find a much wider community through *Pottermore* than they would be able to within their schools. Young people with more eclectic tastes can also find belonging online. One of the interview questions asked the participants to describe something they like which no one else likes. The participants were either unable to answer, or like James, offered content of their own creation as an answer. Tami went into more detail with her statement on how *obviously* you cannot be the only person in the world who likes someone. Part of Tami's understanding of the world is that there is *always* someone else who shares your interests and tastes. An adolescent who has known social networking all her life can take this information for granted.

Belonging also helps adolescents overcome difficult situations. Most of the participants only describe being judged by others, not enacting this behavior themselves. One way to withstand judgement is through a friend network. In Tami's description, her friends judge her taste. She says it does not bother her, but Rosa asserts that it did, and Tami, "…just got over it." Friendship and belonging do help young people build resilience against teasing (Noble-Carr et al., 2014). Similarly, when Anna takes Lilly's description of disempowerment personally, Lilly physically and verbally comforts Anna. Whether real or virtual, having a broad scope of social capital offers adolescents a means of emotional and psychological support. Also, social media can turn conflict into a public conversation. Boyd (2014) observed that young people often described social media conflict as drama, but not as bullying because all parties have equal agency in the interaction. Tami, Rosa, and Kate also describe conflict as drama, and Tami asserts that her friends judge her, but not in a mean or bullying way. They are not cornered in an empty room by someone physically intimidating them, but engaging in public exchanges.

5.3 Marginalization, exclusion, and disempowerment

In the results chapter it was found that adolescents find loss of internet access and facing the judgement of their peers disempowering. The first is in line with the finding that young people view internet access and social media as tools of agency. Loss of access to information translates to an inability to maintain expertise and falling behind in expected cultural capital. Social judgement was also expected, as Kampf and Hamo (2015); Suoninen (2013), and Killen et al. (2013) also observed exclusion and bullying

based on improper taste or lack of cultural knowledge as part of the youth experience. The scope of potential for judgement, however was surprising.

In the omnivorous adolescent culture, there are consequences for having the wrong media tastes or the right media tastes at the wrong time. Spending too much time on social media leads to talk of being 'addicted' to one's phone or having *'*no life.' However, being ignorant of a trend leads to being judged. Bourdieu's conception of cultural capital focuses primarily on elite sources of capital such as higher education and fine arts (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). As such, his concept of cultural capital must be reimagined for a world in which media comes into existence, becomes canonized, and then fades into obscurity within the space of a few months. Websites like knowyourmeme.com focus on curation of online trends so that, should someone miss a video or meme, it is possible to look it up to understand imbedded references in new media and trends (Kaplan, 2013). The necessity of such resources becomes apparent when Tami describes going on vacation for three weeks without internet access. As she puts it, "It started like those three weeks that like me and Kate were in (omitted) so we had no wi-fi so we just, like, lost track of the world." The trend in discussion was a meme about the wrestler Jon Cena, and without contextual knowledge the progression of in-references, jokes, and videos became incoherent nonsense. This is the collection and embodiment of cultural capital at hyper speed.

Some young people are left behind. Generally, these are the adolescents who lack smart phones. Some, like James, are able to effectively research content at home. Others, like Jon, are vocal about purposefully avoiding trends. He describes smart phone users as people who, "Have a lifetime on the internet and not the real world," and says that losing his smart phone "feels like freedom, because I don't have a lot of time." He is able to turn around what other teens see as disempowering and adopt it as a form of empowerment, which is very similar to the construction of anti-trend profiles on social media used by teens to mark themselves as individual thinkers (Livingstone, 2008). Other young people like Anna and Helen show awareness of their lack of access, and do not display it as a source of empowerment. The sample size for this study was too small to draw conclusions about gendered attitudes toward social media, so the event that both boys were able to construct positive outcomes and both girls were dissatisfied with lack of access is considered coincidental but worth consideration, especially in light of danah boyd's similar observation (2014).

Helen also described disempowerment of a more invasive nature. Having her photo taken against her will and disseminated through social media is exactly in line with

Berriman's (2014) high visibility, low participation profile, which he also labels *the victim*. This is also behavior outlined in guides warning about cyberbullies (Burnham & Wright, 2012). What Helen describes is essentially another student using an unflattering image of her face as cultural capital to exchange for social capital, to Helen's detriment and humiliation. She has become the distasteful media used for group identification. Once online this image can no longer be controlled or reliably deleted, and can potentially return to upset Helen at any point in the unknown future (Berriman & Thomson, 2014).

Most of the participants' descriptions of exclusion and disempowerment were less permanent than the photo. Anna's description of being left out of co-media viewing, while emotionally difficult, will pass. What is interesting to note is that while previous studies such as Griffiths and Machin (2003) and Kampf and Hamo (2015) gave taste in specific media as a method for exclusion, in the music room example there is no specific media. None of the participants are able to explain Anna's exclusion, but there is an implied assumption that it is her lack of access and her complacence with exclusion is in line with Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, showing how ingrained the necessity of internet connection is in youth culture.

Access also does not equal acceptance. Isabell and Tami both experience bullying based on taste. This is more in line with the expected findings of the study, but was thematically rare within the data. The ability to withhold information about personal interests and adjust public displays of taste protects adolescents from judgement (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Livingstone, 2008). Staksrud et al. (2013) found that increased access correlates with increased exposure to online risks. Social blunders transcend boundaries just as easily as media experience. Having social support through friendship helps adolescents be resilient against bullying (Killen et al., 2013), and having friends on social media who are willing to intervene in negative interactions also helps (boyd, 2014; Marwick & boyd, 2014), but an adolescent who is active online with neither competence in self-presentation nor a strong network of socially relevant advocates is in a socially dangerous position (Berriman & Thomson, 2014).

Power struggles can also occur among friends. Jon and James often competed for conversational dominance. In the example of their argument about whether the best part about *Star Wars* is the force or the story, they become hostile toward each other, but eventually resolve the conflict when James compromises to include Jon's answer. In another interaction, the resolution is less amicable. In it, James describes watching a *Harry Potter* movie in the cinema:

JAMES: I was just like this (mimes leaning back in a comfortable chair) with popcorn… I finished that all. I finished like, this gigantic soda. I passed out.
JON: That's actually bad, cause that means you might have diabetes.
JAMES & ANNA: (laughing)
JON: I finished my finished my gigantic soda and fifty chocolate bars and I just passed out.
JAMES: No, I had popcorn and a giant soda.
JON: I just passed out.
ANNA: I just had Mentos.
JAMES: I passed out from boredom.

Jon is mocking James, saying that his behavior shows that he is sick, and that it is not normal. James becomes hostile, and appeals to truth to discredit the jibes before giving up and claiming disinterest in the film. Any participant present could have intervened, as they have all been friends with James long enough to be familiar with his health, or at least to take interest in his happiness. They do not, however. Tobin (2000) observed similar reactions to disagreement in his interviews. On one occasion, the children begin talking about *The Black* Stallion, a participant's favorite movie. One of the boys begins to antagonize her about horses, and the other girls quickly distance themselves by claiming disinterest in the movie, despite having watched it with Shirley (the participant). Shirley, unwilling to budge, then engages in a power struggle and ultimately becomes very upset, as seen here: "[Shirley, appealing to the interviewer]: She did! She saw it at my party! [turning to Jewel] You saw the whole thing. You went to my party. You were there! [Jewel]: But I didn't watch… [Shirley]: Yes you did. Why are you saying you didn't?" (Tobin, 2000, pp. 45-50). This volatile interaction shows how relation can even supersede truth. None of the interviews with the participants in this study descended into such a friendship endangering exchange, but the undertones of fitting in were still present in James's preference for shifting truth rather than losing face. In another example of shifting presentation in different settings, Tami, Kate, and Rosa discussed *Star Wars* in more detail when in the large group, but when interviewed as a small group, they actually expressed more interest in *The Hunger Games*. There was no outsider in this interaction, but Oskar had expressed strong preference for *Star Wars* and disinterest in *The Hunger Games* in the first interview. The girls' choice of topics did avoid splintering the group discussion of taste.

Exclusion and disempowerment are complex constructions in adolescent culture. Loss of access leads to loss of agency, but can be compensated for through changes in

attitude. Likewise, access to content does not guarantee access to inclusion. Rather, the careful maintenance of cultural capital affords adolescents the embodied expertise to maneuver the blurred lines of online and offline interaction, and this resource cannot be afforded by a smart phone alone.

5.4 Connections with media

This study began with the assumption that the stories adolescents enjoy watching and experiencing would be reflected in adolescent culture as a sort of role play for adaptation and use by young people. This expectation was based on the existing research referenced in the literature review. The findings, however, were almost completely unrelated. Rather than reliving media through storytelling and incorporation of plot into discussions, the participants viewed the selected media as part of the expected oeuvre of adolescent knowledge. *Star Wars* in particular had no relevance to the conversations of the participants. Instead, the relationship worked in the other direction.

As mentioned in the results, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* differs from other films in the franchise based on actor selection. The film features a diverse cast headed by the main protagonists who are a woman and a black man. They are not romantically involved with each other, and the woman flies space ships, fights the bad guys, and is the one who will eventually carry the mantle of being a Jedi knight. This is different from the previous films, in which the only woman is primarily a love interest and the only black character is a side character of questionable morality. Tami, Rosa, and Kate's observations about the accessibility of feminism and anti-racist information suggest a general shift in views based on social construction of values. Interestingly, Lilly also frequently states that though she has seen all the *Star Wars* movies, she only likes the most recent one. She does not give a reason for her change of opinion, but the most recent movie is the first one which hints at ideas of racial and gender equality.

Similarly, *Pretty Little Liars* faces these topics directly. The main characters include a character with an eating disorder, an openly gay character of color, and two characters whose parents are either divorcing or divorced. One of the antagonists in the show is blind, but her disability is only a plot point in that it is the result of the main characters' actions. This fits with the description of the social justice oriented posts that Tami, Rosa, and Kate find engaging.

Closer examination of *Pretty Little Liars* does reveal some trends which are reflected in the participants' contributions. The primary antagonist of the show is a mysterious

character who is constantly present and harasses the characters through social media and strange offline occurrences, like having a box of cupcakes decorated with pigs for a girl struggling with an eating disorder. The lack of boundary between online and offline interaction, while dramatized, is similar to the fluid experience described by some of the participants and by Berriman and Thomson (2014) and (boyd, 2014). Similarly, the primary source of conflict resolution within the show is reliance on friendship and trust, which is also how Tami is able to resist the negative effects of teasing.

Overall, the result is that media references, while interwoven into participant experiences, do not actively shape the participants' reality as anticipated. Instead the lens is turned in the other direction, and media is showing the pressures to reflect modern values. Nintendo recognized early on that conforming to the needs of young people would be the way to maintain relevance as the digital era leads to increased youth empowerment (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 2003). Now other media is also recognizing that it must bend to socially constructed values to retain relevance (Thompson, 2012), and adolescents are active participants in this construction.

Networked culture is a relatively new phenomenon, and this generation of social media natives is interacting in ways which reflect the changed opportunities and risks they navigate. They are simultaneously empowered and at risk thanks to the softening of social, geographic, and financial barriers to information. In exchange for access to cultural and social capital, they expose themselves to risk. However, non-participation is not a viable option, as it would mean nearly complete social exclusion. Marwick and boyd (2014) suggest that many of these behaviors show a shift in concepts of privacy, which is a culturally constructed concept. Reay (2004c) also argues that to understand the internalized values of a culture, one must rely on how the members of that culture describe and behave in their world. As adolescents navigate their social and cultural circles, they also define the rules of engagement, and these rules shift based on what interactions are possible thanks to the rapidly changing technical tools available. Youth participation in social media also works outward, and adolescents are able to engage outside their social circles in ways which can influence members of other fields. The young, omnivorous experts interviewed described a culture which melds Icelandic school life, their home and family lives, social media, popular media, worldwide internet culture, and their personal interests in a seamless digital/physical experience.

6 Conclusion

This study investigated the ways in which themes of agency, empowerment, and belonging manifest in adolescent culture in Reykjavik as related to media. Twelve young people participated, and they contributed over four hours and nearly 40,000 words worth of information, opinions, and insight into their culture.

They discussed movies and television shows at length when asked, but when given space to offer information they brought forward social media and smart phones. The area of youth empowered social media research is even newer than the field of youth empowered media research, and this discovery added unanticipated dimensions to the study. Internet access and having a smart phone are vital to social success in adolescent culture. The construction of agency within adolescent social circles relies on the ability to find, process, and share digital information quickly, and they see the lack of internet access as a serious liability.

Other aspects of youth culture were more in line with expectations. Some media is more popular than other media, and expressing interest in the wrong thing can lead to bullying and exclusion. However, the inclusion of social media means that the scope of potential cultural capital for a young person in 2016 is nearly unlimited, and so the ability to exercise purposeful prejudice in media selection is just as important as access.

In the connected culture of adolescence, their construction of belonging focuses on knowing what is happening and what other people are talking about. When a group of young people gather with their phones, it is possible to be physically present but socially excluded through inability to participate. Activities do still take place offline, though, and the advent of the smart phone has not ended youth co-enjoyment of movies, music, sports, and hobbies.

One thing that has changed, though, is how adolescents perceive themselves. Access to undifferentiated information has put them in an empowered position regarding cultural and social capital gathering. Successful young people are aware of this, and groom their online and offline presence in a way to enable and encourage future success (Berriman & Thomson, 2014). Unsuccessful maintenance of online presence and general self-presentation can lead to exclusion and even cyber-bullying (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Staksrud et al., 2013) which has the additional consequence of not being physically escapable, as there is no way to simply walk away from an on-line confrontation other than to disconnect from social media (Berriman & Thomson, 2014; Burnham & Wright, 2012).

Because this study took a youth empowering perspective, it attempted to eschew comparisons between youth culture and adult culture in the belief that comparison forces adolescent culture into a frame of under-developed adult culture. However, with the focus on social media, this became a much more difficult task. Social media has only minimal age restrictions, and unless age is disclosed, there is no way to know if a participant in an online interaction is an adolescent or a member of a different group. This destruction of lines between fields of social capital and connectedness is Discussed by boyd (2014) and vaguely addressed by Berriman and Thomson (2014); Buccitelli (2013); Lambert (2015); Livingstone (2008) and Micheli (2016). There is room for much more investigation in the future.

The importance of social media was also under-anticipated. Unfortunately, the first two interviews completely ignored social media in favor of traditional media such as movies and television. Were this study to be re-designed, it would be beneficial to carry out extended focus group interviews in which the participants are given questionnaires about media use and preferences as described by Berg (2009b) to ensure that the questions being asked are relevant to the experiences of the participants. Fortunately, the young people interviewed volunteered suggestions for more relevant topics.

Additional limitations to this study were location combined with language. The research was carried out in the Greater Reykjavik Area by an English speaking researcher. For this reason, only participants fluent in English could be interviewed. This guaranteed a certain level of educational opportunity. Boyd (2014) considers English proficiency an important factor in how young people interact with digital media. Icelandic-only speaking adolescents may have a significantly different relationship with social media and the internet, given the relationship of Icelandic as a minority language, and the ubiquity of English in on-line media, despite the fact that the participants of this study find social media avoidance anomalous among their peers. It is the researcher's opinion that a more comprehensive understanding of adolescent culture in Iceland would be obtained by conducting interviews in Icelandic.

With this study confirming that adolescents in Iceland actively use and benefit from social media, there is ground for more research in this direction. For example, there were hints at the gendered nature of social media use, and this could be a topic for further investigation. Additionally, as mentioned, the overlap of generations in participatory forums may be of interest to researchers looking at youth participation in community issues. The participants mentioned benefiting from timely access to media otherwise unavailable in Iceland, and this is also a potential topic of further study. The

relative newness of social media and especially some of the younger social media platforms offers exciting research opportunities for educators wanting to learn more about the culture of these second-generation digital natives.

Appendix: Question frames

Question frame: Session 1 (Group 1 and Group 2)

1) What kind of movies, shows, or videos do you like best?
    a) What do you like most about them?
    b) Is there anything you don't like about them?
        i) Why?
2) Are there any shows (movies) you don't like?
    a) What do you dislike about them?
    b) Do any of your friends like that movie (show)?
3) Do you have a favorite movie (show)?
    a) What happens in that movie? (
        i) How does it end?
            (1) What do you think of the ending? Why?
    b) Are there good guys and bad guys?
        i) How can you tell the good characters and the bad characters apart?
        ii) Can you describe how they look? The good ones? The bad ones?
        iii) Can you describe the communication between them?
            (1) Why do you think they behave like that toward each other?
    c) Do these characters have friends and families?
        i) How are the relationships? (Do they get along with their families? Do they act the way you think friends should act with each other?)
4) If you wanted to recommend a movie to a friend, what movie would you recommend?
    a) Is that movie popular or well known?
    b) What do you like about that movie?
    c) Do you think I would like that movie?
    d) Would you recommend this movie for a girl, for a boy, or for both?
5) Can you describe a typical "boy movie?"
    a) Who is in that movie?
    b) What happens?
6) Can you describe a typical "girl movie"?
    a) What happens in those movies?
    b) Who is in those movies?
7) Does everyone at your school like the same movies or shows?

a) Can you guess when you meet someone what movies they like?
    i) How do you know?

Question frame: Group 1, session 2

1. Who here has seen Star Wars, the Force Awakens?
    a. What did you know about the movie before you saw it?
    b. What did you expect to see?
    c. Why did you choose to see that movie?
    d. Why might someone choose not to see this movie?
2. (minute 1:17) (Some of you have seen Harry Potter and some of you haven't)
    a. What did you know about this movie before you saw it?
        i. Is it important to have read the books before seeing the movie?
    b. Why might someone choose not to see this movie?
    c. What is happening in this scene?
    d. What emotion do you think the kids are feeling before they put on the hat?
    e. Why does it matter what house the hat chooses?
    f. Why does Harry say "Not Slytherin"?
3. Last time you mentioned viral videos. What does that mean?
    a. How does a video become viral?
    b. How do you find out about a viral video?
    c. What happens if you don't see a viral video?
4. Have you ever chosen to not watch something that was popular? Why?
    a. What effect did that have on your social life?

Question frame: Group 2, Session 2

1. Have any of you watched or heard about anything new or interesting?
2. Who here has seen the trailer to Star Wars, the Force Awakens?
    a. What did you know about the movie without having seen it yet?
    b. What did you expect to see?

c. Why did you choose to see that movie?

d. Why might someone choose not to see this movie?

3. (minute 1:17) (Some of you have seen Harry Potter and some of you haven't)
    a. What did you know about this movie before you saw it?
        i. How does reading the books matter to seeing the movie?
    b. Why might someone choose not to see this movie?
    c. What is happening in this scene?
    d. What emotion do you think the kids are feeling before they put on the hat?
    e. Why does it matter what house the hat chooses?
    f. Why does Harry say "Not Slytherin"?
4. (show the Tribute Parade) What is happening in this scene?
    a. Why do you think this is happening?
    b. How do you think the characters are feeling?
        i. What about the people watching them?
    c. How do you feel about these characters?
5. Do you think some shows or movies are more for girls or more for boys?
    a. How can you tell whether something is a girl movie or a boy movie?
    b. What usually happens in a typical girl movie?
    c. What usually happens in a typical boy movie?
6. Do all of you have a computer or laptop at home? A smartphone?
    a. Why might someone want a smartphone?
    b. What do you do with your smartphone (or what would you do with it if you had one)?

Question Frame: Final interview (all groups and 1:1)

1. Who do you usually watch videos/shows/movies/play video games with?
    a. Do you do these things with different people?
    b. Why do you usually watch with them?
2. What's something you like that no one else likes? (guilty pleasure)
    a. How did you become interested in that?

    b. What happens if someone catches you watching/talking about it?

3. What have you watched because someone recommended it to you?
    a. Why did you choose to watch it?
    b. How did that affect how you and that person get along?
4. When you watch something, who do you share it with?
    a. How do you decide who to share it with?
    b. How do you share it?
5. What's a trend or craze you chose to ignore?
    a. Why did you choose that?
    b. What happened as a result?
6. Who always seems to know what's trendy?
    a. How do you think they find out?
    b. What things do you usually know about first?
7. Last time you mentioned being judged. What do people do when judging others?
    a. Who does the judging?
    b. Is there any way to be safe from this?
8. Who never seems to know what's going on?
    a. How do other people treat them?
    b. What do you think of that?

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