Ecologies of the Televisual: Children’s Use of the Televisual in Melbourne, Australia

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Media and Communication

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**Declaration**

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis/project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

luke gaspard

Date of submission

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Abstract

In a contemporary digital television landscape, commonly described as an era of post-broadcast or post-TV, the televisual can be constituted as the expanded range of possibilities for television consumption provided for in a digital context. The increased range of devices available today widens the scope for content consumption as it can include textual forms emerging from both traditional broadcast systems and content that can be described as being user-generated (UGC). This convergence and portability can be read as key to repositioning the consumption of the televisual from residing in the hands of viewers to that of users. Despite the increasingly flexible experience of the televisual—qualities some have argued are central to reconceptualising television—there is a need for more grounded studies into interpretations of the televisual with everyday life.

Drawing upon the practices of children aged eight to 12 living in Melbourne (Australia), this thesis frames the televisual as part of an ecology whereby “old” and “new” media co-exist. In taking into account young people’s agentive potential in contributing to their own cultural lives, this thesis engages with how their uses of the televisual flow across differing media platforms in pursuit of this user-centric televisual consumption. Through a mixed-method approach that includes surveys, participant drawings, interviews, and observations with over 500 children, this thesis examines how symbolic environments and televisual texts are contributing to children’s literacies, identity construction, and ecology of the televisual.
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<tbody>
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<td>ABC</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<td>ACMA</td>
<td>Australian Communications and Media Authority</td>
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<td>AFL</td>
<td>Australian Rules Football</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASTRÁ</td>
<td>Australian Subscription Television and Radio Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTV</td>
<td>Broadcast Television Services (emanating from free-to-air and pay-TV systems)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTS</td>
<td>Children’s Television Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPLAN</td>
<td>National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBN</td>
<td>National Broadband Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSB</td>
<td>Public Service Broadcasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEIFA</td>
<td>Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STV</td>
<td>Subscription or pay-TV services</td>
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<tr>
<td>UGC</td>
<td>User-Generated Content</td>
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1 Introduction

“TV and Me”: Children’s Televisual Lives

Searching for a parking spot outside Samuel’s house on my first visit to the large five-bedroom family home he shares with his mother, father, and two younger sisters, it occurs to me that there is a small but seemingly well-appointed primary school located just a short distance away from this impressive double-storey, California-style bungalow. But instead of attending this institution located literally on the family’s doorstep, all three siblings are students at the much larger and more financially endowed Bayview Primary School, which is a short 10 minute walk away in this quiet, well-to-do, south-eastern suburb of Melbourne, Australia. Aged 10, Samuel’s real name is taken from the location of his conception, a small sleepy seaside town on the Mornington Peninsula whose summer population swells quite considerably when Melbourne’s second-homers increase the length and frequency of their visits during the city’s warmer months. Since first meeting Samuel in March 2013 (when I administered a questionnaire to his then Year 5 class) I have come to know Samuel to be an earnest, well-spoken young boy who is excited to complete his last year of primary school, and who also loves to watch television.

In a city where almost 40% of its population is born outside of Australia, in Bayview 100% of its population’s ancestry is listed as having an Anglo-Celtic background. The neighbourhood where Samuel lives, his own Anglo-Celtic background, the school he attends, and the affluence that pervades his life provide a very specific context that is neither unique nor general to the city as a whole. Although the roads may stand that little bit wider and cleaner than other parts of the city, and its foliage and trees may be that little bit greener and healthier, the tranquillity and village atmosphere that permeate the surroundings of his home are similar to that found within any number of other affluent areas that are generously spread throughout the inner and outer suburbs of the world’s most liveable city (EIU 2014). Yet despite the relative privilege from which Samuel

1 Since this project privileges the “voice” of children, all participants were encouraged to provide their own pseudonyms for being addressed in this thesis, while the names of schools, locations, principals, and teaching staff have all been made up in order to maintain privacy and anonymity.
springs—he describes himself as being “very well off” in comparison to other Australian children—his relationship to television is remarkably indicative of that of many young people encountered throughout the course of this work. Drawing upon fieldwork with 535 Melbourne children (aged between eight and 12 years old) in school and domestic settings, Samuel’s emergent practices are reflective of what I call “ecologies of the televisual.”

Like many of the young people who participated in this research project, Samuel particularly enjoys animation programmes and those aimed specifically at children appearing on ABC3, one of two dedicated children’s television channels that comprise the five offered by Australia’s main public service broadcaster. If Samuel had a choice he would watch cartoons “all day,” as he points out in one of our interview sessions, particularly ones like Pokémon which, despite sometimes viewing them with one or other of his sisters present, he tends to watch by himself. The following day he typically talks to his friends at school about what he has seen. Like more than half of the children in this study, Samuel makes use of the Internet to consume this and other forms of televisual content.

Samuel possesses his own iPod Touch, his most favoured televisual device, which he uses to watch Adventure Time, the madcap children’s fantasy cartoon, as well as other series he downloads to the device. Despite the small size of the screen he retains possessive powers over it—it’s his—because it offers him the freedom to move around the home exercising his own choices of consumption. This way he is free from the distractions offered by his noisy sisters when he wants some “alone time,” as he describes it. Small enough to be always located on his person, Samuel’s iPod Touch acts as a contemporary descendant to the marbles or sports cards present in the pockets of children from my generation or the generations before, a sort of “friend in the pocket,” as another of the children in this study describes it. The family’s iPad also offers similar portability, but Samuel tends to only use this device to watch online clips and other content via YouTube, attracted by its increased range of functionality and the size of its screen.

Both of these devices allow Samuel to achieve privacy and access to more personalised televisual content. However, rather than seeking out wholly private spaces such as his bedroom, the portability of his device means he can seek out spaces that can be described in a variety of public-private ways, but which ultimately allow him to take agency through his consumption. The perennial Australian problem of patchy Internet coverage within the home (Battersby 2014; Hopewell 2014) means that Samuel ends up taking residence in some interesting locations in order achieve this
televisual use. One of these is underneath a first floor ornamental table where Wi-Fi coverage is good and he can achieve a degree of privacy without shutting himself away in his bedroom.

In a smaller home, this same location would simply be considered a corridor with bedrooms leading off either side, but due to its size and location within this large household it performs the function of the family’s technology hub, with its numerous screens and high-quality printer. Here we find the two family computers, an iMac and a PC, sitting side by side, with an Apple laptop typically stored on a shelf above the computers when not in use. The centrality and accessibility of this appropriated household space for the location of technology, as noted by Elaine Lally’s (2002) work on the placement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Australian homes, would signify the value and importance this family places on embedding these practices within the family structure—metaphorically, as well as literally in spatial terms, at the heart of the home.

The Windows-based machine, which is a little older and slower, tends to be used by Samuel’s father for his work-based activities. The more recent Apple acquisition and the laptop are the principal machines Samuel uses, sometimes in the company of his sisters, to watch their favourite shows, usually via YouTube or on the Cartoon Network website. But when the whole family want to watch television together they settle down in front of their 40-plus-inch digital screen connected to an Apple TV box, both of which are located in the downstairs lounge room closest to the front door, and which is also separate from the main living / kitchen / dining area and the rear garden with its 20-metre swimming pool. In addition to being able to watch free-to-air broadcast services, the lounge room set-up means the family can also purchase movies or individual episodes of series, usually following a relatively democratic process of the children siding together against parents. These are the same purchased episodes, principally of *Adventure Time*, which can be ported to the hand-held devices that Samuel and his siblings have access to, enabling the children to utilise the content at times and in locations of their choosing.

**Televisual Convergence**

This opening vignette describing Samuel’s televisual consumption is complex and bears witness to the evolving ways in which “television” as a media practice can be studied in the lives of contemporary Australian young people. It highlights how television must now be understood as part of an *ecology of the televisual*. Regardless of which of these digital devices he uses or how the content is received (live, streamed, or downloaded), Samuel notes that, “it’s all just television.”
Hence, rather than attachment to specific media as a study of “television” would imply, this study focuses on the practices embedded in the ecology of the televisual. It takes account of the differing technologies that can support these practices and is also concerned with the processes and content that facilitate young people’s everyday consumption of the televisual.

An important dimension of the ecologies of the televisual is the understanding of convergence and portability, both in terms of the ways technology is utilised in pursuit of this practice, and through the opportunities it provides people to engage with an expanded range of textual forms. These textual forms can be said to emanate from differing productive standpoints, whether described as from a broadcast system or created under more democratic spaces typically framed under the broad banner of User-Generated Content (UGC). I argue that the contemporary televisual ecology is set between the interactions and uses of “old” and “new” media forms. Henry Jenkins (2006), in describing a key element of convergence, points to the relationships circulating between media producers and their consumers. These new and old forms overlay and converge in ways that can be described as remediated; that is, newer media remediates older media and vice versa (Bolter & Grusin 1999). In essence, the televisual, as Samuel’s account attests, is a reflection of “the flow of media across multiple platforms... and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want” (ibid.: 2).

As a study situated within the spaces where old and new practices of television meet, this project offers a unique opportunity to observe how the “protocols” of convergence (Jenkins 2006: 13-14) are in play. Despite this increasing convergence, pre-existing institutional, economic, and political influences continue to exert pressures on its formation. With the literal and metaphorical withdrawal of young people from public life (Ariés 1973; Buckingham 2000; Qvortrup 2009a, 2009b), the Internet has been described as the new public space or “a playground” that offers children the opportunity to participate in the circulation of their own culture (boyd 2008; Jenkins et al. 2009; Sjöberg 1999). Offering access to differing cultural perspectives, identity construction, engagement with others, and new forms of literacies (Buckingham 2007; Jenkins 2006, et al. 2009), to what extent do children as so-called “digital natives” (Tapscott 2009) embrace and extend these type of practices in media diets that cut across differing media forms?

Specifically, this thesis asks how televisual uses within this ecology can be framed as contributing towards children’s identity construction, engagement with others, and development of new literacies across these differing contemporary forms of televisual media. Drawing upon
fieldwork with over 500 Melbourne children (aged between eight and 12 years old) in differing school and domestic settings, and incorporating a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods, this thesis bridges the fields of the sociology of childhood, television studies, and digital media studies. In building complex and layered accounts through these approaches of children’s televisual use there is a privileging of children’s voices to an extent not often encountered in a thesis of this kind. Given the contrasting socio-economic settings of young people in this study, this thesis also questions whether Samuel’s use of the televisual in terms of the devices and content he uses is more reflective of the socio-economic position he holds or is indicative of a more generalisable position of childhood that can be applied to a broad cohort of children living in Melbourne, Australia.

Building upon Bourdieu’s work on taste cultures, Newman and Levine (2012) identify television as now occupying a heightened legitimisation in the current televisual landscape. It holds “a newly respectable status,” one that is now of higher cultural value whereby the “improved agency” that digital tailoring demands is read as offering liberation from television’s “historical lower class and feminine identities” (ibid.: 18). The ability of television to be consumed beyond the boundaries of the home and its freedom from scheduling constraints signals to these authors that “convergence-era television” is increasingly “masculinized” and “of a higher and more elite class,” being both “sophisticated and cool” and thus instilling its users with a sense of being “youthfully hip and cool” (ibid.: 37).

It is this ability to mould televisual consumption to personal choice that is meant to signal audience participation in fragmentary terms. Free to pursue niche interests, televisual use is figured as being defined through self-targeted “communities of interest” or “taste constituencies” resulting in the dissolution of the historicizing potential that television can hold (Hartley 2009; Turner 2009). Thus television’s ability to act as an “apparatus of synchronisation” (Ruth in Morley 2000: 112) throws into question its ability to bring viewing publics together and its creation of those “water cooler moments,” or “playground chats” in the case of the young, which contribute to the teaching of “neighbourly comportment... and national togetherness” (Hartley 2009: 33). The argument being made is that the construction of “me” in relation to “us” can no longer be present in the same way because the ground of commonality through television consumption is no longer present through those formally consumed referent points. Thus, the experience of television can no longer be thought of as the consumption by “viewers” or “audiences.” Instead, “users” for Newman and Levine (2011: ) stands as being more representative of the interactivity that technology facilitates, while “viewers”
as coined by Dan Harries (2002) (a term I adopt throughout this thesis) functions to describe an individual’s ability to self-manage their varied screen-based consumption experiences.

It is this disembodiment of television from its confinement within the domestic sphere that would, in this context, effectively signal a dramatic break from the social experience it is considered to support within its older form. As a media practice that now works to define itself as essentially “placeless,” television is now “unburdened” from “attachment to domesticity” and “the contours of the television timetable” (Newman and Levine 2011: 146). Televisual practices would now appear to threaten television's function as a tool of “ontological security” in the context of a domestic technology, managing as it does relationships and demands between the public and private spheres (Silverstone 1994). Thus where Silverstone considers television use to perform the function of “ritualization” and “routinization” linking the worlds of work (and school), leisure, and the home (ibid.), Jostein Gripsrud is even more adamant that television has the ability to meet a “fundamental social-psychological human need,” because it represents the principal technology tool that most clearly “mark[s] the rhythms of time during the day, the week, and throughout the year” (2004: 217).

For other authors, however, the interactivity and agency afforded to television in this digital landscape works not so much as a revolution overthrowing traditional television theories (as Newman and Levine would seem to imply) but as more of an extension and evolution of these framings. In drawing upon the work of Hartley (2002, 2009), Meikle and Young (2011) point to the possibilities of creative practice as a key factor defining televisual interactivity. Within this new “convergent media environment,” a “blurring” of the “distinctions between producers and audiences” is taking place. This allows for an expansion of the possibilities of consumption, offering as it does the ability to democratically broadcast oneself through user-generated content in ways not possible under a broadcast system (Meikle & Young 2011). Here, sociability and commonality are presented as key signifiers in defining this landscape. Rather than offering “some unlikely new turn in human affairs,” the ability of viewers to “find common ground and common purpose with remote, dispersed others whom they might not otherwise have encountered at all” is merely an extension of “our natural impulses for collaboration, cooperation, and sociability” (ibid.: 121). Particularly important to these authors, and of most relevance to the children I encounter within this study, is the role of traversing through these spaces and the “reading” or “reading more” involved in this navigation (ibid.: 114). Although Meikle and Young make it clear that the production of cultural artefacts works to make viewers “more sophisticated readers, viewers, and listeners, as well as more
engaged makers,” ample engagement is afforded with digital literacies and the circulation of culture in these spaces through the listening, reading, and viewing involved in accessing any such content (ibid.: 117-24).

While focusing on the productive and social possibilities this digital environment affords, Meikle and Young also signal the important ways in which media organisations work to survive in this landscape, as well as how texts converge in these spaces to facilitate exploitation across varied convergent platforms. I will discuss this further in the next chapter, but it is important to note here how the concept of flow has evolved from the broadcast to the digital era. Where Williams argues for flow to be considered as “perhaps the defining characteristic of broadcasting” (Williams 2005: 75), he points to the desire on the part of media producers through the sequence of programming and advertisements, both individually and collectively, working to foreground the values and meanings present in the culture more widely. Through the work of Caldwell (2003, 2004) we understand how media producers orchestrate flow in online environments as a means of holding viewers similarly “captive” through varied “centres” that offer differing forms of commercial exploitation (Curtin 2009).

Just as flow is integral to the functioning of this digitally convergent landscape, “spreadability” is similarly a key attribute. Beyond the ability for engagements to be pursued across multiple platforms, the playing out and extension of story narratives across differing access points as with “transmedia storytelling” (Jenkins 2006; Meikle & Young 2011), and the ability of media firms to diverge their interests and form alliances across multiple and interrelated revenue streams, all make media “spreadable” across each of the areas that give rise to and maintain participation. This is “empowering” to young people as it greatly expands their range of communication possibilities. It expands the potential to foster more widespread connections (Messenger Davis 2010: 180), including those that are geographically dispersed and anonymous (Buckingham 2007: 80). These processes of interaction and participation in everyday contexts provide opportunities to facilitate communication and learning through engagement with peers and other social groups (Ito et al. 2010; Livingstone 2009; Simpson 2005), and to develop key relationships through which children acquire and appropriate culture (Corsaro 2005). Such cultural appropriation is often more influential and relevant than knowledge obtained from more traditional sources, such as parents and schools (Tufte & Rasmussen 2010: 187, 189).
Children’s (Media) Culture

Terms such as “opportunity” and “exploitation” are crucial to formalising how children are positioned in relation to their own culture. Particularly central to these debates is a concern that the participatory spaces that offer emancipatory potential for young people are largely dominated by institutionalised commercial structures. Within narratives that seek to present children as innocents, the argument of some commentators is that children lack the requisite skills to combat the continual tide of commercialism (Postman 1983). This is a protectionist position towards childhood that, as David Buckingham and Vebjørg Tingstad argue, presents young people as “being bombarded, assaulted, barraged, even subjected to ‘saturation bombing’ by the media: [where] they are being seduced, manipulated, exploited, brainwashed, programmed and branded” (2010: 2). In response, many parents choose to limit their children’s exposure to, and opportunities for participation in, these “corrupting commercial influences” (ibid.).

Authors such as Patti Valkenburg (2004) would appear to add to the concerns of parents who fear the level of commercial exploitation their children encounter in this online landscape. She argues that branded communities represent the most favoured or most likely locations in which children spend their time online. In the analytics website eBizMBA’s listing for May 2015, two-thirds of children’s top 15 most popular sites are wholly commercial. Aside from the prominence of commercialism in children’s online activities, the principal issue for Valkenburg is one of awareness on the part of children. In contrast to Jennifer Gillian, who claims that viewers generally “are well aware” that they are being targeted as consumers in these online spaces (in Turner & Pertierra 2013: 70), Valkenburg (2004: 110) contends that children typically display very little understanding of the commercial imperatives driving the sites that dominate their online lives.

As within older media systems, the commercial domination of children’s online spaces is dependent upon what Marsha Kinder (1991) terms the “supersystem.” Premised on building a “network of intertextuality,” the successful promotion and consumption of media characters or personas is premised upon their exploitability across a range of media forms. Working from Piaget’s developmental model of childhood, Kinder points to children being addressed as “voracious consumers,” whereby their agency is supported through ongoing consumption within and across a variety of interrelated product-lines. Within this context, consumption retains some form of
transformative potential, both on the part of children to act in relation to the objects of consumption, and also to be acted upon in pursuit of a constant state of establishing equilibrium. This is achieved through both the continual motifs of repetition found within intertextuality, and also via the differing “actions and relationships” that each media forms offers (ibid.: 57). Thus consumption is also bound to the ongoing process of a child “becoming” savvier and gaining more understanding of their role as consumers, a position that Kinder argues is not fully realised until maturation in adulthood.

However, this preoccupation with commercial imperatives is presented as being particularly limiting to our understanding of children’s media culture and the online spaces, or media worlds, that facilitate engagement with the televisual in its contemporary context. The implicit pessimism attached to this reading presents consumption as failing to meet or nurture the formulation of a well-rounded self. Thus the commercial exploitability that Williams (2005) argues is central to understanding the context of television can also be extrapolated to supersystem-dependent media worlds. It is in these spaces, as Kinder (1991) argues more widely, where narratives are driven by commercial imperatives rather than stimulating explicit learning and educational goals. Likewise, where collectability features as a key aspect within the supersystem, acting as it does to extend and justify its own existence (ibid.), those children’s (and media) markets that are adverse to regulatory intervention become heavily reliant upon character-based sales in shaping and driving children’s culture (Kline 1993: 371). It is this positioning for commercial exploitation that authors such as Jennifer Hill (2011) argue have become the de-facto means of addressing children’s cultural lives.

These standpoints, however, fail to take full account of the ways in which children utilise consumption in the construction of themselves and their identities. Through the work of Daniel Thomas Cook (2004) we understand childhood as a modern construction that is inextricably tied to the growth of consumption culture more generally. Cook describes the former as being “indispensable” to the latter’s “rise, reproduction and transformation” (2004: 21). Building on the work of Daniel Miller (1987), who argues for the “internalization” of consumption as an expression of self, Cook (2004) identifies commercial markets as being central to defining and presenting children as “social persons” who are the worthy objects of care and nurturing, and thus also of the expenditure that could be bestowed upon them. Hence, in order to sustain growth in department

2 These media worlds can be read as sharing in common the framing of Ginsburg and colleagues (2002) in that technological uses offer the potential for shaping both collective and individual identities.
stores as emporiums of consumption at the beginning of the twentieth century, the ability to attract mothers and the young as consumers is achieved by treating “children as individuals with identifiable desires and concerns of their own” (ibid.: 78).

Whereas Kinder’s (1991) account of children’s consumption foregrounds the acquisition of skills in aiding their functioning as consumers that bears full fruition in adulthood, Cook takes the position that consumption is used by children as an inherently social experience determined by the relationships derived both from others and from objects of consumption. For Allison Pugh (2009), focus is placed on how an “economy of dignity” circulates around children’s consumption. This is a process she describes as taking place through “facework,” in which young people view their own consumption in relation to that of their peers. Pugh also argues that particular forms of consumption (and non-consumption) can be held in a higher regard and of greater cultural value than others. Children who can draw upon greater forms of economic capital are more able to participate in more “valued” forms of consumption. Ultimately, however, all children lay claim to whichever forms of consumption they can draw upon as a means of fostering belonging rather than separation from one another (ibid.). Echoing the sentiments of Pugh, Cook (2010) points to “commercial enculturation,” a term that captures how the agentive child participates in this realm of structural consumption (e.g., markets) through social relationships enacted in differing social contexts. Capturing this interdependency between the differing determinants of consumption, Cook states of commercial enculturation that:

*It assumes that consumption and meaning, and thus culture, cannot be separated from each other but arise together through social contexts and processes of parenting and socializing with others. Children, in this view, are not so much socialized into becoming one specific kind of consumer as they are seen as entering into social relationships with and through goods and their associations. This is a variable process that is not necessarily linear or temporally determined, but socially and culturally embedded in understandings of childhood, adulthood and market relations...* (Cook 2010: 70)

Further defining consumption as unfixed and co-determined by its own circumstances as well as that of the child, Cook describes enculturation as highlighting:
... the notion that engaging with goods, advertisements, brands and packaging—as well as with parents, peers, siblings and others—entails encountering and dealing with a variety of meanings which do not live in abstract space, but which are found in and experienced through social relations. It does not imply that every child comes to know and relate to consumer life in the same way or along the same path. [This transaction of] meaning in social life [can and does] include ethnic and national cultures as well as those encountered in specific localities and regions, in specific social classes and through gender and its expressions. [Where] parental networks, child peer associations, the geography of the local neighbourhood, among other things, all contribute to how children come to know about and negotiate their ways through various commercial worlds (Cook 2010: 70, 75).

It is this same agency that marks children as being active contributors to their lived experiences. Critics claim that marketers appeal to this active contribution by children to justify ever-increasing expenditure on advertising budgets in children’s markets. Thus the wonderfully coined term “agents of materialism,” as used by Robert Wuthow (Pugh 2009: 10), speaks to the empowerment presented in advertising discourses that focus on children registering their needs, finding their voices, building their self-esteem, defining their own values, and developing independence and autonomy” (Buckingham & Tingstad 2010: 3). Such a focus was utilised more than a century earlier by department stores aiming to further well-being and developmental expenditure on children (Cook 2004). However, the same approach can be applied to how contemporary marketers position children as technological consumers. Hence organisations such as the Association of Market Research frame children as key targets by which to infiltrate household spending:

All our experiences demonstrates that it is this age group [children] which is consistently ahead of technological development and as such constitutes a powerful force within the family unit in terms of establishing ownership and usage patterns (sic. Buckingham et al. quoted in Messenger Davis 2001: 108).
Such sentiments continue to dominate the thinking of companies and institutions that play a large part in determining children’s culture. More recently, Jim Perry, head of sales for the Nickelodeon Group, points to how marketing to children actually represents investment in the wider and more lucrative family market, permitting the conglomerate to appeal to advertisers who have traditionally shied away from children’s markets: "The kids market is really becoming a kids-and-family market... We continue to do business with folks that were not talking to kids in years past" (Lafayette 2014: 12). As Buckingham and Tingstad point out, central to the success of these narratives is a view that:

\[
\text{adults are boring; kids are fun. Adults are conservative; kids are fresh and innovative. Adults will never understand; kids intuitively know. In the new world of children’s consumer culture, kids rule (2010: 4).}
\]

It is this play towards the knowingness of children that Sarah Banet-Weiser (2007) takes up in her text Kids Rule by focusing on how the behemoth of children’s culture, Nickelodeon, is so successful in addressing children’s consumption as a statement of their citizenship. The success of these branded communities, and the resultant media worlds or “Americanised” online spaces as Valentine and Holloway (2001) describes them, is dependent upon these companies presenting these spaces as liberated zones of safety. Thus the aim of these online locations is to appear to demarcate themselves as being free from adult involvement, providing a “safe haven” or “secure neighbourhood” in which young people are at liberty to pursue their own particular version of managed childhood (Banet-Weiser 2007). These spaces present themselves as fostering a “shared community and common values about youth culture,” where children are addressed as being “understood,” and the brand takes on the role of a “kinship network.” They are both “informed by kids” and instinctually situated to “know” what young people want (ibid.). For Buckingham, this sense of “autonomy and freedom” that these media sites push is inherently “illusory” as they ultimately serve the commercial interests of advertisers and the institutions themselves (in Herring 2008: 73-74).

It is these spaces, working as hard as they do to maintain the “user flows” that Caldwell discusses (in which gaming forms an integral role to maintaining these online spaces), where the televisual can be consumed and participatory practices performed. Aside from the learning potential in the game-play that these spaces can offer (e.g., Chiong & Shuler 2010; Richards et al. 2013), the
exploitation of children is described by Sarah Grimes (2008a, 2008b) as central to how games in these spaces function. She points to how these offerings function as *advergames* in which advertisements are seamlessly integrated into the gaming world, serving as promotional tools towards other properties as well as providing opportunities to road-test “new series and product lines” (Grimes 2008a: 121). Besides performing the function of maintaining immersion in the media supersystem more generally, these advergames provide a valuable source for data mining and the accumulation of other useful information (Grimes 2008a). However, at the same time it also limits scope for participation in the context of interaction and collaboration with others within the gaming worlds (ibid.; Wasko 2010). The limited and managed opportunities for participation presented in these spaces is indicative of the “differentiation and stratification” that Couldry (2011) suggests are present within convergent practices more generally. Despite the “multiple” possibilities for participation on offer, there is an “unevenness” to the ways that users can and do engage, and these reflect how interactions can be characterised as taking place in “unequal spaces of circulation” (Couldry 2011: 494, original emphasis included). Understanding how children’s participatory practices vary across dimensions of difference, such as gender, class, and ethnicity, represents a core aspect of this thesis.

**From TV to the Televisual**

Although these theoretical framings contextualise how opportunities for participation and loss are applicable to children in the contemporary televisual landscape, empirical evidence suggests that there are numerous contours present in these understandings. There is considerable evidence of change already, supporting the arguments of Hartley (2009) and Turner (2009) that audiences will in the near future not come together in the same way as they once did. In the UK and the USA, the high water marks of the most viewed television broadcasts as a percentage of the total population occurred in the 1960s and 1980s in each county respectively. Realistically, is England ever likely to again feature in the last game of the FIFA World Cup, or is a finale on the scale of *M*A*S*H* ever to result in such synchronistic consumption?

While the percentage of a population who simultaneously view a broadcast may not reach the peaks we saw in the past, Turner (2009) makes clear that television will still function in its ability to deliver vast audiences for those “event moments” that work to bind nations together. These are most likely to be of the sporting variety, but are also likely to include events that bear witness to
national celebrations or commemorations (Turner 2009). A clear example is the 2014 Superbowl where 111.5 million viewers tuned in to watch, making it the most viewed TV event in American history. In the same year, a similar precedent was also achieved in Australia when, on the 28th May 2014, 4.058 million people tuned in across the regions and the metropolitan areas for the opening 34th State of the Origin Rugby League fixture (Thomas 2014). Besides the death and marriages of members of the Royal Family, and the opening and closing ceremonies of the Sydney Olympics, the State of Origin was the sixth most viewed television broadcast in Australian history. Nevertheless, such mass viewings are increasingly rare when compared with the past.

It is against this backdrop of changes in television audiences that we see the increasing need for more nuanced understandings of television and its continuing relevance within everyday life. Among older demographics within the US, UK, and Australia, the consumption of “Traditional TV” or free-to-air services shows an upward trend when analysing data historically. According to recent Nielsen ratings, in the USA use of this mode of television has increased since at least 2012 among the over 50s (marketingcharts.com). Likewise, in Australia since 2008 this same demographic has progressively increased their consumption of free-to-air television (screenaustralia.gov.au). In the UK, where age cohorts are segmented somewhat differently (aged between 55 and 64 or 45 to 54 respectively), this same pattern of increased engagement is present since either 2006 or 2007 (OFCOM n.d).

Among children from these same nations, the relationship to television cannot be described in any universal terms. This reflects a sociological position that emphasises how considerations of childhood are in part determined by social context. Television use in Australia, the UK, and the USA is near universal in households with children.³ Throughout the rest of the world, it retains the status of the most popular leisure activity and form of media consumption in which young people partake irrespective of national context (ABS 2012; Nielsen 2015; OFCOM 2014: 57). However, what this relationship to “television”⁴ actually means varies across these differing national contexts. In the United Kingdom, for example, recent trends indicate that young people are choosing to watch the television set at consistently comparable levels to the past (OFCOM 2012: 55, 2013: 53). In the

³ Australia, 96% (ABS 2012b); UK, 98% (OFCOM 2013: 37); USA, 99% (Kaiser 2008: 9).
⁴ The switch-over of television from analogue to digital occurred at differing times between these Anglophone nations: in the USA it occurred in June 2009; October 2012 in the UK; and December 2013 in Australia, three years after the digital switchover had begun in the state of Victoria.
United States there is a movement away from “live” television towards a preference for time-shifted viewing via the older medium (Rideout et al. 2010: 44).

With Australian children, however, there appears to be a rejection of traditional television altogether, as they have dramatically reduced their consumption by 6.5 hours over a nine year period (ABS 2003: 33, 2009: 38, 2012a). This decline in use of the older medium is partly matched by young Australians' increased use of the Internet for their televisual needs. In a recent report specifically detailing these activities among children published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2009), 28.5% of all young people were already “watching or downloading TV programmes, videos or movies” via the Internet (2009: 42). This level of use was already higher than that of British children two years later (OFCOM 2012: 34).

**Access To and Availability Of Technology**

Rates of Internet access are higher in households with young people than in households without them (Livingstone 2011: 348; Livingstone & Bober 2006: 93; Soeters & van Schaik 2006: 31). However, for children in Australia, the ability to access the Internet at home appears as an earlier and more common occurrence than for many of their American and British counterparts. Whereas 81% of young people in the United Kingdom could claim to be receiving these services in 2010 (OFCOM 2011: 19), and 84% of American children in 2011 (Rideout et al. 2010), Australia experienced the quickest and widest dissemination of home Internet access. By 2007, according to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA No.3 2008: 3), 91% of all Australian young people aged eight to 17 could claim to be enjoying this particular privilege, irrespective of whether living in a major conurbation or rural area (ABS 2011).

As we understand it, however, a digital divide along lines of social class is likely to persist as an important determinant as to whether households possess the capability to access the Internet (Seiter 2005). In Australia, where equivalised household incomes are AU$80,000 or more, 95% have Internet access. Conversely, in households with a total income of AU$40,000 or less, almost one-third of households do not have an Internet connection (ABS 2011). The ACMA's (the government body responsible for the telecommunications industry in Australia) (ACMA No.3 2008) examination of the 9% of total households without Internet access found that two particularly prominent “demographic

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5 Used for comparing total household income where household compositions are varied.
sub-groups” lacked household access to the Internet: almost one in five featured a sole parent, and 16% had a head of household who had not completed compulsory education (ibid.: 8).

Besides a lack of the basic tools for accessing the Internet at home, it is likely that there is a “gradation of digital access” among young users, in which social class, age, and gender are likely to be important factors in the quality of access experienced. In cases where there is a need for economic capital to drive the ongoing requirement for technology retooling, social, cultural, and educational capital are all important in providing the support and impetus for continued technological use. With “planned obsolescence … the guiding principle of the new technology industries” (Seiter 2005: 102), the perpetual need to upgrade components and systems, the prohibitive costs of software, and the need to access to high bandwidth all work against situations in which household budgets are tight.

Paralleling this argument, Seiter (2005, 2008) and Buckingham and Willett (2006) also point to the “knowledge” and “social” costs that can contribute to technological inclusion and people’s exploitation of technology. Limits to social capital place restrictions on the sources, networks of interaction, and role models that young people can draw upon for guidance, support, and help. These issues are compounded by inadequate literacy levels, which further impede this ability to participate adequately online (Buckingham & Willlet 2006; Seiter 2005, 2008). Likewise, parental attitudes, knowledge, and skills can cultivate children’s relationships and use of the Internet (boyd & Hargittai 2013; Jackson et al. 2005; Tripp 2010), allowing for the implementation of values that prioritise educational goals and increasing the opportunity for improved living standards (Livingstone & Helsper 2008; PEW Research in Soeters & van Schaik 2006). Parental standpoints on the likely value of ICT purchases for “entertainment” versus “edutainment” purposes influences thinking on how they should be included into the structure of the home (Lally 2002; Livingstone 2002: 153).

Clark (2013) argues that children from contrasting social-economic backgrounds are encouraged to occupy differing perspectives towards the use of technology due to differing cultural attitudes within those domains. She points to lower class children in the USA, who she describes as typically engaging in higher levels of media use, as manifesting an ethic towards media that is more respectful of parental wishes against an ethic of empowerment found among higher class households that discourage ICT uses that “may distract from goals of achievement” (ibid. xii). For Seiter (2008: 38), a “lack of economic capital reinforces the lack of higher status cultural capital,” and the social
relationships relevant to media use play a “determining role” in “exacerbating these divisions even further.” It is against this background that children experience differences in the quality of access they can enjoy. Greater opportunities for use typically lead to increased skill acquisition, with age, gender, race, parental education, and socio-economic status (SES) all being key determinants of Internet use (Livingstone 2011: 348-9; Livingstone & Helsper 2007; Hargittai 2010). Sonia Livingstone & Helsper surmise that “boys, older children and middle class children all benefit from more and better quality access to the Internet than girls, younger children and working class children” (Livingstone & Helsper 2007: 12).

The importance of capital to understanding how young people come to engage with technology is made apparent through work conducted by Lelia Green and her colleagues on behalf of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries, part of a comparative analysis of Internet use amongst young people in Australia and across the European Union. Utilising responses from 400 nine to 16-year-olds, the researchers point to those occupying the lowest social-economic status (SES), in contrast to the young people Clark (2013) encounters, as the ones using the Internet the least often and for shorter periods of time in an average day, while also having access to a smaller number of Internet-enabled hand-held devices (Green et al. 2011: 15-16). Besides highlighting the earlier availability of home Internet access in the lives of Australian children, the report also identifies a number of factors signalling the prominence of Internet use among this group in comparison with other national cultures. Compared to EU averages, the young people they encountered in Australia are more frequent and longer users of the Internet, utilise a wider range of devices to gain access, and are some of the youngest first users of the Internet (Green et al. 2011: 14-16). They are ahead of children living in the UK (Livingstone & Haddon 2009: 69), but some way short of the 6.7 years of age that American children are reported to begin Internet use (NPD Group 2007).

Increased opportunities to engage with the televisual through non-fixed devices threatens the normative relationships observed taking place between children and television. The opportunities for “time-shifting” (Mittell 2010) that these technologies facilitate may be challenging patterns of children’s television engagement, which predominately takes place on the return home from school during weekdays and on weekend mornings (Buckingham 1993: 110). With an increased potential to access television programming through alternative platforms, an activity Tufte and Rasmussen (2010) point to as being increasingly more prevalent amongst boys than girls, we may see changes in the relationship children possess towards what Messenger Davis (2010: 149) has termed
broadcast “liveness.” For Messenger Davis and others such as Gentikow and Hill and Gauntlett, children’s apparent fondness for engaging with content as scheduled points to how young people’s lives and routines are accommodated around broadcasted programming (Gentikow 2010: 150; Hill & Gauntlett 1999: 23-25).

Threats to the security of ritualization that televisual use provides in this contemporary digital landscape can also be extended to the particular roles that technologies have become associated with in the context of the home. Researchers such as Barbara Gentikow (2010) have observed a “division of labour” between the television set as a device of entertainment and other communication technologies, such as the computer, as tools of work. However, this division is challenged by convergent Internet-enabled devices that offer the ability to perform multiple functions only previously achievable through a variety of tools.

These characteristics of television’s scheduling and function within the home pose an interesting question with respect to the “inherent” “savvyness” (Hargittai 2010) associated with young people as being digitally attuned and enabled (as observed with the Indian Hole in the Wall children, see Seiter 2005: 10-11). Is such an inherent savvyness reflected in their use of technology in pursuit of their televisual practices? Or is there, as Buckingham (2002) suggests, an under-use of technologies by children in ways that can be described as “creative or technically complex”? Do those typical demarcations of household space and technological use, whereby technology’s place in the home is characterised as facilitating uses of “leaning forward” and “sitting back” or “work” and “play” (Gripsrud 2007; Uricchio 2004), continue to persist in this contemporary landscape?

Household Relations and Structures, and Their Moral Economy

One of the opportunities provided by the use of the televisual in our new digital landscape is “placelessness” (Newman and Levine 2011), described as a separation of the use of televisual technology from the domestic sphere. With the proliferation of mobile devices, television has become a practice of mobility that is innately wedded to consumption within public environments. The implication of uncoupling television from the domestic sphere is that it no longer structures and mediates the relationships between the public and private spheres in the same way as it did in the past. Silverstone (1994) and Gripsrud (2004) argue that a central function of fixed television has been to provide the lubricant to manage this relationship between these two competing spheres of existence. In drawing upon the work of Max Dawson (2008), Newman and Levine point to how
advertising discourses place focus upon mobile television's potential to liberate the domestic and feminine. In doing so, television consumption is no longer tied to the private sphere of the home. However, Newman and Levine’s reading of Dawson diminishes the role of the domestic that Dawson still places on television in this mobile context. In one respect, Dawson is quick to point out that accessing television on the move is still only practised by certain groups. He notes that this is a demographic that is generally the “technologically adroit, young white male,” typically under 36 years of age and wealthy enough “to afford the technologies and services” that support this mobile consumption (Dawson 2008: 295, 2007: 232).

In conjunction with this phenomenon, Dawson characterises mobile consumption as wedded to the location of the home. This further challenges the notion of the televisual in the contemporary landscape as being essentially placeless. Thus the “power to extrapolate the sense of control and mastery enjoyed by the home viewer to the world at large” is matched by “seeking to recreate the feelings of security, connectivity, and control [mobile users] enjoy in the front of their home televisions” (Dawson 2008: 297, 294). Similarly, Groening (2010), in extending the work of Raymond Williams on mobile privatisation, as well as that of Walter Benjamin on the sanctuary of the home providing a retreat from the public world, also concludes that television use remains “an outgrowth of already existing societal conditions” (ibid.: 1335) in which consumption is still rooted to the same comfort, safety, and stability that the home offers.

In fact, far from becoming disembedded from the private sphere, mobile television is presented as privileging “a withdrawal from sociability and interpersonal interaction” in which televisual consumption is a privatised act offering “an idyllic form of privacy” (ibid.: 1333-4). For both Groening (2010) and Dawson (2008), this privileging of the televisual as a product of the atomised interior experience of home-based consumption is extended outwards. Mobile devices are privileged as offering protection from the intrusions of unwanted public contact. As much of the literature in and around mobile media purports, far from creating placelessness, mobile media reinforces the importance of place (Ito 2003; Morley 2003).

The centrality of the home, both theoretically and as presented in the advertising discourses Dawson (2008) unpicks, is further signalled by a major international empirical study conducted by Ericsson ConsumerLab (2013) across 15 countries including the US, UK, China, and Russia. Interviewing 15,000 respondents aged between 16 and 59, they paint a picture of televisual use in
which television is a practice that is inextricably tied to the home more than to arenas of public use. The commute to work, the workplace, and the shopping mall are all shown to be minority locations for consumption (Ericsson ConsumerLab 2013: 5), although the report also indicates that mobile devices play an increasingly important role in these activities. Likewise, a Screen Australia (2014) report detailing on-demand televisual use of consumers aged 14 to 60+ states that only 6.8% of use takes place outside of the home.

Given that televisual use can be described as a practice that is rooted to the home, and which extends these sensibilities to mobile and public consumption, I believe it is possible to argue for the ongoing relevance of domestication (e.g., Silverstone 1994; Silverstone et. al 1994). Where Silverstone (and colleagues) address this attachment to the home as offering security from the chaotic nature of the public world and its attempts to encroach into the private space of the household, I wish to examine the relevance of this theory in a digital landscape that continues to frame theorisations of the televisual as an evolution of Silverstone’s writings rather than the revolution as argued by Newman and Levine (2011).

In Silverstone’s placing of television within the context of the everyday, the home is taken as an economic unit in its own right. As well as working in relation to the public economy, it also functions as a social and cultural unit within a moral economy that transacts meanings and understandings from the public world of work and leisure, particularly in relation to goods and commodities, into the context of the home (Silverstone 1994: 48-50). Information technologies, as with those relating to the televisual, are woven into the fabric of the home. They are thus doubly articulated, for their use and integration into the home are dependent upon how they are appropriated and converted both as commodified objects that can convey meaning in and of themselves as public goods, but also as objects that convey messages (Silverstone et al. 1994). Attempts at “taming” this introduced technology are dependent on the aesthetic, cognitive, and evaluative impressions of the household, whose biographies and politics determine how it is incorporated as an object of the ordinary and everyday (Silverstone 1994). Thus “on the one hand the particular characteristics of a household’s moral economy will define how television is actually used,” for it determines:

how it is incorporated into the daily pattern of family or domestic life; how its use is structured by the gender- and age-based relationships of the family at a particular
stage of its life-cycle; or how it is mobilised into the household’s sense of its own
domicity, its own sense of home. And equally the kind and level of resources a
household can call on will also affect how television comes to be used, both in terms of
the household’s spatial arrangements, in terms of the accepted patterns of the
household’s time use, and in terms of such simple but crucial factors as the number of
television sets or channels available within the domestic space. On the other hand

**television itself, as medium and as message, will extend and plausibly transform a
household’s reach: bringing news of the world of affairs beyond the front door;
providing narratives and images for identification, reassurance or frustration; affecting
or reinforcing the household’s links with neighbourhood and community; and locking
the household ever more firmly into an increasingly privatised and commodified
domestic world** (Silverstone 1994: 50).

Through detailing children’s televisual use in an expanded televisual ecology, we can see how
children incorporate the technology that supports this media use into the household’s structure.
Rather than a focus on the “microsocial environments of family and household interaction” that
typically frame consideration of the symbolic environments of media use, this thesis takes a wider
mandate that incorporates the “neighbourhood, economy and culture” through which consumption
can be articulated (Morley and Silverstone 1990: 32-3). Thus neighbourhoods and schools are read as
the cultural sites through which this form of consumption can be articulated. Both schools and the
neighbourhoods from which they spring are taken as lenses through which socio-economic status
can be understood and therefore serve as the contexts through which differing children’s cultures
can be framed.

Objects and their symbolic environments or user practices have typically taken priority in
studies as a first and second articulation of meaning (e.g., Silverstone & Haddon 1996). In contrast,
this thesis places a focus on how **content** can offer a third articulation. Building on work by Hartmann
(2006) who argues that, in a digital landscape, engagement with content is not bound to contexts of
use as it once was, this thesis examines how the objects of children’s televisual use, the symbolic
environments that give rise to this use (which in a digital context can be read as participatory
spaces), and the media texts they engage with all contribute to framing children’s relationship to
their contemporary televisual ecology.
As a transactional system typically comprised of a number of individuals, the household must manage relationships in order to maintain its (smooth) functioning. Mary Douglas (1991) points to the imposition of “coercive” rules that work both implicitly and explicitly to master the space and time of the home, maintaining the household as a location of relative peace and cooperation, if not as site of personal freedom. Children within this context are undoubtedly subjected to a number of rules and a lack of access to power, both generally and in relation to their media use. The ethnographic studies of Wood and Beck (1994) suggest that young people encounter numerous regulations that attempt to minimise their “barbaric” potential within differing rooms of the home. Morley (1991) points to how television use is representative of the dynamics of power in the household, with its male head typically defined as the holder of its authority. Dependent upon parental values, differing forms of regulation, or mediations impacting young people’s media use, there is an expectation that these power relations will be internalised and eventually re-enacted by children (Hawkins in Lally 2002: 154), as with overall attitudes towards technology (Jackson et al. 2005). Just as television is used to managing children’s presence within the home (Buckingham 1993; Morley 2000: 25-26), for the vast majority of young people there are rules and practices that govern access to the Internet (Fleming & Rickwood 2004: 366), with mothers typically embodying the role of mediator-in-chief of children’s Internet practices (Livingstone & Haddon 2009).

However, in different national and social contexts we see variations in attitudes and practices around the governance of children’s media use. In Australian homes, the majority of these parents believe they enact some form of mediation on their child’s behalf; in comparison to parents from the EU nations this places Australian parents among the top five heaviest mediators of their children’s media use, as well as being substantially higher when compared to parents in the UK (Green et al. 2011: 41, 44; Livingstone et al. 2012; OFCOM 2011: 83). Mediation is motivated by fears that young people will access inappropriate content, be contacted and exploited by strangers, or conduct themselves in an inappropriate manner while online. Parents in Australia tend to adopt active forms of regulation involving discussions or observations around use, compared to parents in the UK who tend towards the denial of access towards certain forms of use (Livingstone & Bober 2006). In contrast to the UK, where boys typically encounter greater forms of regulation, in Australia gender is not generally a factor influencing how parents exercise Internet controls. Typically, British girls are afforded more trust, and as a result they face lower levels of supervision and fewer restrictions on the amount of time of use (OFCOM 2011: 85). In addition, whereas socio-economic status appears
consistently as a non-factor among British parents in managing children’s mediation (OFCOM 2012: 198-9, 2013: 205, 2014: 165), in Australia it is those from the lowest SES that face the least restrictions (Green et al. 2011: 41) despite parents’ overall greater control.

In the new orthodoxy that has developed in the conceptualisations of children and childhood, and which are central to the perceptions of the young in this thesis, Philippe Ariés (1973) highlights how the sphere of activity moves from the public to the private in modernity, and in a western context ultimately it is a child’s bedroom that can be viewed as a key site for the mediation of children’s culture (McRobbie & Garber 1977). Ariés (1973) describes this “push to privacy” as how, with industrialisation, the household takes on broader and more focused attention by the family unit. In this context, the proliferation of technology to young people’s bedrooms is seen to foster an increasingly privatised experience for the young within the context of the family home, both generally and in relation to their media use. Stimulated by the “multiplication” of cheaper media goods available to households, Livingstone (2002, 2007) describes how children’s media-rich “bedroom culture” acts as an exercise in flexing children’s personal autonomy and culture making, for it provides “an individualised space vital for the construction of identities and social relations” (Livingstone & Bovill 1999: 115).

Within the perspective of the sociology of childhood (James et al. 1998), the bedroom serves as a site of confinement and an attempt at appeasement for the increasing withdrawal of the young from participation in public spaces. For James et al., the bedroom represents an activation of Foucault’s “panopticon” whereby the relationship of children to the bedroom is one of subjugation rather than freedom. Since serious curtailments on children’s access to public spaces are the norm in contemporary Western settings, particularly within urban environments, the bedroom becomes the principal household site where, without being “under the feet” of adults, the young still remain very much under their gaze of surveillance (ibid.).

Livingstone (2002), whilst echoing these sentiments, also foregrounds the potential benefits in cultural participation that it offers. On one hand it provides the opportunity for young people to explore their own culture away from the gaze of parents, while on the other, media use within these spaces decreases the possibilities for direct interaction or supervision from parents or other responsible individuals (Livingstone 2002, 2007). In addition to lessening the potential for co-viewing that has been observed with children and television (OFCOM 2008: 19), young people are considered
to increase the amount of time they spend with devices when located in their bedrooms rather than located in other spaces of the home (Livingstone 2002). As a result, late night technology use has been observed as a more common facet of children’s lives (Kennedy 2013). This potentiality for privatised electronic media activity as well as Internet access and use is, however, not shared equally by all children despite the overall increase in the availability of Internet connections in children’s bedrooms (Livingstone & Bober 2006: 94; OFCOM 2013: 30-31; Seiter 2005: 3, 16). Whereas working class young people are typically found to possess greater amounts of “screen entertainment” in their bedrooms (Livingstone 2003: 148), boys and children from middle class families are more likely to enjoy online access and related technologies (Livingstone and Bober 2006: 94). In contrast, children from the very lowest socio-economic group (DE) are increasing their computer use within the main family room (OFCOM 2011: 26), and girls are generally the recipients of “media-poor” bedrooms (Livingstone 2003: 149).

**Structure of This Thesis**

In this first chapter I have set out the broad theoretical frameworks this work draws upon in order to argue that children’s televisual use is premised on convergence and portability. Drawing upon the work of digital media, childhood studies, and domestication theory I have set out how, alongside the terms of *convergence* and *portability*, those of *opportunity* and *loss/exploitation* are also key to understanding how both television can be contextualised in this digital landscape, and how these terms apply to contemporary theorisations of children. I briefly outlined (to be expanded upon in the next chapter) how the broadcast system’s market-orientated sensibilities continues to frame the relationships of producers and consumers as opportunities for consumption become increasingly Internet-based. Following on from this outline, I discussed how children’s media practices within this landscape contribute to young people’s identity work. We have also seen that, despite the ability to frame televisual consumption as a “placeless” form of media use, and thus revolutionary with respect to its status as a domestic technology, the everyday use of the televisual continues to foreground this relationship to the home.

The following three chapters explicitly situate the lived worlds of the children in this study. Chapter 2 further contextualises the changing media landscape that the children in my study encounter. Drawing more deeply upon the work of Raymond Williams (2005), Mark Andrejevic (2009), and Michael Curtin (2009), the broad political economy of the televisual is established before
the specificity of the Australian context is provided. In so doing, it is shown how the relationship of the “old” and “new” frame this emergent televisual ecology, in which traditional broadcast services co-exist alongside Internet-based consumption. For example, we see services such as YouTube in use alongside branded media worlds such as Cartoon Network.

The next chapter, Chapter 3, details the processes of collecting data and the justifications for employing the various “ways” or “tools” that are used in the execution of this work. This includes discussion of the specific cohort selected for participation, children aged eight to 12 living in the greater Melbourne region, and why they form a particularly useful group to address the core questions of this research. Justification is provided as to why school settings are the primary and most suitable locations for accessing the number and range of participants this study focuses upon. This chapter also examines the complexities of the research processes that frame this work, i.e., gaining access to children in these particular institutional settings, and how conducting research with children in Australia complicates the very existence of such research. Explanation is also provided as to how the mixed multi-method design of this study, including surveys, drawings, and interviews, allows this work to remain informed by ethnographic considerations (although it is not strictly an ethnographic study). The ability to triangulate findings from the various tools utilised in this thesis permits the composition of rich, detailed, and textured data. This depth is achieved by building relations through numerous interactions with many respondents and compiling these into a nuanced and layered account of children’s televisual practices. This is done to maximise the ability of the young people in this study to “speak” for themselves via their own images and words, both written and spoken.

Chapter 3 performs the function of “drilling down” through the ecological layers that the children of this study are located within. It begins by providing an overview of the location of this thesis (Melbourne, Australia) to provide a generalised backdrop to the locations from which the children’s voices spring. Chapter 4 then turns to the schools and communities in which the participants in my study are located. The purpose of these framings is to demonstrate that, while the home retains important value as a “central mediating site” of a child’s life-world (Bronfenbrenner 1979), it does not stand in isolation. Instead, it is always part of wider macro-social structures and is thus dependent upon them for the management and maintenance of its own existence (Qvortrup 2009b). Where Silverstone’s writing on the moral economy of the household most clearly signals this co-dependence, work on domestication focuses (understandably) on privileging the way households
work in mediating the values and cultures circulating between the public and private spheres (e.g., Silverstone 1994: 48-50).

Although such an approach has been particularly useful for providing insight into experiences of television use within the context of the family home (e.g., Hill & Gauntlett 1999; Livingstone 2007; Livingstone & Bovill 1999; Lull 1980; Morley 1991), the aim of this thesis is to articulate how the wider structures that frame the presence of the home can be viewed as reproducing those values. This focus on the reproduction of culture (Bourdieu 1977/2009, 1990) takes school settings—key locations that Bourdieu & Passerson (2000) point to as retaining prime importance for the establishment, negotiation, and rejection of value systems expectations, norms, and tastes—and asks how the observable culture in those locations can permeate children’s televisual practices. Attention is given to how, within the fabric of the four schools from which participants are drawn, the objects and symbols present are displayed inwardly and outwardly through locations such as schools’ websites, mottoes, and logos. These symbols reinforce, and are reinforced by, wider social contexts, i.e., communities and neighbourhoods, of which these schools and homes are a part. In essence, the school setting is taken as a proxy for the wider social context in order to contextualise the class differences that emerge among children within differing settings.

The remainder of this thesis is divided into two sections, Texts and Participation: Practices and Spaces, and is reflective of this thesis’s chronological process of analysis. Chapter 5 focuses on the types of content that children are making use of in their televisual ecology. I argue that the consumption of content should be considered as triply articulated, as it works independently of its symbolic environments to offer an additional means of mediating between public and private worlds. Due to the increased possibilities and opportunities that the contemporary televisual landscape offers for engagement with content, children can signal their relationship to the outside world in any number of alternate ways. This chapter draws upon Hartmann’s (2006) position that media consumption can be thought of as being articulated through the devices of consumption, contexts of use, and also content consumed, rather than the traditional framing of context and text as being largely interdependent, with the latter holding reduced significance as an object of meaning (Silverstone & Haddon 1996). This chapter also addresses the diversity of tastes exhibited by my participants across the differing cohorts, demonstrating how age, gender, social class, and ethnicity can all be utilised as signifiers to understand and classify children’s tastes. Engagement is also provided with discourses of American cultural imperialism, which Bennet et al. (1999) have argued
are particularly relevant to understanding the (television) tastes of Australians. This is particularly in light of ever-stronger attempts to increase the level of domestically produced content available on free-to-air broadcast services.

The next section of this thesis, beginning with Chapter 6, discusses how children engage with the differing (symbolic) environments that frame their televisual ecology. Over two chapters I present the relationships that facilitate children’s televisual use within the context of Internet-based consumption, demonstrating how the technologies and online spaces that support these practices are utilised by children as a way of negotiating their social lives. Chapter 6 focuses specifically on how children use the televisual to make claims upon the household’s technological objects, as well as its spaces. Additionally, they challenge the organisational potential of television in order to facilitate an increasingly self-determined consumption.

Chapter 7 details the principal online spaces through which these practices are centred: the video sharing system YouTube. It asks how children’s engagements within this televisual system can be interpreted as contributing to identity construction, communal experience, and the development of new literacies. In presenting YouTube as an enhanced televisual mode, I identify four practices—browfing, TV Alternative, “The Best YouTubers” and Concerted Viewsing —that signal how YouTube works to replicate or remediate aspects of the broadcast television system, extending recognition and familiarity with its existing practices. Here we observe the importance of peer and interest-driven cultures as contributing to children’s participation in these online experiences.

The final chapter in this thesis ties together this work’s varied discussions and findings in order to address the principal research questions. It also addresses what these findings may imply for children’s television use in the future. It considers the implications that these patterns of televisual use may hold, both for future televisual consumption, and for potential questions arising from the work’s findings.
Section I:

Situating This Study:

Participants and Their Ecologies
2 The Australian Televisual Context

In the first chapter of this thesis I set out the broad theoretical frameworks that inform how television functions as a digital media and the changing relationship of consumers to the televisual. Convergence and portability are central to this emerging landscape, but the home retains a key importance as a mediating site for understanding children’s contemporary televisual ecologies. Loss and opportunity also figure as key terms through which to understand children’s culture, both generally and specifically in relation to their media use. This second chapter seeks to further contextualise the televisual landscape, which my participants encounter as they navigate their televisual use, in relation to the findings that will later emerge in this work. I set out the economic, institutional, and legal contexts of this Australian televisual landscape beginning with how flow retains key importance within this ecology. I then examine the Internet-based spaces that form the backdrop to children’s televisual experience. The final sections of this chapter address how the development of the pay-TV market is an important determinant in contextualising this contemporary landscape, and also how protectionist measures are utilised by the state as a means of driving children’s engagement with domestically produced content.

The Televisual as Commercial Enterprise

In taking television as a product of economic imperatives rather than of political or social will, Williams (2005) identifies commercial imperatives within capitalist democracies as driving the development of the “scattered techniques” of technology that ultimately give rise to the initial emerging presence of television. Irrespective of the differing regulatory frameworks and funding models that may later emerge from a state’s position in relation to private capital, for Williams it is this initial economic incubation that defines the manufacturing and distributive base of television systems. Thus he describes “public service” and “commercial” television institutions that subsequently emerge in television markets such as that of Australia, the UK, and USA, as ones where compromises are struck to varying degrees between state interest in broadcasting as a public service and that of the private and commercial interests of manufacturers (ibid.: 24-28). It is this “commercial character of television” that, in essence, defines the nature of broadcast television. Its
market orientation operates at a number of differing levels, which Williams describes as occurring within:

the making of programmes for profit in a known market; as a channel for advertising; and as a cultural and political form directly shaped by and dependent on the norms of a capitalist society, selling both consumer goods and a ‘way of life’ based on them, in an ethos that is at once locally generated, by domestic capitalist interests and authorities, and internationally organised, as a political project, by the dominant capitalist power (Williams 1974: 38).

Authors like Andrejevic (2009) and Curtin (2009) argue that this kind of political economy is central to the interactive and social opportunities available to viewers in a digital televisual landscape. As old revenue streams dwindle and disappear, the ability for media organisations to reinvent themselves as convergent enterprises is key to exploiting new ones, which are necessary for them to maintain their positions as the principal holders of symbolic power in the media market place (Meikle & Young 2011: 58). Thus the “ongoing processes of consolidation and expansion” that organisations engage with works to fortify them as being “larger, more integrated, and more networked” whereby the “possibilities offered by affordances of communication technologies” can either be incorporated into “their existing business” practices or exploited in a way that “significantly changes the scope and prevailing uses of the technology, and in so doing changes the scope and scale of their own business” (ibid.: 35, 40).

For Michael Curtin (2009), these innovations on the part of business can be described as occurring across a number of consumption “centres” or “circuits” that lead to a fully-integrated media “matrix.” This media matrix serves to immerse users within a conglomerated flow akin to the “planned flow” that Williams (2005) argues is present in all earlier broadcast television systems. Despite the “increasingly flexible and dynamic modes of communication” made available to viewers offering fulfilment of a more individualised televisual experience (Curtin 2009: 13; Turner 2009), and the increased possibility for civic and democratic participation (Hartley 2009), the ability to access content across “a diverse repertoire of mass, niche and micro-niche” interests is representative of the new business models that media enterprises employ in their attempts to accumulate audiences (Curtin 2009: 31). Thus instead of broadcasters’ one-time ability to deliver viewers en masse to advertisers at differing points during the flow of television, the varied channels of consumption that
the Internet and digital technologies provide allows for stronger demographic targeting. Ultimately the actions of consumers perform the work of marketing that was previously shouldered by broadcasters.

As such, when viewers like Samuel trawl across the Internet to engage with content such as *Adventure Time*, whether through the Cartoon Network website, Apple TV, or YouTube systems, the tracking of his movements and practices in these media spaces provides new possibilities in the accumulation of marketable data and “focussed eyes.” Here the self-generation of information in relation to interests and social networks, the registration of personal data (typically pre-figuring the ability to use such sites), the completion of surveys, and the placing of local cookies on devices, all serve the purpose of profiling consumers to advertisers (Andrejevic 2009; Curtin 2009). Andrejevic (2009) argues that it is through the creation of this “information glut” that these participatory practices give rise to the performance of “economic labour” on the part of viewers, as in essence they automatically produce commercially exploitable information that is then re-sold or fed back into creating more detailed and targeted user profiles.

If these authors capture the structure or “hardware” component of flow, John Caldwell’s work explicates the ways in which viewer experiences are managed in a software capacity. With an aim of attempting to elicit increased pleasure on the part of their users, the varied tools utilised to maintain attention in these media spaces foster deeper levels of engagement with, and attachment to, the varying aspects and properties of a text than can be achieved via viewing alone (Brooker in Bennett & Strange 2008). This “conglomerating textuality,” as Caldwell describes this practice, aims to maximise the time spent “grazing” in these spaces, or to ensure any auxiliary participation occurs in the “herded” locations affiliated to those same media organisations (Caldwell 2003). Achieved through the building of navigational areas or worlds that facilitate the playing out of diegesis across a number of platforms (Caldwell 2003, 2004; Rutherford & Brown 2012), Caldwell (2004) points to the “repurposing” of content as playing a particularly important role for facilitating interactivity. Activated through differing “online strategies,” such as use of chat forums and blogs, Caldwell encourages a “weighing in” with “critical analysis and dialogue on a given series,” or an immersion in inter- or extra-textual relationships that add “value” to engagements through character “backstories,” “behind-the-scenes” features, or merchandising opportunities (ibid.).
Media Worlds

Thus, in a contemporary televisual landscape, media worlds can be perceived of as the online spaces that media organisations use to hold the attention of viewers through the flows Caldwell discusses. Depending on the type of institutions being considered, these can be described as either “ancillary platforms” within the context of commercial conglomerates (Caldwell 2003), or as a multiplatform “media project” in relation to enterprises working within a public service ethos (Bennett & Strange 2008; Rutherford & Brown 2012). The differing ways in which media organisations frame their engagements for the types of viewers found in this study points to the alternate modes of address that these young people can expect to encounter. In Rutherford and Brown’s (2012) account of the Australian public service broadcaster ABC and its online provisions for two of its children’s properties (the teen drama Dance Academy and the historical series My Place), it is clear that although differing value systems can be present in how children are addressed, these can be organised in a manner that still supports “human capital-building” as provided for within the corporation’s Charter obligations (ibid.: 206). These contrast with the consumption-based modes of address found in alternate media worlds and online spaces.

Whereas the circuits of consumption of the televisual text My Place are clearly framed within an educational context, the “more entertainment driven Dance Academy,” which has an online presence, still manages to present children with “multiple modes of identification” through engagement with issues such as relationships, body image, and (cyber)bullying (Rutherford & Brown 2012). At same time, it makes use of the gamut of tools that Caldwell identifies that are used to maintain viewers’ attention. However, it is within these public service media worlds where the greatest forms of televisual innovation are typically encountered. As such, the ABC was the first Australian broadcaster to offer podcast and vodcast services, and its iView player represented the country’s first free programme catch-up service (Debrett 2010: 102). Since the corporation makes strenuous efforts to make its archived content available online, Debrett argues that the ABC is an important driver promoting the take-up of the national broadband service (ibid.: 103).

Despite the increased pressure that the ABC encounters to produce properties with greater potential in commercial and offline contexts (Handsley 2007: 389-390; Rutherford 2012), the media worlds constructed by commercial conglomerates can be described as predominately addressing

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6 The second most favoured individual text of the girls of this study, discussed further in Chapter Seven.
children as consumptive beings, in relation to which the idea of “human capital building” is
ultimately a minor and secondary consideration. As such, Wasko (2010), echoing the sentiments of
Sarah Grimes (2008a, 2008b), describes these sites as constructing online spaces for children, while
at the same time ultimately functioning as products of “immersive advertising.” The point for
advertising executives is to help nurture their brand and related products in ongoing support of the
supersystem. Thus, in the minds of children, these media worlds attempt to “…produce lasting
awareness, retention and brand affinity, with impressions that effectively and repeatedly convey the
advertiser’s message to the intended consumer” (Wasko 2010: 119). For Grimes (2008), this pre-
occupation and perpetual cycle of self-referencing within the supersystem diminishes the
opportunities for worthwhile communicative and creative participation, resulting in severe
curtailments in the ability of young people to contribute actively.

The media world of Cartoon Network that Samuel encounters through his attempts at
engaging with the televiual text *Adventure Time* provides a case in point to the procribed forms of
participation that Grimes describes as being on offer. This “safe haven” of children’s culture works
synchronously to create an impression of the “shared community” that Banet-Weiser (2007)
describes, as well as offering limits to participation that are dependent upon a child’s national
context. Hence the universalism of childhood is presented in the US(.com), British (.uk) and
Australian (.com.au) versions of the Cartoon Network media world through its branding and visual
motifs that translate across these offerings. The placement of logos, website design, aesthetics, and
colouring therefore bear considerable commonality across these differing media spaces. Collectively,
these sites are centred across three differing areas of participation: viewing, doing, and playing.
However, the prominence and depth given to these activities in differing market territories is
emblematic of the differentiation that Couldry (2011) highlights as an important determinant to
participation.

For example, both the UK and Australian versions of Cartoon Network possess easily
accessible points to the popular MMOG *Toonix* gameowned by Turner Broadcasting. This game is an
example of the “herding” that Grimes (2008a) and Caldwell (2003) point to as feeding back into the
conglomerate-managed supersystem. Viewers can create avatars, facilitating the ability to play with
appearance, as well as offering interactions with others, although on a pre-formatted basis. A
narrowing of the scope for participation is also evident in relation to the proprietary *Mixit* video-

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7 These observations of the Cartoon Network media world in the three markets were conducted in July 2014.
creator app, which is only available on the US and Australian versions of the Cartoon Network websites. Although affording viewers the ability to create 30-second clips that can be rated by others and shared across multiple platforms, the images, sounds, and effects that allow creation of these montages are all proprietary objects of the Cartoon Network brand, and the incorporation of any others are not permitted through this app.

In addition to these differences, a number of other subtle changes are apparent between the differing locales. These serve to further signal how participation is tailored. Only visitors to the UK site are offered the facility to submit jokes, which again can be rated and shared. It also offers the only national context to provide engagement with the Adventure Time (AT) interactive “Map of Goo,” which provides a limited backstory to the diegetic setting of the text. Similarly, children situated within the USA have no opportunity to download many of the wallpapers, icons, or “things to make” as do children in the other regions, and they also miss out on the downloadable AT apps that children in the UK and Australia are able to use. Although young people in Australia have a much greater range to choose from, children in the USA are offered twice as many Adventure Time games than children in the other territories. This is possibly a reflection of that country’s lax regulatory regime regarding advertising within children’s games (Grimes 2008b).

Common to all these Cartoon Network spaces is the provision of the clip or “segment,” as John Ellis (1992) has described the “basic” unit of the television text. Ranging in length from just a few seconds to a couple of minutes, these capture brief dialogue interactions or the presentation of whole “preview” scenes. Typically, viewing these is preceded by non-interruptible advertisements relating to other properties of the brand or its parent company. Where Australian viewers were formerly denied the ability to access full length episodes (as were users of the British site), recent changes to access permissions now prevent Australian registered IP addresses from accessing the US website altogether. With subsequent changes to the Australian version of the site, it is now possible to access a small number of full length televiusal episodes. However, it only permits access to shorter segments, and the number available is still small compared to the range of texts that American viewers currently can access.

The YouTube System

Alongside the media world of Cartoon Network that children like Samuel use, the YouTube platform provides a particularly prominent access point for online-based televiusal consumption. Although
both of these online spaces can provide very particular forms of address for young people (Grimes 2008; Valkenburg 2004). Cartoon Network, as the discussion above highlights, provides highly managed and localised opportunities for participation depending on a child’s national context. Although both of these spaces offer children insights into the demands of creating content within a televizual ecology, YouTube offers greater access for to children partake of a “technological identity” (Lange 2014) through which the roles required for production are in greater evidence. For Lange, participation within YouTube offers young people the opportunity to learn how to present themselves technologically through differing media forms such as text, voice, and music, as well as accessing the differing processes, skills, tools, and potential roles involved in bringing a video to fruition (ibid.). Likewise, children bear witness to the differing ways in which to communicate and present aspects of self, as well as the value of sharing the personal and intimate. As Lange points, referring to what she calls “an interactive performance model” achieved via Goffman’s notion of the “performative self,” (Lange 2014: 23) it is these interactions between video creator and viewer that work together in a process of “negotiation.” In this way, a user’s ability to “ratify or reject” the efforts of a creator allows for a process of “self-action” on their part as they rationalise the value of these presentations (Battaglia in Lange 2014: 22). However, it should be noted that the ability of young people to create and participate in these spaces is not universal. In order to post videos a viewer must possess a YouTube account, which is restricted to those 13 and over, as well the fundamental technological capabilities that can facilitate this.

Since YouTube launched in 2005 and its subsequent takeover by Google a year later for US$1.65 billion, the site has grown to become the world’s number one video sharing platform, with billions of hours of videos viewed each month and approximately 300 minutes of content uploaded every minute. With the introduction of advertising in 2007, the ongoing success of the company within the market economy has seen its value rise to US$40 billion. This same year also saw the beginning of a localised version of the site for Australian viewers like Samuel. More recently, the company introduced its “YouTube Live” service in 2011, through which it has staked its claim as a broadcaster through the streaming of live content. These include the Olympic Games, music concerts, and the provision of original content through its YouTube channels. In another attempt to monetise the online platform, May 2013 marked the introduction of ad-free paid subscription channels, while more recently attempts have been made to offer a similar paid service to the whole of the YouTube site. Despite these attempts, however, the vast amount of content—99.8% according
to reelso.com (Jarboe 2014)—remains free-to-air, indicating that the site’s “bottom-up” architecture remains key for the company’s success in the foreseeable future. However, it is this relationship between being dependent upon its users to generate its content, and the successful appeal to advertisers, that marks YouTube’s importance within the marketplace. As such it marks itself as a particularly successful model in the contemporary televisual landscape, one which Burgess and Green describe as being:

>a highly visible example of the broader trend toward uneasy convergences of market and non-market modes of cultural production in the digital environment, where marginal, subcultural, and community-based modes of cultural production are by design incorporated within the commercial logics of major media corporations...[One whose] value is partly generated out of the collective creativity and communication of its users and audiences, and its culture has both commercial and community motivations and outcomes (2009: 75).

Thus, in spaces where individuals can stake their own claims to “broadcast yourself,” children are provided with the opportunity to actively participate in the circulation of cultures present. This is in contrast to those cultural activities that are pre-formed and managed on sites such as Cartoon Network.

Subscription Television

The pay-TV market has struggled to establish itself as a viable component within the contemporary televisual landscape in Australia. In comparison to pay-TV in other developed nations, pay-TV in Australia it is expensive, has low penetration rates, and is largely monopolistic in nature. With only 29% of all households nationally (ASTRA 2013) adopting pay-TV services, the country is firmly entrenched within a lower tier of national take-up levels. In some of the more mature markets, such as those of Scandinavia, there are far higher levels of both adoption and competition. Countries like Sweden and Norway possess adoption rates three times higher than that of Australia. Even compared to the other principal Anglo nations, Australia's level of domestic use is still far smaller. In the USA, for example, the 100 million households making use of these services account for 86% of all those available (Digital TV Research 2013). Even in the UK, whose STV market bears many similarities to that of Australia, usage rates still stand at 54% of all households.
Where the markets of both the UK and Australia are largely dominated by a single player, both trace their ownership and control back to Rupert Murdoch. In the case of the UK, News Corporation (or more latterly 21st Century Fox) owns a 39.1% share of BSkyB. In Australia, the News Corp company owns the STV service Foxtel in an equal share partnership with Telstra. Overall, both of these entities control 66% or more of their respective markets. However, although the UK operation reaches a 76% control of market share, the smaller market in Australia is judged to be far more lucrative. Under the average revenue per user (ARPU) measure, which compares supplied services to revenue generated by customers, Australian pay-TV users would be considered some of the most valuable in the world, twice more so than those in the UK (OFCOM 2010). The high cost of these services is considered the main reason why penetration rates in Australia lags far behind those of the US, the UK (Knott 2012), and Northern and Western Europe. At current penetration rates, the STV market in Australia is more comparable to those found in countries such as Italy and Spain.

Due to government disinterest and mismanagement of pay-TV policy in Australia, a situation has developed that Rodney Tiffen (2007), an Emeritus Professor specialising in Australian mass media, has described as “one of the most convoluted, indeed, absurd, policymaking processes that Australia has ever witnessed” (ibid.: 55). The result is an infrastructure largely developed and financed within commercial hands. At the same time, established broadcast interests have been able to circumvent the initial impact of STV on their finances though a five-year ban on advertising in the new medium (ibid.). Due to significant early losses through initial high start-up costs, and with companies often switching allegiances in order to guarantee market share, costs to consumers have remained high, while rigid bundling structures restrict consumer flexibility on programming choice (ibid.).

Children’s Television

Since the earliest days of any regulatory framework governing broadcast television in Australia, younger viewers have been afforded the status of a protected audience. The Children’s Advisory Committee, formed in 1953, is tasked with advising the Australian Broadcasting Control Board on issues relating to children and television. Younger viewers are treated as different to adult viewers, and this implies that specific content provision is required to meet their needs. More recently, this role has fallen to the ACMA through its formal interventions via the 2009 Children’s Television Standards (CTS). One of the principal tasks of the ACMA is to ensure that children are not exposed to
harmful content, and that commercial free-to-air broadcasters, excluding the ABC and SBS, provide sufficient content to meet their quota obligations. At present these stand at 130 hours for pre-school viewers and 260 hours for children under the age of 14. In addition, ACMA also takes on the role of monitoring the scheduling of children’s programming to ensure broadcasters’ provisions fall within children’s broadcast times set down by the CTS.

In order to meet these regulatory commitments, content is deemed suitable for children only if it meets a number of stipulations set down by the 2009 Act. In short, it must be considered as being made specifically for them, it must provide entertainment, be of sufficiently well-produced quality, add to a young person’s understanding and experience, and also be appropriate for the tastes of Australian children (Children’s Television Standards Act 2009: 8). Historically, one of the principal issues the Australian market often encountered prior to such regulations was its status as a dumping ground for older, US-produced content. Thus, prior to the introduction of the C classification by the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal in 1979, Patricia Edgar (1983) claimed that 70% of the content broadcast as part of the now-banded afternoon to early evening broadcast schedules was produced in the USA, made prior to 1970, and often repeated.

Alongside these protected broadcast scheduling slots for children, minimum requirements are in place governing the amount of domestic content children should be able to access. As part of the regulations governing all free-to-air broadcast licensees, there is a need to transmit fifty-five percent of domestically produced content between the hours of 6AM and midnight. There are also rules in place via the Broadcasting Services (Australian Content) Standard Act of 2005 that impose requirements on first release children’s drama. Borne out of conclusions that the original C classification would not sufficiently stimulate productions of diverse, quality local content (Edgar 1983: 8), Australia is, according to Lallo (2012), the only nation in the world to impose such a quota on children’s drama. The current requirements are for broadcasters to screen a minimum of 25 hours of original content, plus eight hours of repeated C rated dramas produced locally. This is a substantial improvement from the eight hours first introduced under the quota in 1984.

However, with these aims of promoting access to free-to-air broadcast content that privilege “Australian identity, character and cultural diversity” (Broadcasting Services Amendment Bill 1999), research carried out by Screen Australia (2013) suggests that young people do not recognise the country of origin of the programmes they consume. Nevertheless, their child respondents do
indicate a desire for seeing places and characters they know of or that remind them of themselves, in addition to favouring stories that could be part of their lives, or those of their friends (ibid.: 5).

Conclusion

The contemporary Australian televisual context that the children in my study encounter is multifarious, but it is largely determined by commercial economic interests in broadcast, pay-TV, and Internet-based contexts. However, it is possible that these children are afforded differing modes of address within these forms. In the current Australian broadcast system, protectionist measures are in place to ensure that children have access to minimum amounts of domestically produced content that attempts to privilege local culture and identity. Media worlds that are dependent upon the context being considered can either focus on working towards “human capital-building,” as utilised within the ABC PSB setting, or represent young people as consumerist subjects when taken as part of the media supersystem, such as with media conglomerates like Cartoon Network. Allied to this, the YouTube platform, despite increasingly positioning itself as a traditional broadcaster, is inherently determined by the content its users produce. This therefore expands the possibilities for children’s televisual engagement.
This study explores how you, as a child, interact and engages with televisual media. In this study, you are the expert... [A]nd by talking to you we are hoping to give voice to your thoughts and to allow people to better understand the role media plays in your lives.

(Taken from the children’s Information Consent Form used for this study)

This chapter addresses the methodological framework that guides this work. Fieldwork for this study was carried out between March 2013 and January 2014 in Melbourne Australia. It involved over 500 children aged between eight and 12, and was centred around four differing school locations (the details of which are discussed in the next chapter). Premised on a participatory research model, children are taken as “natives” of their own social and cultural lives and presented as the people best able to represent their own views, knowledge, and everyday experiences (James et al.1998; Christensen & James, 2000; Tisdall et al. 2009: 5, 75). Taking an inductive approach, the subjective positioning of children is considered to offer opportunities for new theories to emerge or existing ones endorsed (Greig et al. 2007; Pugh 2014). As such, this thesis recognises a central premise under the new sociology of children and childhood, that which conceptualises the value of children’s culture in its own right, and thereby situating it as worthy of study and investigation (Corsaro 2005; James et al. 1998; James & Prout 1997).

This methodology takes into account past dangers when attempting to enquire about aspects of a child’s world, especially an over-emphasis on the interpretative qualities the adult researcher can bring to their child subjects (Greig 2007: 1, 72). As Mayall describes it, the methodology seeks to reverse a “generational order” in which the expectation that “good information about childhood” comes from assumptions made from “the superiority of adult knowledge.” Instead, the methodology adopts an initial position that starts “from children’s experience” (Mayall 2000: 110). As already presented in Chapter 1, this study does not focus on children as “becomings” in relation to a supposed future position obtained with maturation in
adulthood, but rather as “active,” “subjective” “beings” in pursuit of their own immediate social lives and, as such, the principal makers of their cultural experiences.

Recognition of such agency on the part of children is declared internationally under The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989, currently ratified by all nations of the world except for Somalia, South Sudan, and the United States. Taken into Australian law in December 1990, it bequeaths under Article 12 that children have the “right to be heard” “in all matters affecting the child” (United Nations 2009), and that in order to do so “environments and working methods should be adapted to children’s capacities” (United Nations 2010: 84). Whether through legal obligation or good practice, placing children at the centre of this research project cements the rights of involvement they are encouraged to exercise as citizens and research participants. Providing young people the agentive space to comment on their own social worlds as they experience and understand them remains at the heart of the methodological approach this work engages.

Although the methods used in this study should not be regarded as research tools that fall solely under a remit of offering a “child-friendly” approach, they are the ones that best fit the questions asked and the nature of the participant group under consideration. The triangulation of the multimethod approach enables a deeper, richer, and more well-rounded analysis (Gorad with Taylor 2004; Wellington & Szczerbnski 2007). As well as enabling the identification of common practices among a range of children in differing contexts through the quantitative use of surveys, the sample groups of this study also provide the opportunity to understand “how” and “why” these practices occur.

Respondents and Interactions

This work is premised on purposive decisions about the nature of its sample pool. There are no claims that the data provided will be representative of a child population as a whole, but by utilising a “smaller, convenient, and therefore non-probable” sample pool, judgements have been made about recruiting participants who will have the best knowledge of, and ability to, represent the experiences required (Greig 2007: 72). As this work is primarily focused upon childhood cultures in different socio-economic settings, four primary schools were selected. These schools are embedded in differing classed and cultural milieus, as will be detailed in the next chapter. Briefly, however, Finley Central can be described as low class; Highland can be attributed the status of upper working
class / middle class; and Bayview and Shawcross Road can both be described as upper middle / upper / higher class.

The use of these four schools as the primary sites for data collection within this project is important for a number of reasons. Outside of the home setting, schools are the location where children spend the greatest amount of time, and so they are an important site where children can be engaged and their experiences collected. Within this context, children can be described as a “captive audience” where the presence of adults is expected and taken for granted. Given my own direct experience as an educator, schools represent my primary avenue of engaging a broad range and number of children simultaneously. As a site where children come together in mutual exchanges and interactions, school is a key location where children’s culture can be said to develop (e.g., Corsaro 2005; Opie & Opie 1969; Opie 1993). As will be discussed in Chapter 4, schools can also be characterised as “proxies” for discussing socio-economic status, and thus for contextualising differing children’s culture in relation to their televisual use.

All school visits were carried out between March and December 2013. In total, Finley Central and Shawcross Road Schools were visited on four separate occasions, Highland five times, and Bayview (the largest in terms of student enrolments) eight times. Two of these schools, Highland and Bayview, can also be categorised as embedded within largely Anglo-Celtic ethnic communities in Melbourne, while the others can be described as emanating from more culturally diverse settings where non-English speakers are more prominent (again discussed further in the next chapter). Visits to these schools tended to follow a similar pattern. The first round of visits typically lasted between half and a whole school day, and would involve the administration of a questionnaire to the appropriate classes (discussed further in this chapter). The following visits involved small group work with children in the creation of drawings related to their televisual use (again discussed in more detail later). These visits typically occurred after a two month interval, thereby allowing time for analysis of survey data before re-engaging with participants. The final round of meetings usually occurred after a much shorter interval, typically a few weeks, and involved group discussions (and another activity that did not make its way into this thesis).

In addition, home visits were conducted within five households in which all children were students of the schools of this study except Highland. Two of the homes visited also contained
siblings who attended the same school. These home visits, typically carried out across a number of occasions, lasted in total between 1.5 hours to 4 hours.

In line with the essence of this project, that aims to give “voice” to children, all child participants were encouraged to choose, and provided, pseudonyms by which they would be referenced within this work. The names of schools, locations, principals, and teaching staff have also been made up in order to maintain privacy and anonymity. All conversations, whether in a school or home setting, were digitally recorded with the children’s permission. As a prelude to any interviews, children and responsible adults were provided with information consent forms detailing the nature of the project and of the work we hoped to carry out. These forms also detailed children’s right to privacy and our desire to record our interviews. The forms were typically provided to children a number of weeks before any interviews took place in order to allow them time for reflection on their willingness to take part in these next stages of the research process.

When engaging with children through the process of research there are inevitably issues of power that arise between researcher and child, in relation to the institutional context in which that research is located. Through my experience as a child educator with numerous years of classroom experience working within the age groups on which this work focuses, I am acutely aware of the ways in which power is enacted through an on-going process of counter-balance. Bloom (1998) acknowledges that power is neither a permanent fixture held within the adult figure, nor can it be described as inherent to the researcher.

Within the school setting, the structure of the institution can in many ways “weigh down” this quest of pursuing the experiences of children. It implicitly manifests inherent contradictions between individualisation, that is, the pursuit of knowledge that can aid in a child’s formulation of their own cultural lives, and the normalising of the power relations that frame this knowledge as originating from adult voices. Various tools were employed in order to reduce the perception of myself as an authoritative adult figure, and to distance the research from the work of school and its implications of compulsion and obligation. Although the nature of this project did not require any strict utilisation of Mandell’s (1998) “least-adult role,” account was taken of the “generational issues” that can be applicable to researchers in these contexts (Mayall 2000), and efforts were made to bridge social worlds and to be more in tune with that of the children I encountered.
When introduced to the children, my role was always framed as a researcher talking to them about their media use in relation to the completion of a PhD. My experience as a teacher was never discussed in these meetings, although it emerged subsequently through our work together. In those first interactions I would explain a little about myself without being overly specific, such as that I originally come from the UK and have worked with young people in differing capacities, as well as explaining the nature of the level of degree I was hoping to complete. I ensured that I was always introduced by my first name, and that children should always refer to me by that designation. Any time children reverted to the more common way of addressing a male adult figure in this setting, i.e., “Sir” or “Mr….,” I was always quick to remind them of my name verbally or by pointing to the board at the front of the class where it was always written at the beginning of each session. The physical space of the classroom was also used to create an air of familiarity. On each visit I would ask the teacher to gather the children on the floor where I myself knelt / sat in order to allow my (re)introduction at a physical level similar to that of the children. On these more equalised terms I could then discuss the purpose of my presence in relation to the specificities of that particular visit.

To further manage conceptual differences when engaging in desk-based work (whether one-to-one or in groups), any chair that bore the signification as being for an adult was discarded for one equal in stature to the chairs that the children themselves used. This resulted in no end of knee pain, a problem that I had regularly encountered while teaching regularly in primary schools, and which I did not miss! In attempting to further create distance from the work of school, all activities except the questionnaire phase were conducted in spaces away from the children’s classroom base. This typically meant the use of usually smaller rooms, which contributed to the air of privacy and confidentiality that was always stressed in the initial discussion at the commencement of our sessions. It was always emphasised that the children were under no obligation to carry out any of the tasks if they saw fit and were free to leave at any time if they so choose.

Within the home setting, following on from the experiences of Scott (2000), whether children were approached depended upon the willingness and enthusiasm they exhibited as participants throughout other encounters in the research process. From those who expressed an interest in participating, five children were selected as being reflective of the differing socio-cultural milieus this work focuses on. In order to obtain children’s involvement in these home visits, additional information consent forms were sent home for both children and parents. These forms detailed the specificity of this particular aspect of the research. Parents were asked for their contact
information in order to manage the arrangements of these visits. Communication largely occurred via e-mail, which also provided the opportunity to address any questions or issues that the parties may have possessed. These visits occurred in February and March of 2014, and they are representative of my last engagements with my research participants.

As a way of negotiating children’s comfort in these contexts, they were encouraged to select a location where our discussions took place. All chose a public space within the home, most commonly a main living area. Parents were neither encouraged nor sought to be directly present in conversations with children, and this provided the opportunity for these young people to remain the focal point of the study. It emphasised the valued position they held and afforded them the ability to be as candid as possible (as much as such situations can dictate; see, for example, e.g., Hood et al. 1996). A separate parent interview was conducted generally with their children in attendance or in close proximity to the location of the interview. Usually these parent interviews involved mothers, although a father and step-father were also present on individual visits to two different homes. This provided for scenarios such as those described by Berry Mayall (2000), in which dialogues between adult and child are interactive in nature, providing insights into practices from differing perspectives. As Scott (2000) points out, the benefits of conducting interviews with children in these home contexts is that they provide the opportunity to probe and prompt for information, often in a circulatory nature, but in a way that ultimately provides the opportunity for children to retain a large degree of control over the “pace and direction” of the proceedings, with the “raising” and “exploring” of topics as they see fit (Mayall 2000: 121).

Besides interviewing children in their home, I was provided the opportunity to observe children in the participation of their televisual practices. However, in contrast to observations that attempt to capture young people in the everyday pursuit of their culture (e.g., Corsaro 2005; Thorne 1993), their use here was predicated on the information profile built up from all my previous encounters with the children. Through these tools, a “back-story” is built-up, and so when respondents omit, add, or enlighten the information gathered in these home-based interviews, observations can be obtained from practices that are not only taking place currently but also of those which occurred in the near past, and which may not be present during the specific focus and duration of more traditional observatory practices. This research cannot be considered to be strictly ethnographic, as it avoids long and deep immersion and observation into the social environments of its child participants (e.g., Lareau 2000, 2011; Thorne 1993). However, it is, in essence, the study of
people and the “units of social relationships which individuals interact within” (Whitehead 2005: 8) in relation to their televisual use.

**Children in This Study**

Although this work is not concerned with a developmental psychological approach as a means of adjudging children’s capacities in relation to their televisual lives, such an approach does bear some importance to this work as a way of exploring variances in media practices in relation to young people. For although such approaches tend to focus on the cognitive abilities that children are said to be experiencing during their *Concrete-Operational Stage* (Piaget 1955), this thesis follows on from other work which explores how relationships to media may change among children in differing age-groups (Singer & Singer 2011; van Evra 2004). By focusing on the cohort of my research participants my expectation is to observe how age may figure as a determinant towards attitudes and relationships towards the televisual from the onset of later childhood and early adolescence, a time when other activities command a greater proportion of their time and attention (Huston et al. 2007: 45). Thus parts of the analytical work of this thesis will focus on how consumption practices change over time, particularly in relation to children at the beginning and end of this particular “phase” or moment of life.

In total, 553 young people were surveyed across four school sites (discussed in the next chapter). Three children were excluded as their age fell beyond the scope of this study (aged 7), and another 15 were found to be unsuitable due to the children not clearly marking their gender or age on the survey. This left a usable sample of n=535, broken down along the following lines: girls = 266, boys = 269; 44 children at Highland; 251 at Bayview; 71 at Finley Central; and 168 at Shawcross Road. The number of children within each age band can be broken down as: age 8 = 99; age 9 = 164; age 10 = 114; age 11 = 124; age 12 = 34. Table 3-1 below details the number of respondents per year group and school.
Questionnaires

The initial instrument used in this study consisted of a two-page, age-appropriate, piloted questionnaire that was administered to all of the children in this study. Used both quantitatively and qualitatively, many questions allowed space for children to elaborate on their more closed responses, thereby providing for an additional source of usable data. The aim of the questionnaires was to gain the views of as wide a selection of participants as possible, but also to act as a “screener” to the subsequent rounds of enquiry of this study. Its benefits, when used among a sample pool such as the one under consideration, are varied. Often overlooked as a valid research method in relation to children (Scott 2000), some researchers have deemed surveys to be “fair” as they offer a wider number of young people the ability to communicate views than would not have been possible through other methods (Tisdall et al. 2007: 6). In addition, they provide the opportunity for shy individuals to share their knowledge without fear of being talked over by others (such as in the context of focus groups), as well as offering anonymity and confidentiality (ibid.).

With questionnaires being administered within a school setting there was an acknowledgement on my part of both the benefits and risks this could engender. As discussed earlier in relation to conducting research generally with children in schools, the use of surveys provides the ability to question a broad number of respondents within a relatively short period of time. In schools that chose to exercise their standing consent from parents in the execution of this first phase, participation rates of students in Years 3, 4, 5, and 6 were particularly high. Thus at Finley Central, 88% of all students enrolled in those four years completed a survey; at Bayview and Shawcross Road approximately 94% of those eligible took part; whereas at Highland, where there was a need to send out information consent forms prior to conducting any research, only 18% of a possible sample of

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Table 3-1: Breakdown of survey sample

With questionnaires being administered within a school setting there was an acknowledgement on my part of both the benefits and risks this could engender. As discussed earlier in relation to conducting research generally with children in schools, the use of surveys provides the ability to question a broad number of respondents within a relatively short period of time. In schools that chose to exercise their standing consent from parents in the execution of this first phase, participation rates of students in Years 3, 4, 5, and 6 were particularly high. Thus at Finley Central, 88% of all students enrolled in those four years completed a survey; at Bayview and Shawcross Road approximately 94% of those eligible took part; whereas at Highland, where there was a need to send out information consent forms prior to conducting any research, only 18% of a possible sample of
257 provided permission to take part. As questionnaires follow a recognisable format that did not stray too far from children’s experiences of exams or other forms of testing, they are familiar objects in regards to requirements for their completion. However, taking account of the negative connotations this activity may have as a form of schoolwork for some children (Gallagher in Tisdall et al. 2007: 72), the following efforts were made to mitigate these issues as far as possible.

In all contexts I administered the questionnaire myself. Teachers were often present, but they always served a secondary supportive capacity. This was to minimise their role in the surveys’ administration in order to minimize the disruption of a teacher-pupil dynamic at play in any classroom setting. This allowed me the opportunity to reaffirm for children the non-mandatory nature of completing these surveys, as well as providing reassurance of the confidential and anonymous nature of their responses. The goal was to avoid promoting fears in children that “their responses can be accessed by those who have power over them and consequently may expect to receive poorer care, support and understanding” (Greig et al. 2007: 92). When possible and where time permitted, warm-up games or activities were utilised in order to further reinforce children’s perception that the exercise was not associated with school work. Examples of this were playing hangman and using titles of media texts children would be familiar, or a game entitled “I’m thinking of a word...” where children had attempts at guessing a word that I would provide clues for.

Borland et al. (Tisdall et al. 2009: 6) point to a number of issues when making use of surveys with a sample group of this particular age, such as issues with survey spoiling through respondents indicating “trivial” or joke answers. However, the young people in this study shied away from such behaviour as the topic under consideration appeared particularly “meaningful” and interesting to their lived experiences. The children were given reinforcement as to the meaningfulness of their responses through my constant affirmation that they were the experts with respect to their experiences of the televisual, and were therefore the ones best suited to providing insights. When asked to interpret questions for them, I often responded, “whatever it means to you.” To counter a potential problem noted by Scott (2000), in which the proximity of class mates can compromise confidentiality or deter children from sharing their responses, verbal prompts were continuously provided emphasising the uniqueness of each child’s relationship to the questions at hand.

In order to combat issues with children who may have low levels of literacy and who may struggle to adequately complete the questionnaires, the survey was reasonably short in length,
allowing for completion within a 10 to 15 minute time frame depending on a child’s capabilities. To further ensure that the questionnaire was likely to be understood by the greatest number of respondents, I carried out a pilot study that was targeted at the youngest and potentially least literate members of the target group. This enabled me to test out the clarity of questions and to ensure instructions were straightforward and sufficiently easy to follow. The survey can be described as consisting of seven parts, each with a specific research focus: personal information and household structure; televisual content they consumed; consuming content via the internet; devices utilised in media use and general preferences for how content was consumed; televisual characters favoured; their (social) use of the TV (when, where, with whom, and the practice of multi-tasking); televisual content that seemed most real to them, and game-playing in relation to televisual characters.8

In the wording of the questionnaire, “television” and “programming” were used as it was found that children were unclear as to the broader meaning associated with “televisual” and “televisual content.” Administrating the survey myself allowed me to expand upon the specific language utilised in order to accommodate a broader range of meanings that would encapsulate specific content, such as that of YouTube. In addition, as a class group we progressed through the surveys together to allow me to read out each question and add any further clarification if and when needed. The benefit of this was to ensure that no children raced through to the completion of a survey without fully grasping the requirements of each question.

8 Data accumulated in the penultimate and final areas of focus did not make its way into this thesis.
Creative Methods

Where there is a concern to investigate children’s experiences of their televisual practices, a reliance upon a child subject generating an immediate verbal response in an interview situation or focus group may prove limiting to shedding light on their perception of consumption (Gauntlett 2004). To overcome such difficulties, use is made of “projective techniques” that provide the opportunity for a child to “project” their own feelings, thoughts, and opinions, generated from an object of stimuli (Cohen 2001: 580). For David Gauntlett (2004, 2007), the utilisation of these approaches can provide for a greater reflection on the part of the participant as time is taken up thinking about and making an object as a response. In contrast to speech and language acts, there is an activation of different areas of the brain that are associated with creative practices, and these provide the opportunity for a “different quality of data” (Gauntlett 2004: 3).

The creative projective approaches utilised in this work have made use of what has been described as the universal language of childhood, in which drawing techniques are described as the “natural mode of expression for children” (Cummings 2003: 199). Young people have described this type of creative tool as being fun, and thus more conducive to the collection of valuable data (Hagerman 2010). Engaging participants with these types of approaches fosters access to the “implicit” thinking of an individual that may not be as readily accessible via verbal language (Cummings ibid.). The employment of the draw and write technique, in which participants are asked to provide images relevant to various aspects of their consumption followed by a short piece of their
own writing detailing the nature of their creation, is augmented by a “tell” element in which children are individually interviewed regarding the circumstances and contexts relating to their drawings. This allows for their own commentary to underpin their creations, as opposed to any reliance of interpretation on the part of the researcher. Children taking part in this phase of the research process were invited to participate due to the responses they recorded in their surveys. Attention was particularly paid to children utilising the Internet generally to consume televisual content. At Bayview School, 152 children were asked to take part in the creation of drawings, 34 at Finley Central, and 110 at Shawcross Road. In contrast to previous research which has yielded low-response rates amongst children from lower class and minority-ethnic settings (Maruyama & Deno 1992: 59), in this project students at Finley Central returned the highest number of positive responses to my requests for participation. Of the information consent forms sent out to all four schools, 56% of those within the lowest socio-economic setting expressed a willingness to take part, whereas students at the two highest class schools, Bayview and Shawcross Road, returned only 35% and 39% respectively.

Children were not provided with any specific incentives to participate in this phase of the research process or the next. Information consent forms were provided to class teachers in sealed envelopes with only a child’s name for identification purposes. It was hoped that the wording of these documents and my interactions with the children would have provided the principal motivation for continuing their involvement. This wording emphasised their expertise, explained that participation in this project would be my only means of understanding young peoples’ media and televisual use, and appealed to children’s own personal interest in the research undertaken.

This phase of research, including creative activities and group interviews, was conducted with children within their own year year groups. Therefore children in Year 3, despite being in different classes at Bayview, carried out their drawings with children in the same school year. The same occurred for children in Year 4, and so on. At the other schools, each of which utilise mixed-year groups (e.g., children aged seven, eight, and nine at the start of the school year) could be in the same Year 3/4 class and completed the research phases in these mixed year groups. (The reasons for doing so are discussed in the next section.) The number of children taking part in these projective

9 NB At Highland School, children’s participation in this creative phase was already guaranteed by the initial requirement to obtain consent to conduct research with children in the first instance.
10 Additional groups were also selected for their engagement with reality TV, the results of which are not present in this completed thesis.
techniques for each school is as follows: Highland, five children in year 3/4 and nine in year 5/6; Bayview, six in Year 3, seven in Year 4, 13 in Year 5, 15 in Year 6; Finley Central, ten in Year 3/4 and six in Year 5/6; and Shawcross Road, six in Year 3/4 and 14 in Year 5/6. In any single session, no more than eight children worked together. Typically, however, group sizes for this approach involved six children. Each child participated in only one session, each of which ran for no more than one hour.

Children produced a minimum of three images, each with their own accompanying text, while some completed four drawings if there was sufficient time in the session. Prior to the commencement of children creating their drawings, a brief discussion took place outlining the requirements of each of their creations and texts. This was supported by text prompts that were placed in the middle of the table on which we worked to enable children to have constant reminders of what was being asked of them. The three main prompts for this session were: “Draw a picture of you watching television on the Internet”; “Draw a picture of a television programme you most like to watch”; and “Draw a picture of a character on television you most like you to see.”

The first of these prompts refers to how children are making use of the Internet in their televisual ecology, while the second of these is concerned with the televisual preferences that are emerging in a landscape where greater access opportunities are available. As with the survey phase of this work, explanations were provided to children to expand the range of meanings that “television on the Internet,” “television programme,” and “television character” may have. The purpose of this, as with the administration of the surveys, was to ensure that children could include the whole gamut of their televisual experience, including that of YouTube.

In order to give children greater autonomy in the process of creating their images and words, the children were specifically asked and encouraged to produce images in an order of their own choosing, allowing for further distancing from simply mimicking those creations of others. Participants were also encouraged to make use of their own materials, such as pens, colouring pencils, and markers, and to create images in whatever manner they saw fit. The goal was to facilitate a sense of ownership over the proceedings.

11A fourth prompt was also made use of: “Draw a picture of you playing a screen-based game that has a television character in it.” As with the survey responses related to this research focus, as well as the data collected regarding televisual characters, this did not make its way into the final thesis.
Interviews and Group Discussions

The third and final approach utilised in this thesis is centred upon the processes of speech and discourse in relation to children’s use of the televisual. Whereas semi-structured group interviews are considered a more useful tool for younger aged children (Scott 2000), young people themselves express a range of positive and negative attitudes to their use. For example, Tisdall et al. found that some children believed that speaking together in a small group context could alleviate the shyness that some children may have experienced in normal school life when dealing with larger classroom settings (Tisdall et al. 2009: 6). Moreover, according to Tisdall, children themselves found focus groups to be far more quick and convenient than other methods and were more likely to be fun, resulting in a greater exchange of views (ibid.). Gallagher attributes some of these positive aspects to children being able to engage with the research while their friends are present. Use of existing friendship groups smoothed and facilitated the process of data collection (ibid.: 76). In such instances, there is the possibility of accruing benefits to children that “promote an ethic of co-
operation and mutual aim, helping children to cement their relationships, identify shared goals and spur each other to action” (ibid.). This issue is particularly relevant to this study, as children were interviewed in same-age groups (as discussed in the previous section) of no more than eight members, which served the purpose of minimising issues of group dynamics.

However, some researchers hold a parallel fear that such groups can be unrepresentative of children’s own views, since only limited numbers can be engaged and any pre-existing peer group relations could affect children’s involvement. Such interferences could include gendered relations, the dominance of certain voices over others, or the risk that collective participation could cause the discussion to going off topic easily (ibid.: 6, 76-77). There is also a possibility that participants are likely to partake of a normative form of discourse whereby little disagreement takes places over the meanings that others generate in conversation (Hodge & Tripp 1986: 146). Alternatively, what can transpire is a process of “collective monologue” whereby children contribute their own meanings and understandings in a vacuum that neither elicits a follow-up response, nor a response to previous contributions (ibid.).

As a way of pre-empting these issues, this research emphasised the ongoing development of relationships with children via the varied approaches utilised throughout the study. With the perpetual signalling to respondents of the importance of airing their “own voice” through the survey phase, reinforced by how the “tell” phase of the creative method in one-to-one dialogues was conducted, the research aimed to nurture an environment in which children recognise the value of their own thoughts and insights beyond loyalty to any others in a group setting. It is also through these types of interactions with peers in discussions that children are provided the opportunity to hear and explore the variable experiences of childhood, allowing, as Mayall points out, for “evaluation” and “debate” through the learning processes of talk (Mayall 2000). In line with Corsaro’s (2005) findings, the children in this study demonstrated sophisticated social skills in their interactions through a willingness to listen, rephrase, and incorporate the views and points of others in order to reinforce or contrast their own experiences.

Children who participated in the creative element of this project also took part in a group discussion, unless they were not present at the time of this visit. These discussions generally took place a few weeks after the creative phase, and individual children were involved in only a single group interview session. The maximum running time for these was one hour, but they typically lasted
for approximately 40-45 minutes. Adopting a semi-structured approach, discussion prompts involved: how televisual devices are used in their lives; likes and dislikes around these technologies; using their devices in public spaces; and instances of devices offering liberation.

**Access and a Question of Ethics**

Ethics clearance was applied for and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at RMIT University. Additionally, approval was sought and granted from the State of Victoria’s Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) to conduct research with children within the school settings. Since there are a number of prior research projects also within school-based environments, but in differing national contexts, I wish to take a moment to relay the differences in approach between Australia and the UK, with the hope that this comparison may benefit future researchers undertaking research with young people in Australia for the first time, whilst also offering some general help on conducting research with children. I wish to draw attention to the importance of social networks and capital when attempting to engage in a project centred on working with children as research participants.

Prior to this project, my experience of the school setting and academia were exclusive to that of the United Kingdom. All of my formal education took place in the UK, and as a qualified teacher with nearly a decade’s worth of experience, the majority of that time was spent in British classrooms, namely those of London and the South-East but also in the East of England, namely the Norfolk and Suffolk regions. My undergraduate and postgraduate degrees were also obtained in those same respective locations. A research project for the first year of another PhD involved data collection within primary school settings. It focused on how children of the same age cohort as this project, eight to 12, came to recognise particular television content as being appropriate for their consumption. That project was also to be based in four school settings, also within differing socio-economic environments.

Having worked as a substitute teacher for at least a year within the particular contexts where I hoped to carry out this research, “bonding” ties were particularly important as a means of approaching gatekeepers who were ultimately responsible for granting access and permission for me to carry out research within those institutions. Although these connections can be described as

12 A prompt involving children’s game-playing on their devices was also used, data from which was not included in this thesis.
“loose” in nature, they approximate a form of social capital that Putnam and Goss (2002) describe as bringing people together who are much alike—in this case, educators working within the same institution—if only on an irregular basis on my part. The ease with which I was able to gain access to those head teachers to present my proposal and gain subsequent approval (either granted on the spot or within a week of our meeting), and the difficulties later encountered within the Australian context (discussed below), mean that this form of social capital had a particular importance in gaining access to school populations in order to carry out research, and as a result is a possession most closely prized.

For this thesis, two schools, Finley Central and Shawcross Road, were recruited through my direct approach. This involved cold calling these schools in order to discuss the project with the principal; emailing information sheets detailing the specific nature and demands of the project; and arranging a face-to-face meeting with the principal in order to discuss the nature of the project in person. Once permission had been granted, the principals of these two schools very kindly provided detailed schedules for the execution of the questionnaire phase of the project. They continued to act as liaison for the later execution of the other phases of the research process. In the case of Highland and Bayview, contact information for individual teachers was provided via an associate of my supervisor, Larissa Hjorth, who had carried out art projects at these two schools. Through email correspondence with this individual, and after her having contacted the schools in question to see if they may be interested in participating in this research project, I was furnished with the email details of her teachers’ contacts at each school. These two individuals then acted as the mediators for my entry into each school. They delivered the project information to their respective principals and created a schedule by which I could execute data collection within those institutions.

A Risk-Averse Research Culture
Comparing the process of gaining ethics clearance in the two national contexts is particularly eye-opening for any researcher unfamiliar with the complexities of conducting research with children in an Australian landscape. In a country recognised for needing many of its bureaucratic institutions overhauled (Burgess 2010: 106), according to Etzioni-Halevy (2010) Australia employs more than twice the number of central government workers per 1000 head of the population than in the USA or the UK. Against this backdrop, it is unsurprising that obtaining institutional clearance in Australia bears little comparison to the UK. Unlike the ethics clearance document in the UK, which consisted of nine questions over a handful of pages, the form to obtain university clearance in Australia involved
completion of a 22-page document. Hence while the process from application to approval took six weeks in the UK for a similarly structured project just a year earlier, the Australian process in comparison took five months. The process involved submission of an incorrect form due to misinformation supplied by the Committee office, as well as issues of revisions arising for aspects not sufficiently detailed for the Committee’s requirements. An additional two months were required to extend clearance for interviewing children within a home setting, where a thorough and detailed explanation of the precise nature of the questions and the length of the time needed with participants were subjected to an intense scrutiny that was only finally overcome by a meeting with the Chair of the panel.

In many ways, this experience draws parallels with that of Lomas Scott and Fonseca (2011), who describe conducting research in the immensely risk-averse culture in Australia as “tip-toeing through a minefield.” (ibid.: 84) Conducting research with children in a state-run school setting, as was the case with this project, is further complicated by the need to obtain approval from the Department of Education in each state in which one wishes to work. In this particular instance, the board of Victoria should be commended for its swift turnaround in the processing and granting of approval. Although the school systems between the two nations are similar in kind, both structured around primary and high school settings, with the first of these running for children aged five to 11 and in the state of Victoria from aged six to 11/12, a requirement to obtain an additional layer of clearance is not present in the British context. Although this clearance is mandatory at the state level its granting does not aid the process of gaining access to specific schools. Where there is a duty to inform the Regional Director of Schools of one’s plans to conduct research in the local area, no further support or direction was provided in order to facilitate access, despite numerous attempts on my part to make contact with the regional office.

Once ethics and project approval have been granted from the relevant institutional bodies, a researcher is then in the position to approach schools, who in turn must also grant their own consent. Allied to this is the expectation of acquiring parental consent as well the assent of the individual children concerned via an information consent form running to three or four pages in length, further problematising the types and range of respondents a researcher can draw upon. This

13 If wishing to conduct research in Catholic or independent schools in Melbourne, DEECD clearance is not required. However, in the case of the former, Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) must be approached in order to seek approval, whereas those of the later kind can be approached directly. Once the issue of contacting state schools became apparent, clearance was sought and quickly granted from CEM, however of the many Catholic and independent schools approached directly, all declined to be involved in this project.
is evident from the differing approaches that principals from the participant schools took towards the execution of this project. Three of the schools, Bayview, Finley Central, and Shawcross Road, relied upon their standing consent with parents in order to furnish carrying out the first approach of this project, the questionnaires. It was only then, at the point of identifying which children were to progress with the creation of drawings and group interviews, was there an insistence on acquiring parental authorisation in order to continue. In this regard, the sample pool that I was able to drawn upon in order to progress with the further methodological approaches proved substantially greater within these three schools compared to the one where parental consent was required in the first instance (as detailed earlier in this chapter).

In many respects it is clear why such processes are in place for working with young children. Protection of their rights, as well commitment to their agentive potential, would all seem worthy goals. However, the processes within this Australian context would seem particularly obtuse and time-consuming. They must be factored into the research process in order to allow sufficient time and energy to receive ethics approval. My experience lends agreement to Catherine Scott's (2007) observation that ethics committees in this country appears more “dedicated to the prevention of research rather than its facilitation” (ibid.: 97). It would appear that ethics committees operating under a guise of protecting “vulnerable” participants are primarily concerned with mitigating an institution’s exposure to “risk.”

**Conclusion**

Throughout this thesis, the data accumulated are utilised in differing ways. Children’s drawings within this thesis have not been analysed as individual research objects. Instead, they are approached as visual representations of the narrative analysis and pattern recognition that emerges from the survey, (individual and group) interview data, and children’s own writings that were made to accompany these images. My analysis in Chapter 5 relies exclusively on children’s survey responses, while Chapters 6 and 7 are based on interview data and children’s own writings.

Before progressing, a note should be made regarding how this study refers to the sample group it engages. Where Boocock & Scott (2005) argue that the children they study are the ones best able to signal how they should be addressed, the most common self-reference of their participants, “kids,” takes precedence over “children” (although they do decide to use the terms interchangeably in their work). Although children in this Australian sample did refer to themselves and their peers in the
same manner, equally using the two terms (albeit infrequently), during my experience as an educator and researcher in the United Kingdom children only used the term “kid” or more usually “kiddies” as a pejorative and representative of a group they were not part of, one that is inferior to their current status. In light of this apparent cultural difference, the terms “children” and “young people” will be used interchangeably out of recognition for how children in Australia choose to recognise themselves but also as an acknowledgement of my own experiences of working with young people within a differing context that has ultimately provided the primary motive for conducting this current work.
4 Situating This Study: Class, Culture, and Education in Melbourne, Australia

Melbourne is not beautiful. The city is geographically bland, sprawling over a vast urban area. It has a bay that is functional but nondescript; beaches that are unglamorous. The weather is often terrible.... Sydney may have glitz, glamour, booming surf, sunshine and a sparkling harbour, but Melbourne has something more refined and civilised... [and it’s] the best city on the planet in which to live

(Josh Gordon – “Melbourne is Only the Most Liveable City if you Move in the Right Circle,” The Sydney Morning Herald 2014 Online)

If it isn’t its weather, its beaches, or aesthetic qualities that warrant such proclamations, then Melbourne must be doing something else very well in order to be named as the world’s most liveable city for the fourth consecutive year by the Economist Intelligence Unit. However, despite such acclaim, for its residents and many more visitors the city is also full of contradictions, as the quote above is quick to point out. Of the 4.35 million people who live within its greater metropolitan area, those who are not moving within the right circle, that is, its inner suburbs, would certainly find bones of contention to pick over before declaring such adulation of the city as a whole. Commute times by public transport, accessible train lines, affordable housing, and access to local services are all problems typically encountered by those beyond the city’s inner ring.

Across the city’s vast expanse, social stratification is in ample evidence, as suburb boundaries typically provided by major roads or highways indicate obvious markers based not only of class but also of ethnicity. This throws into question the often bandied “multicultural” tag assigned to the city, since many population centres remain heavily mono-culturally Anglo-Celtic in composition. This chapter performs the function of addressing the nuances of Melbourne, Australia, the sole location that provides the data for this study’s exploration of the televisual practices of the young as an exercise in media use and consumption. It starts out by framing the city in a national context and
then challenges the image of a “diverse” and “inclusive” city that has come to characterise its place on the global stage.

**The City in Context**

Melbourne is the capital and most populous city of the state of Victoria. It derived its name from a small British town in Derbyshire, following Queen Victoria’s decision in 1837 to honour one of her early political mentors, then Prime Minister William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne. Nestling against the banks of the Yarra River to the south, the tributary through which John Batman and the first settlers arrived, the city now encompasses a metropolitan area of 7,694 sq. km. Geographically, this makes the city the eighth largest in the world. With a population approaching almost four and half million people, nationally it is the second most lived-in greater capital city behind that of Greater Sydney. However, of all the country’s major cities it is the fastest growing, and is estimated to bypass the New South Wales capital sometime towards the middle of this century. As is reflective of the nation overall, Melbourne is made up of a highly migrant population. Among OECD nations Australia enjoys some of the world’s highest levels of foreign-born populations, and in the city of Melbourne as a whole more than three out of 10 residents can be classified as such, 10% more than the national average.

Compared to Sydney, the city with the “glitz, glamour... and surf,” Melbourne is home to a number of larger ethnic populations than its more northerly counterpart. The city contains the largest population of Greeks and Italians outside their home nations, and double the number of those found in Sydney. Likewise, those born in countries such as Britain, Vietnam, India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and the Netherlands tend to relocate to Melbourne in higher numbers than to its competitive sister city.
Generally speaking, the populations of Greater Melbourne are less well educated, less well renumerated, and have lower status jobs than those of Greater Sydney. Seemingly as a legacy of being the first city in the world in which unionised labour won the right to an eight hour day across a whole sector (the building industry), the city features more manual workers employed in occupations classified as technicians and trades, as well as sales staff. Additionally, part-time employment is a greater proportion of its overall workforce in comparison to that of Sydney. Comparing incomes equivalised by household, Greater Melbourne features more residents within the lowest group and fewer within the highest (see below). Given that it lacks the earning potential, the pull of better weather, and the surf of Sydney, why is Melbourne the most booming city in Australia? This question may possibly be answered by the cornucopia of culture it offers.

![Figure 4-1: Equivalised household comparing Sydney & Melbourne](Data source profile.com.au)

Widely considered to be the most cultural of all Australian cities, Melbourne is the home to the “national” game, Australian Rules Football (AFL / “footie”), as well as the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), the most capacious stadium in Australia and the eleventh largest in the world. The city also features as the first home of Australian film and television production, and its central plaza,
Federation Square, houses the Australian Centre for the Moving Image. Between 1901 and 1927 it held the position of the nation’s capital city. Its tram system ranks as the fourth largest in the world and the largest to be found outside Europe. Besides possessing almost double the number of universities than Sydney, it is also the second city, behind Edinburgh, to be awarded a UNESCO title of City of Literature. According to the website experienceoz.com.au, Melbourne also features the greatest number of cafes and restaurants per capita than anywhere else in the world. However, perhaps more important to Melburnians is its recognition as the nation’s coffee capital and of course its number one ranking with EIU. In addition to its consecutive run in the top spot, it has also figured in the EIU’s top three ranking since 2002 (Wikipedia). The EIU also ranks Melbourne as the eighth most expensive city in the world, and it has held a position amongst the top 10 since 2011.

The Lay of the Land

Greater Melbourne is primarily divided into four zones. These radiate outwards from Melbourne City Centre, which houses the metropolitan’s main economic, financial, and political centres within its Central Business District. This serves as the heart of the inner suburb of the municipality of the City of Melbourne, an area covering 37.6 sq. km. Under the Melbourne Statistical Division, which covers the whole of the metropolitan area, the city stretches 75 kilometres eastwards from the CBD through its middle and outer suburbs, while those of the north and west are approximately 50km from its centre (Davies 2010). Despite this vast expanse of land, Greater Melbourne is generally considered to consist of just the two rings, the inner and outer / greater. The figure below designates these areas are designated in yellow and blue, and indicate the approximate locations of the primary data collection sites to be discussed later in this chapter.

A City of Enclaves

Many of the characteristics of Melbourne’s population, as described above, mark it as a “global city.” According to the Urban Immigrant Index, as devised by Benton-Short, Price and Friedman (2005)¹⁵, the city would be categorised as one that is Alpha in nature, one of only 10 worldwide. This is due to the high levels of foreign-born people in the city, both in terms of numbers and percentage of the overall population, and the fact that their relocation has predominately occurred from non-neighbouring nations (ibid.). Since the city bears many obvious signs of cosmopolitanism, and few overt signs of hostility between its multi-ethnic populations, a claim of “Multicultural Melbourne” may well appear valid on some level (Collins et al. in Marotta 2007: 44).

¹⁵ Australia is only one of three nations to possess two or more cities to be classified as such (Benton-Short et al. 2005).
However, when examined more closely, Melbourne’s migrant populations still resemble the settler patterns of its past, with common language and ethnic groups dispersed throughout the city. In contrast, Sydney appears to be engaging in greater levels of spatial desegregation (Hugo 2008). Alongside claims that more languages are spoken in Melbourne than there are countries in the world, a recent article appearing in the *Sydney Herald* (Butt & Worall 2014) provides a particularly tangible reminder of the way in which multiculturalism is defined by enclaves within the city. This article claims that, across Melbourne’s metropolitan area containing at least 1,200 suburbs, the city’s Somali speaking population are localised to just 44 suburbs.

More generally, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, particular areas of the city can be associated with foreign-born nationals from specific regions or countries, who are largely localised to the north, east, and west. Hence Middle Eastern migrants are commonly found in the northern suburbs, whereas Filipinos tend to be concentrated in the outer-west suburbs. Likewise, those born in Malta are seen in greater numbers in the western suburbs. There they account for five per cent of the area’s total population, while making up only 1.6% of the city’s overall population. Some of the largest overseas born populations of the city, that is, those coming from China and Vietnam, account for more than a fifth of the total population of particular suburbs. In Box Hill to the east of the city, Chinese-born persons account for 22.3% of the whole suburb, whereas those from Vietnam account for the identical number of the population in Springvale to the south east of the city (ABS 2014a). In these two particular locations the concentration of foreign-born populations has resulted in non-English speakers featuring more prominently in Box Hill homes than English speakers, and in Springvale 80% of inhabitants speaks an additional language to English.

In the same way in which ethnic enclaves have developed based on shared language or culture, even within the city’s inner suburbs there are many that remain resolutely mono-cultural. For example, within some of the city’s inner suburbs located just 10km or less from its centre, there are areas that are dominated by Anglo-Celtic populations. For example, the inner suburbs of Fairfield in the north-east, Kooyong in the south-east, and Middle Park in the south, all feature populations where at least 91% of its inhabitants’ ancestry is classified as English, Australian, Scottish, or Irish.

Economic opportunity follows a similar path. As Moratta (2007) points out, within the inner suburbs where overseas born populations are the greatest, fewer individuals earn one thousand Australian dollars or more per week. Similarly, suburbs that encounter greater disadvantage and
feature lower on the city’s “Socio-Economic Indexes For Areas” are ones with larger ethnic minority populations. Likewise, suburbs where populations have the lowest levels of education and unemployment are typically those where multi-ethnicity is at its highest (ibid.). The implication, following Horst’s (2014) observation, is that within the inner cities of Anglo nations a brand of cosmopolitanism may well exist that is attached to different socioeconomic groups. An example of this can be found within the City of Melbourne’s local government authority, where the areas of Carlton and Southwest Parkville are both placed in the bottom half of the ABS’s Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) when compared to the municipality as a whole. With both containing higher levels of non-English speakers within the home than the 29.1% city-wide average, both encounter unemployment rates that are more than double of those found more generally, with the most disadvantaged of these, Southwest Parkville, encountering higher levels of both unemployment and non-English speakers.

Having situated Melbourne as a global city, one in which consumption opportunities and its participation very much define its existence, the remainder of this chapter will further situate the specific sites where data collection for this work takes place. The schools and homes that form the backdrop to this are embedded within four very different milieus, offering a diverse sample pool principally in terms of economic, cultural, and social composition. The attempt here is not to capture any population group that can be described as typically Australian or Melbournian, if such a thing is actually possible. Instead, these sites represent the polyglot nature of a city and country that, despite any contrary discourses, is embedded in clearly evident class divisions. Before focusing upon the schools and neighbourhoods from which the children of this study emerge, I will frame the context of education in order to situate the systems within which they operate.

**Education**

Australian schools are governed by education departments run by each of the country’s six states. Although there are slight state variations as to the actual ages when school begins and finishes, effectively education is compulsory for children aged between six and 16, Year 1 through to 9 or 10, with Years 11 and 12 optional at a senior secondary school or college. Primary school traditionally runs for seven or eight years starting with non-compulsory “Kindy” (Kindergarten / Preparatory) and

16 In Australia, three levels of governance are in operation, with federal and then state governments being the broadest, and local government areas most commonly referred to as shire, council, or city being the lowest. In Victoria 79 of these exist.
running to Year 6 in the state of Victoria, after which time children enter secondary school, most commonly referred to as High School, at 12 or 13 years of age. According to the 2014 Human Development Report on Human Progress, Australia is ranked second only to Norway in terms of the quality of its education provision. In Victorian government primary schools, class sizes stand at 22 students, a figure that has remained stable since at least 2009 (DEECD 2013a). This compares to 21.2 children found within American public elementary schools\(^\text{17}\) (NCES 2014) and 27 in the UK (DFE 2011).

The Australian Government provides funding for all schools, with individual states responsible for their administration as well as regulation of the state / public / government schools under their control. This function is performed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) in Victoria. Both the state’s 1,130 government and 422 non-government schools (Catholic and Independent) are expected to adhere to the same curriculum frameworks and are able to draw upon Commonwealth and State Government grants as additional funding sources. In the case of the former, any additional income can be raised through voluntary levies or gifts, as well as community fund-raising activities, which often form key elements in the generation of extra revenues. These principally take the form of annual summer entertainment extravaganzas, typically scaled upwards to be recognised as particularly prominent community events. Independent schools, on the other hand, are able to charge fees as and when required in order to meet the financial demands placed on their institutions.

In order to access particular sources of government funding with an aim of reducing inequalities among Victorian schools through the state's Student Resource Package, each state school is obligated to provide detailed information on its student body. This is to ensure that extra funds are targeted at schools where the density of students from disadvantaged backgrounds is at its highest (DEECD 2013b). Parents of students are required to provide, in addition to demographic information including home language and country of birth, details on their occupational position, non-school based qualifications, and their highest level of school education completed. This is to ensure that the Student Family Occupation (SFO) can be attributed to one of five occupational groups, and the level of parental income is not taken as the prime factor in determining a school’s place in the Index. Any school’s SFO entitlement is based on the weighting of each occupational category of all its students compared to state-wide medians, with parents who are not

\[\text{17 Within the US schooling primary system, elementary years traditionally run for children aged 5 to 6 and 10 to 12 dependent upon state provision.}\]
working receiving the highest weighting. This can entail schools within the most deprived areas receiving as much as AU$205 per student per annum.

At present, all Australian states adhere to the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy tests (NAPLAN), which are administered annually to children in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9. These focus on the areas of reading, writing, language conventions, and numeracy. However, there is an expectation rather than an obligation for children to sit these tests, with children being withdrawn if parents believe testing is not suitable on religious or philosophical grounds. Likewise, whole schools can also opt out based upon these same principles. Although the vast majority of primary aged children take part in this testing process (in Victoria between 94-95% of those in Years 3 and 5 do so), the general trend in participation rates since their introduction in 2008 has been downwards. This situation has been welcomed by the small but vociferous “Say No To NAPLAN” campaign active in the media and among Australian academics, 107 of whom have signed their support against their administration (literacyeducators.com). Although schools face no direct penalties for refusing to administer the test[^18], NAPLAN scores are used as a key comparison indicator for school performance on many of the prominent school information portals such as myschool.edu.au and better.education.com.au.

All the schools in this study are located within the Greater Melbourne area and are classed as government (financed) schools, and all are mixed gender. Two of the schools are located in its inner suburbs, east, and west, and two from its outer, north-east, and south-east suburbs. (Figure 4-2 above) provides a visual representation of their spatial location within the city.

[^18]: If individual parents still desire their children to sit the tests, schools must provide for those needs.
Schools of This Study

Highland Primary

Figure 4-3: Front of Highland School

Figure 4-4: Highland's grounds

Figure 4-5: Highland’s motto
Highland Primary is the most geographically distant of all the schools in this study. It is located approximately 35km from the city’s central area. Set in idyllic surroundings, the school and the small quiet strip it sits upon could easily be from another era, a postcard moment featuring the traditional butcher and baker. Here, life moves at its own very particular pace and literally everybody knows each other’s names. Located on the fringes of the city, it is easy to see how the area of this largely rural setting is ranked as one of the best places to live in Victoria. With a population density at least 10 times less than any of our other school locations, this is a land of local farmers markets, horse-rides, and baking sales. With large, well-proportioned properties a mainstay of the area, it is easy to see why a quarter of its population is less than 17 years of age, offering as it does ample space for children to play in front and rear gardens.

This is also the location of successful blue collar workers who are likely to have been educated to vocational level and gravitated towards work in the construction sector, or who are otherwise principally employed as technicians and trades workers. Education beyond compulsory schooling is not a feature of the population here, although vocational qualifications are twice the level of anywhere else, as well as being higher than the Greater Melbourne average. Unsurprisingly, this location features the highest number of households within the medium income bracket. Due to its location, car transportation and multiple car-ownership is prevalent, and households are more likely to contain three vehicles or more rather than just one. Likewise, the idea of a non-car household is particularly anathema as practically none are found without one. This school can be described as being medium to large in nature with its 416 enrolments. This is the size of school that has seen the greatest level of increase nationally since 2003.
Figure 4-7: Bayview's main entrance

Figure 4-8: ICT suite at Bayview
If Highland can be described as a rural ideal, then the area sounding Bayview is its suburban equivalent. However, in contrast to the rolling fields of the former, these residents have well-tended beaches and sailboats just a few blocks away. Here the gum trees and the conifers stand broader and their foliage is more pronounced than in other areas of the city, and the streets are that little bit wider and tidier. There is a small country town air to the place, but one that is obviously affluent in nature as the “Toorak Tractors” (SUVs / four-by-fours) compete for prominence against shiny, two-door sports cars in the amply proportioned double-fronted garages. This is where the manager class is in situ and where the greatest number of stay-at-home parents can be found.

Although there are more family-sized three and four bedroom homes surrounding Highland School, they are a more common occurrence in the spacious and ostentatious suburbs surrounding Bayview Primary. As such, one is just as likely to find multiple houses with five bedrooms as ones with just one or two. Similarly, properties owned outright are a greater feature of the housing tenure landscape than those having to contend with monthly mortgage payments. But of those that do pay mortgages, many more households are paying at the very top end of mortgage repayments across the city. This is the largest of all the schools in this study with a student body standing at 553 children, and the one with the most balanced gender profile, since it features 275 girls and 271 boys. In addition, at year end 2012, close to AU$3.8 million was received from government and state funding.
Figure 4-10: Main entrance to Finley Central

Figure 4-11: View from Finley's front gate
Finley Central is the smallest of all four schools within this study, with a student body consisting of just 165 children. Similar to Highland, the school has a gender imbalance in favour of boys, with approximately 15% more than girls. This school, located in the western part of the city, sits just a few blocks north of the Princess Highway. Travelling just a little further to the south, the M1 highway can
be found. These two trunk roads are some of the city's most important arteries, since they link all aspects of the city and its surrounding areas. The River Yarra is a short distance way, with access to the bay not far beyond. But unlike the leisure boats that frequent the water line close to Bayview Primary, only major transport ships cruise these waters. Although the school itself sits on a relatively quiet street that is equidistant between those two busy thoroughfares, the surrounding area is defined by its proximity to its many major transport hubs. Manufacturing, both heavy and light, is a feature of the locale, as is the major road freight that continuously makes its way to the varied transport depots, business parks, and refineries that dot the vast industrial spaces that define this part of the city.

Unsurprisingly, this is a destination that parents of school aged children do not flock to in great numbers. Here the proportion of households with children aged 14 and younger is almost half that of Highland’s. Walking around the school, this is made obvious as significant portions of the building remain dormant, where space is given over to a local language organisation in order to facilitate an air of use and productivity. Within the local population, a greater portion of residents are born overseas than in Australia. Where 46% of the student body has a language background other than English—a mirror image of the local population as a whole—efforts to facilitate young children gaining language skills before entering mainstream education seem prudent. Unsurprisingly, with these barriers to participation within the local population, the residents of this community are just as likely to have no qualifications as opposed to a Bachelor degree or higher. Unemployment rates are between three and four times higher than that of our other sites and more than double of those across Greater Melbourne as a whole. Against this climate, the school receives approximately 33% more money per student from the Australian Government than any of the other schools in this study, and between 35% and 66% more than other schools in the state of Victoria.
Figure 4-14: Front of Shawcross Road

Figure 4-15: Quadrangle at Shawcross Road
Parallel to Finley on the other side of the city and just a little further to the north, Shawcross School also has to contend with the meandering Route 83 on its doorstep. Here, however, it merges into the most major eastern highway and acts as a gateway to the affluent and greened suburbs of the northeast. Unlike the choking traffic that seems to hem in Finley, Shawcross enjoys a huge expanse of green as there is a nature reserve at the bottom of the school’s street to the west. To the east, a stylish and chic, locally owned parade of shops can be found that have now acquired the status of Shawcross Village. In the surrounding streets an eclectic mix of Victorian wrought iron fenced-in...
cottages can be found alongside large-blocked, double-fronted properties, as well as recently converted modern warehouse spaces that sell in the region of AU$1.5 million dollars. All of this contributes to making the area one of the most desirable of the city’s inner suburbs, and one in which gay and lesbian residents have always been made to feel welcome.

Although the communities of both Bayview and Shawcross are approximately three quarters Australian born, the latter features a much greater number of speakers of languages other than English. This is in contrast to the annual reports for each school that claim a mid-proportion of their students are considered to have English as a second language. In addition, the households of Shawcross can also claim to be better educated and better numerated than that elsewhere. In terms of higher education, more than half possess an undergraduate degree or higher. Although earners at the very highest level and with the biggest mortgages can be found in Bayview, equivalised household income (i.e., the economic comparative analysis if all households were the same) would actually be substantially greater in Shawcross.

Under the same form of comparison, Bayview would also have a greater number of people within the lowest income group. However, it would appear that enhanced economic capital amongst its residents does not transfer to property ownership, as renting is the most common form of household tenure, where homes being bought or already owned are 30% less common than compared to the Bayview neighbourhood. Whereas Bayview is renowned as a bastion of Liberal conservatism, Shawcross is a hotbed of bohemianism and left-leaners—commonly referred to as the “latte set” and “Chardonnay socialists”—consistently returning Labour Party candidates in elections to local and state assemblies. This is also the school that features the largest number of girls in relation to boys, 23% more in fact, and where parents contribute more per child to the school’s annual income levels, 14% more than Bayview’s and 17% more than Highland’s parents.

Each of these schools, with the exception of Finley Central, are rated as high in terms of their Student Family Occupation Index for the overall socio-economic profile for its student body. This includes the portion of their student body who speak a language other than English at home. The highest of these is at Shawcross Road, with 11% of its children; the lowest at Highland, with 7%, and at Bayview with 10% of its enrolled students. But, as should be clear, the neighbourhoods that give rise to these cultures offer particularly classed positions. Educational and economic opportunities figure highly in the life-worlds of the residents of Bayview and Shawcross. This is in marked contrast
to those of Finley, where a lack of language skills and educational attainment impact opportunities for advancement. In this light, the ecologies of the first two schools, Bayview and Shawcross Road, shall be termed higher class, while Finley Central shall be termed lower class. Due to its successful but largely non-managerial populace, Highland shall, in this work, be characterised as middle class. These profiles, which detail the neighbourhood ecologies of these schools, serve the purpose of anchoring the differing lived contexts in which the children discussed in this thesis emerge. Although households may act as mediators to these value-systems, they can be considered as neither unique nor original, but rather framed through the interactions of the differing ecological contexts, such as neighbourhood and school, which a child can be considered part of (Bronfenbrenner 1979).

**Schools’ Cultures**

**Culture Via its Fabric**

Within childhood studies the location of a school can be read as a principal characteristic of Western modernity in relation to children’s lives. It represents, as Jens Qvortrup (2009a) argues, the new primary site where children’s “obligatory” labour becomes most visible—a replacement of the more public locations where the young typically expelled their efforts in pre-industrial eras. Hence the “manual activities” that once characterised children’s contributions to a household and community are exchanged for “mental activities” located in the schools that emerge from industrialisation (Qvortrup 2005: 5, 2009a). This results in a shift in labour potential from the present towards future possibilities, where possible rewards are not only funnelled towards direct benefit of the household as in previous eras, but instead society becomes the main beneficiary of future labour and taxation possibilities (Qvortrup 2009a).

In many ways, school classrooms can be viewed as the shop floor of these new labour institutions, which stand as incubators of the value systems of the social contexts that give rise to them. As educationalist Jerome Bruner (1996) points out, schools represent constructions “not only of our worlds but our very conceptions of ourselves and our powers,” and as such represent major sites in which reproduction of the wider cultural systems take place (Bourdieu & Passerson 2000). As such, schools can be considered as incubators for bonding social capital, where “solidarity” emerges “on shared group styles, practise and tokens” (Collins in Pugh 2011: 14). In this section I discuss how the value systems at play within the four data collection points of this thesis are reflective of the wider communities in which they are based. This provides clues as to the consumption practices that
become evident later in this work. Through investigation of the schools’ “culturalism,” as Bruner (1996) terms the circulation of culture present within these institutions, the economic resources a school can call upon, its staff, and how physical structures are organised and classrooms arranged, all play a part in understanding the reflection and reproduction of a school’s wider value systems (Bourdieu & Passerson 2000; Bruner 1996).

To return to the analogy of schools as modern workplaces, Shawcross Road can be described as the new-funky-creative work-play-space that gained prominence during the dot.com era. Entering one of the school’s main teaching spaces is akin to entering one of these contemporary shop floors, still populated by hipsters, but just in miniaturised forms. Any gentility that pervades the streets surrounding the school grounds is left far behind once the principal’s office and school’s reception are passed, and one encounters the first of the school’s four main teaching areas or “lounges” spread across two blocks rebuilt in the 1970s as a result of fire damage. Bedecked with sofas, beanbags, and other forms of comfortable seating, entering these spaces one is greeted by a wall of sound, matched only by an array of colours and clothing fashions. Rather than uniform shorts and school jumpers, the mainstay of the typical Australian primary, waistcoats, fedoras, and panama hats appear to be the attire of the season. Unsurprisingly, traditional classrooms are anathema and have been since completion of the new buildings. In its place there are multi-age teaching spaces occupied by children as young as prep right the way through to Year Six. This is the “hippy school,” as 11-year-old Willows Henderson chooses to describe it. Willows is a precocious female blogger who will soon make her way into a local high school renowned for its performing arts program, and is a voice to be heard from in much detail throughout the course of this work.

As a teacher myself, one used to the formalities of an English classroom, the absence of school uniform and teachers referred to by their first names is something to become quickly acclimatised to and instantly feels refreshing. However, the level of noise between the children within the different spaces is high, and to me would appear problematic if required to teach within such an environment on a regular basis. But the teaching staff, who vary in terms of gender and age, and many of whom have held posts in the school for substantial periods of time, are all quite adamant that this is something to which one quickly becomes accustomed. This style of schooling, as well as a liberal use of team-teaching, is meant to encourage development of more rounded children, as staff are proud to point out. Children act both as learners and mentors where skills of sharing, caring, and creativity take priority, since younger and older children often intermingle as
they move throughout the differing spaces. Adopting a model more common to that found in northern Europe (Sefton-Green 2013: 76), such approaches to schooling are perceived as having comparable outcomes in numeracy and literacy to mainstream schools (da Silva 2005; Tattam 2003). Emphasis is placed on the creative arts, particularly drama and music, and performances by the various creative groups feature regularly throughout the school year. Unsurprisingly, with the school’s ethos focused on nurturing individuals in a holistic fashion, any attempts at formal grading and standardised testing have long been shunned, and the setting of homework is eschewed until children reach the later school years. Soon after the millennium, the school rebelled against the Victorian State Government’s attempts to introduce an A to E report card system as a means of formalising academic achievement, and refused to provide any comparable monitoring system for children’s progress. More recently, attempts to have students tested within the national NAPLAN system (as discussed above) have been rejected by the school on philosophical grounds, although there are still a small number of parents who insist that their children do so, and the school is obligated to cater for these parents' wishes.

The school is also marked by the lack of technology present within its fabric. Whereas children in other schools are able to easily call upon a range of electronic devices such as digital cameras, scanners, video cameras, and even iPads, such items are conspicuous by their absence at Shawcross. There is a modest bank of computers set between the differing teaching zones, making the ratio of computers to children approximately one to eight. An obvious marker that ICT is not a key feature within this school is reinforced by the absence of the subject in the curriculum in the school timetable. Likewise, no place is found for interactive whiteboards, which have been present in every UK classroom since the beginning of my own teaching practice in 2005, and which have become a more prominent feature within the Victorian schools landscape since around 2008. Some parents may be aghast at this absence of technology within the school, instigating fears of their children being left behind as a case of “technophobia of the future” (Marshall in Valentine & Holloway 2001), but for others this is merely a reflection of their own views and experiences. For Rebecca Heston, Willows’ mother, who herself went to an “alternative” school as she describes her schooling in the 70s, this school’s approach to technology with its awarded “budget of $1500,” although “fucking ridiculous” for a state school of its kind, is not perceived as out of place or inherently problematic for the school she has chosen to send her two children to:
I think a lot of people have a lot of technology in their lives at home and do they really need it at the school. I don’t think my kids will be set back by not having access to it at school.

A similar recognition of this inter-relationship between the cultural setting of the school and of the system of the home is further evidenced when Rebecca discusses the school’s stance on advocating exclusion from the state-sponsored NAPLAN tests. Reflecting Sefton-Green’s (2013) observation that such tests represent “proxy forms of learning,” Rebecca’s attitude chimes not only with the values of her own education and past, but also her current positioning, both of which see little value in her children sitting these tests as they would contribute little to their educational development:

I said no, I don’t want my kids to do it [NAPLAN tests]… you get results 5 to 6 months later, so what is the relevance, schools teaching to the test, and also… and well… some schools are judged and eventually rewarded for where that puts you, and I think that’s the wrong way to teach.

Under Bruner’s (1996) cultural psychology of education, the way in which Shawcross approaches teaching could be considered, of all the schools within this study, as the one that most obviously sets out to establish “mutual learning cultures,” described by Bruner as the process whereby “learners help each other to learn” (ibid.: 21). According to David H. Hargreaves (1995) in his discussion of the topologies of school cultures, this informal and relaxed atmosphere within the school, alongside the focus on individual child development, would peg Shawcross as a school with a focus on high expressive and low social control functions—one where its charges are encouraged to express themselves in a climate of reassurance and acceptance.

The Display of Culture
As homes communicate their value systems (e.g., Douglas 1991), so too do schools set expectations and coordinate their functioning. For example, Bayview, which under Hargreaves’ taxonomy could be said to lend itself to a greater focus on instrumental functions with its resultant interest in individual performance, this is made clear through the way in which the school chooses to present itself through its website. As a symbolic representation of the institution, its website aids the process of institutionalisation by infusing the values (Selznick 1949 / 1980) relevant to the school, reinforcing and transmitting the shared belief systems, values, and norms that perpetuate these institutions.
The focus on personal endeavour, which is a heightened cultural feature of Bayview, is communicated by the images most prominently positioned on the various sections of its website. Here three different school settings are utilised, amongst these photographs two of which prove most telling in defining its cultural position. In one, four young boys are observed huddled in a playground, heads bowed over their textbooks and writing away feverishly, focused on their work without distraction. Seemingly with no teacher in tow to keep them on task, they appear to be self-motivated, hard-working, and dedicated individuals. Oblivious to any sentiment of fun that a typical playground space may offer these children, they appear content, and with the corners of their mouths tipping upwards they capture a level of satisfaction, if not rapture, with their preoccupations.

A similar scene is presented in another of these prominently featured images on the school’s website, but transposed to a classroom setting. In this case, a number of children are captured while focused on their work in front of them, again without an overseeing teacher figure present. In the centre, two boys are standing shoulder-to-shoulder, engaging in the task at hand. Although it is unclear whether these are joint or individual pieces of work, the proximity of the children to each other indicates a telling association with work. Whereas young boys are typically seen to be under-performing academically compared to young girls in both the UK and Australia (especially among lower class groups) (Mickelson 2008; Mills et al. 2009), and are also perceived as favouring playfulness and lacking focus (Honig 2006; Pellegrini 1995), the resonance of both images, this one more so than the other, is that boys within this school are dedicated to the processes of work. Hence despite the distractions that boys typically encounter within the school setting, such as play and distracting friendship groups, work takes precedence over all of these. Personal motivation is figured within the school’s representations as central to young boys’ place within the school, rather than it being coordinated and orchestrated by adults.

Just as institutionalised values that may be regarded as positive are being communicated within an online presence, as with Bayview, the reverse is also true in a context such as Finley Central. This location has to contend with a whole different set of issues, such as the scarcity of wealth evident in the surrounding neighbourhood ecosystem the school. The school has places for 600 students, but it operates at less than a third of its capacity. Ensnconed within its environment of poor economic and educational opportunities, the school is, unsurprisingly, only able to generate a small amounts of locally raised funds from parents and other avenues, at rates between 10 and 14 times less than the other schools of this study. As with a dearth of income, absence is a key feature in
the way the school presents itself via its website. Although its website’s construction bears structural similarities to each of the other schools’, for example, containing sections about the school, information for parents, and its curriculum, the lack of content overall present within those pages when compared to other schools is a reflection of the school itself. This provides an aesthetic reminder of the emptiness lying at the very centre of the school and the wider system of which it is part.

Instead, other signifiers are communicated that take precedence within the culture of this school. Unlike images used elsewhere, which perpetuate themes of whiteness among the other schools, the ones used here by Finley are populated by children of obvious ethnic diversity. This is a reflection of the diverse cultural milieu that is a feature of the local population. Whereas industriousness figures as a key motif for Bayview, at Finley Central differing value systems are clearly in evidence. Instead, the process of play, the construction of art, and the use of technology are made most prominent in the images on display. The first two of these indicate that fun-based activities are the ones through which the school defines itself. Unsurprisingly, the presence of teachers is made more visible within these spaces, providing the impression of paternalism, and that support is needed in the guiding of those under their care, connotations not in consideration anywhere among the images through which Bayview chooses to present of itself.

In many ways, Finley bears the traits of what Hargreaves (1995) terms a school exhibiting a survivalist culture. The air of depressed opportunities present in the wider system is reflected within the very fabric of this school. Student absenteeism, a principal descriptor under this definition, is at its highest when compared to all the other schools of this study, and the number of students enrolled has halved in the last four years. Further reinforcing this view of crisis, staff willingness to take industrial action for want of better pay would seem to strike a similar chord. Similarly, within this community, where newspapers serve as propagators and reinforcers of the cultural systems of which they are part (Cohen & Young 1981; Hall et al. 1978; Hartley 1982), the way in which local journalists report the activities of the schools in their neighbourhood proves telling. Whereas those in the case of Bayview are happy to regale stories of the school’s students’ success on the rugby field, or their participation in charity events, or which professional opportunities may lie before those new entrants into the school, those at Finley reinforce very different value systems. Mention of the school’s name is in the context of headlines proclaiming “School in Turmoil” alongside parents stating their unhappiness at the way the school was previously structured. Likewise, this is the only
school of the four to be named in reports pertaining to the 30,000-strong state-wide day of action taken by teaching staff in 2013.

In lieu of these difficulties the school encounters, technology is the literal and metaphorical “fix” through which these problems can be alleviated. As a trial school and early adopter operating under the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s iPads for learning initiative, each child is asked to “bring your own device” (BYOD) or is provided with one depending on personal circumstances in order to support their school-based learning. Where the DEECD frames use of digital technologies as preparing young people for participation in a world that will be increasingly founded on such tools (ipadsforeducation.vic.edu.au), the prominence in which this figures through Finley’s website communicates particular meaning in light of its circumstances. In this regard, technology can be seen as the primary means through which educational and social inequality can be alleviated (Kelley-Salinas 2000; De Ferranti 2003). Of course, this intention—that all can be rescued if technology is utilised in the “right” way—can be very different from the reality of how children make use of digital technology (Lally 2002). Thus whereas the DEECD may have worthy goals of preparing a digitally literate student body, the literacy that it may be propagating may not be of the “serious” kind as intended.

Interestingly, the experience of some of the children in this context parallels the feelings expressed by parents of first-generation Latino migrants in Los Angeles. In those cases, where a lack of access opportunities is evident, the hope is for children to make the best use of their online opportunities in order to support school work as opposed to more “fun”-based activities (Tripp 2010). In the Australian context, Mich (a 9-year-old boy from Finley Central whose background is from a more established working class Southern European settler community) appears to hold true to these migrant values of the importance of education. It also demonstrates the increased prosperity that may come with prolonged settlement. As part of the school’s involvement in the iPad program, he is able to call upon his father’s tablet, laying symbolic claim to it, while at the same time Mich bemoans the presence of this device at school as only seeming to result in increased leisure use. This is in opposition to greater engagement with his studies and has lead to a general sense of apathy with the technology:

Mich: I would try and use it [my iPad] a bit more... for other stuff, not just games coz, games can get boring and then you have to do your homework and stuff like that... I think I’d like to use it more. Recently at home I haven’t been using it
much except for games, not for homework or anything. I’d like our teacher to ask us to do something on the iPad or something like that... Say there’s this website or something, it can help us learn, or anything like that you know

Me: Does that happen now at all, or not enough?

Mich: Not enough. There’s this thing called Reading Eggs and she sent us a note to go home for our password, but she didn’t say to use it. [I’d like to use it for lots of different things]

This experience of Mich, and of those of the lower class children in Los Angeles, proves particularly telling, for it demonstrates a possible trajectory such children may encounter as they move from online and technological scarcity to one of plenitude. For although increased economic opportunities may offer opportunities for greater participation in online practices, and despite the desire to make use of those, the way in which the home, children, and the school institution intersect within differing classed positions can be particularly divergent (Lareau 2000).

Cultural Symbols

In addition to these particularly outwardly-facing symbols of deeper meaning to schools’ culture, as presented through their websites, these institutions are also able to embody their cultural positioning through more inward-looking motifs. Taking up the notion of how schools work to create narratives of themselves (Bruner 1996), Deal (1999) points to a range of signs scattered throughout the institution that further help to link and reinforce its meaning-making potential as part of the ecosystem it arises from and reinforces. These may act as amplifiers to encourage accomplishment, or add understanding of a school’s history, both positive and negative. Deal views these as a “critical” element to gaining “a deep understanding of the culture in a school” (ibid.: 48). Thus there are a number of artefacts present within these schools that add layers of meaning to understanding their positioning. It is such “symbolic frames,” where there is the ability to “focus attention on meaning and symbols, rituals, ceremonies [and] stories,” that Deal argues contribute to value setting, the qualities an organisation stands for, and the conditioning of behaviour within it (ibid.: 9).

In this light, objects such as school signs serve to signal how a school wishes to frame its value systems. Thus the “Welcome” sign made up of discarded recycled materials that overhangs the entrance to Shawcross Road (Figure 4-14) stands for the green ethos that is at the heart of this school, recognised as such by its receipt of sustainability awards and its Edible Garden. This project
features as a principal plank of its curriculum, and all children play a part in the garden’s seeding and nurturing, as well as the eating of its produce. Furthermore, the non-linearity of the placing of the sign’s letters further indicates the alternative, non-traditionalist approaches that the school engages, marking its place as a bastion of non-conformity. This is despite the identical pupil demographic it draws upon when compared with Bayview, where both schools have the same level of students who feature in the two middle and top quarters of the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage.

Bayview, a school that can be characterised by its traditionalism and air of tranquillity, does much to reinforce these values through its own small but well-maintained front entrance (Figure 4-7). As part of its physical legacy to its Victorian past, dating back to its very inception, it would appear that little has changed from the images contained on the school’s website, which capture the school from its earliest days. However, the centrality and scale of the newly built library (Figure 4-9) and adjoining well-equipped ICT lounge (Figure 4-8) act as markers of their relative importance to the school’s outlook, despite it being one of the oldest in the state. Throughout the school, the link with its past is further in evidence. The vast trees that adorn its perimeter remain from their planting by a former principal in the 1930s. Linkages and the honouring of what came before, or a “prologuing the past,” as Deal (1999) puts it, is further reinforced by the prominence of this feature in the school’s badge, an emblem connecting it to the present, as well as the woodlands from which the school originally sprang.

At Highland, a school that emanates from a very different ecosystem compared to the others, there is a symbolic and literal framing of physicality that mirrors its placement in the community of which it is a part. The school grounds are vast. To the front and left side of the school there is a wide expanse of space for children to play. Moving around to the rear, one is greeted by a well-equipped playground with four separate sets of fixed playground facilities for the younger children to enjoy. Moving further on, there are two all-weather basketball courts and three other similar surfaces of various sizes and markings. There is also a long jump pit as well as a separate sand area, numerous covered seating areas, with a footie (AFL) oval occupying one corner, in addition to two sets of climbing frames. Added to this can be found a landscaped garden including large planting areas growing all manner of beans and seeds. In short, this is a space for children to be active and involved—a place for the body and its exertion. This is further reinforced by the school’s honour wall to the immediate left of the main entrance, which highlights the many sporting achievements the school has enjoyed in the past.
Opposite this, immediately prominent on entering the school, is the phrase “imagine believe achieve” (Figure 4-5). In conjunction with the accent on the physical and the active, which are the focus of the honour wall and grounds of the school, this becomes an interesting referent point when considering how these attributes figure in the predominate occupational roles that people in the immediate ecosystem enjoy. In a sense, this sign is advocating aspirational goals albeit within the wider occupational contexts of which this school is embedded. “Imagine” you can become someone whose productive labour is focused on the physical and manual, “believe” these are the roles most suitable for you, “achieve” that which is most abundantly present within the life-worlds within which we as a school, and you within a community, are based. Thus the sign can be perceived as privileging the manual-based occupations of the majority of the local populace—a literal embodiment of the ecologies of the home, school, and neighbourhood—one in which the experience of the televisual will almost certainly play a part. An example of this is manifested in the words of Tony Whatt, an 11-year-old boy from the school, as he discusses why Scottie from the reality TV programme *The Block* is the most favourite character he likes to view. This character is representative of these overlapping and cross-fertilising cultures of which Tony is part:

*He’s like the host of The Block and he works for Mitre 10. He’s really funny. I like his character. It’s not like, he’s an actor, it’s an actual show where they renovate houses. I want to be a tradie (trades worker), and he’s a tradie, so yeah I could [be a tradie]....I was watching BTN, Behind The News in school and they were thinking about jobs, and you know work-experience, and I saw someone being a tradie then I went home and I was like I wanna be a tradie, and that’s all I’ve ever wanted to be since then....I’ve been watching the show [The Block] since 2010.... I started watching it in 2010 with my grandma. My grandma came to my house and showed me The Block and I started to get into it, and I’ve been watching it from 2010 to this year. The Block just supported [my idea of being a Tradie]*
This is an example of the mutual reinforcement that takes place at the varying levels of ecosystems of which a child is at the centre. Favouring a particular televisual character, enjoyment of a particular show, cannot simply be read as an expression of vacuous personal choice, consumption compromises within the context of the household, peer relationships, or any other influences that may be attributed as a factor in those choices. As Shirley Brice Heath (1983) has pointed out, value systems are profoundly influenced by the community of which a young person is part. Where the school acts as a key institution within this, it works as a conduit towards framing these values and setting cultural tones (Bourdieu & Passerson 2000). These values are, in turn, set through the “triumphs and tragedy” that schools encounter, accumulating in the stories schools tell of and to themselves, both through symbols but also in the actual retelling of events. These, for Deal, are the “cultural codes” that are transmitted throughout the very fabric of the institution (Deal 1999). The values and belief systems of a school are projected by its people, its teaching, its physical structures, its routines, and by its objects, signs, and motifs. This is both evident internally and projected onto the wider system of which it is part.
Households and the children within them do not act in isolation. They operate within multifarious layers and levels of influence of which their school is a key component, simultaneously acting as “producers of learning and purveyors of meaning” (ibid.: 130). These four institutions and the neighbourhoods from which they spring provide the means to frame the consumption participatory practices that will be discussed throughout the remainder of this work. These are neither universal, nor unique, but instead manifest traits that are to some degree common to children within the different milieus discussed in this work.

“Melbourne, Australia Is Still the Greatest Place to Live on Earth”

Melbourne’s status as a global city is attractive to many of those who live here, or who seek it out as a destination of choice on a temporary, intermediate, or more permanent basis. A cursory glance through blogs and newspapers provides ample evidence by permanent residents or temporary visitors of the many factors that mark it as an attractive destination. But is it really the most liveable city in the world? A tag such as the EIU’s annual award of “Liveability” would seem to bestow it with traits of equality, opportunity, and quality of life. Yet the categories in which Melbourne scores the highest of marks, healthcare and education, are rated by the EIU as privatised, not public, provisions. Indeed, the right circle that Josh Gordon alluded to at the start of this chapter would seem to capture a particular brand of cosmopolitanism at play in regards to this global melting pot.

For Ghassan Hage (in Turner 2008: 568), the type of internationalism at play in the cities of Australia are those he has termed “cosmo-multiculturalism.” This version of multiculturalism is very much centred upon lifestyle consumption choices, where there is a favouring of economic modes of expression rather than of social ones (ibid.). In essence, as Turner (2008) goes on to point out, this form of participation is only open to the affluent middle classes, whose lifestyles becomes more distant from the cultures whose practices they are built upon. This has an obvious implication of a retreat by minority ethnic groups into areas that become marked by their class positioning or “economic exclusivity” (ibid.: 571). In these areas of the city, provisions of services are more depressed and economic opportunities are more difficult to pursue, resulting in suburbs that, although more culturally diverse, are somewhat less affluent (Marotta 2007: 58).

20 Approximately 45 million people visited the city in 2013 either as a daytrip or overnight stay, both domestically and internationally, representing a 3.5% per annum rise since 2008 (tourism.vic.gov.au).
These are the paradoxical contexts that situate the televisual practices of the children in this study. On one hand, consumption and its repetition determines subjective position (Appadurai 1996). On the other hand, however, it situates children within larger social structures (Cook 2004), as well as social relationships to others (Cook 2010; Pugh 2009). As will be discussed in greater detail, consumption is emblematic of class in this Australian context despite the absence of economic capital it masks.
Section II:

Texts
5 Televisual Consumption as Texts

Whereas the previous section of this thesis situated the differing contexts (televisual, methodological, and socio-cultural) in which this study is based, this first chapter of findings deploys Hartmann’s (2006) reading of domestication theory as one that includes the “individual communicative instance” of media use. In agreeing with Hartmann, when conceiving of media use in a digital context, as with the televisual, it is helpful to understand it as being triply articulated. This takes account of how texts can be consumed as dis-embedded objects outside of the symbolic environments that have typically been perceived of within domestication theory as holding greater meaning and significance in the “overall flow of media messages” (Silverstone & Haddon 1996: 74).

However, rather than focus on how individual texts may work to construct meaning between the public and private worlds, as is traditionally held in framings of domestication theory, this chapter principally works to situate how bodies or genres of texts can be said to fulfil this same role. Although individual titles are considered in this chapter, these are principally taken within the context of being representative of wider taste patterns. In this spirit, this chapter is concerned with how television works to “constantly reinforce certain ideological, mythological, and factual patterns of thought, and so functions to define the world and to legitimise the existing social order” (Lemish 2007: 101). It is through this consumption of content, its contribution to the construction of identity (Morley 2000), and its place as a social experience, that it is possible to question those arguments that frame children’s tastes as being particularly adult-orientated (Gunter & McAleer 1997; Postman 1983).

Convergence and portability offer “infinite choice” within children’s contemporary televisual landscape. As a result, preferences for consumption of televisual content are reflective of the desires of both regulators and child audiences to engage in content that is more culturally proximate (as the discussion in Chapter 2 foregrounds). In the Australian television market, concerted efforts have been made to privilege domestically produced content, and specifically in relation to children’s provisions. How successful can such policies be in a market where American cultural imperialism is seen as a major factor in defining the televisual landscape? Against a backdrop of expanded televisual choice and access, how do these quota systems fare in the actuality of children’s textual
consumption? To explore these questions, this chapter will draw upon the work of Tony Bennett, Michael Emmison, and John Frow (1999). This work follows Bourdieu in examining classed cultural tastes, and is a useful tool for understanding the television tastes found among children in the differing classed contexts of my work. The work of Dafna Lemish (2007) also proves particularly useful in contextualising the nature of these Australian children’s consumption against that of children in different national contexts.

What Are We Watching?

The Possibilities of Infinite Choice

As will be borne out in subsequent chapters, the portability and convergence present in my participants’ televisual ecology offers increased flexibility in how children can engage in televisual content. In this chapter, however, I focus on analysing the trends that emerged from children’s survey responses. One very specific trend emerged from a survey question that asked children to name three “television programmes you most like to watch.” As already discussed in Chapter 3, during the administration of the surveys, respondents were led by the researcher through each question to allow full clarification and exposition of them. Thus “television programmes” was detailed as anything they watch via a TV set or the internet (with the exception of films). This was to ensure the inclusion of the whole gamut of children’s televisual consumption, including the types of content they used via YouTube. However, as I explain in the following discussions, although children do engage with user-generated content (UGC) (as discussed in Chapter 7), children’s preferences towards televisual content is heavily weighted towards forms originating from a broadcast system.

Thus, where children have specifically indicated that they consume content via the Internet, user-generated content accessed via YouTube is the most common type they mention engaging with. Moreover, the boys in this study indicate a much stronger inclination to consume UGC than girls. However, when cumulatively examining all the differing forms of content my participants consume in this manner, the vast majority are those that emerge from an institutional setting, the titles of which most notably are Dance Academy,21 The Block,22 and Adventure Time.

21 The most widely consumed form of online content by girls at Shawcross Road.
22 At Bayview School this is the most mentioned form of content by girls alongside “YouTube.”
The Privileging of Children’s Culture

Examining the televisual tastes of the children of this study more widely, we see considerable commonality with historical trends and consumption patterns present in other Anglophone nations. Some of the earliest work conducted with children and their viewing patterns found cartoon- or animation-based programming to be particularly popular among children of a similar age to those in this study (Schramm 1961). More recent studies undertaken in the UK and USA by the Broadcasting Standards Commission, the Independent Television Commission (Atwal et al. 2003), and The Annenberg Public Policy Center as part of its Third Annual Survey of Television in the Home (Stanger 1998) continue to paint a similar picture to that found among my Australian participants.

Of the 1375 survey responses recorded by these children to name the content they most liked to consume, two of the top three are animated titles, accounting for just over 13% of all recorded responses. Comparing these results to the Annenberg study, we see a close mirroring of children’s tastes despite the passage of time and cultural distance. This appears to lend support to the suggestion posed by Bennett et al. (1999) that Australia holds the position of America’s 51st state. Then as now, children’s overwhelmingly top choice is The Simpsons.

Among my sample of Melbournian eight- to 12-year-olds, this programme is chosen twice as often as the second most popular programme. If accounting for the remainder of the top three programmes between the children of this study and those of the Annenberg study in the USA, it would appear that further credence could be given to describing Australians’ tastes as a “mindless imitation of another’s country’s habits and fashions” (ibid.: 204). Here we see a second animation title holding the number two spot, while a family sitcom completes the top three of programmes identified. In this Australian context, Adventure Time (AT), a PG-rated cartoon produced by the Cartoon Network available on free-to-air-services via Channel Go!, is a replacement for the more grown-up and grossed out title South Park. Meanwhile, the contemporary update of the family-
based comedy *Modern Family* replaces *Home Improvement* as the third most popular title identified by children.

Behind these headline findings, however, is a landscape of consumption offering many differing textures to understanding children’s consumption choices. In part, there is a meeting of expectations when taking into account the differing cohorts of this study alongside contradictions that problematise any simplified narratives constructed along lines of class. In one respect it is clear that an American cultural product such as *The Simpsons* holds universal appeal across children’s culture, both within differing national contexts as described above, and among Australian children living in divergent settings within a single greater metropolitan area.

At each of the four differing settings of this study, *The Simpsons* is the most commonly mentioned programme among boys and girls combined. There is, however, a particularly gender-biased picture suggesting that engagements with the family from Springfield are a practice more commonly favoured by boys, since it is almost twice as popular when compared to girls. However, girls at Highland stand as exception to this, as they favour this title 2.5 times more than the boys at the same location. In addition, the children situated within the lowest class context (Finley Central) show much stronger engagements with this title (between 40% and 52% more than children of the other schools of this study (Appendix D presents the top 10 choices of children by location).

Such gendered taste patterns are further made clear if analysing children’s preferences separately. If considering children’s top eight
choices (Table 5-1 below), we see girls particularly favour live-action programmes (principally comedy) that typically have stronger emphasis on personal welfare and social relationships, whilst boys tend towards animation titles. Thus a number of youth-based comedies, plus the teen drama Dance Academy (DA), feature prominently amongst girls’ favoured choices, whilst being almost completely absent from any of those made by the 281 boys questioned. Likewise, Good Game, the video and computer game-review show, features in the top eight choices of boys alongside Australian Rules Football (AFL) sport shows, whereas for girls these account for less than half a per cent of all their recorded responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>% of Overall Sample</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>% of Overall Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Simpsons</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>The Simpsons</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dance Academy</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Adventure Time</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Modern Family</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>AFL</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Block</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Modern Family</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Victorious</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>ABC3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Horrible Histories</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Good Game</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Life With Boys</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Regular Show</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>iCarly</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>The Block</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5-1: Programmes children most liked to watch

These findings in the Australian context provide a far more nuanced account of children’s textual preferences than previous research would seem to suggest. Dating back to the work of Abrams in 1956 (in Davis et al. 2004), a particularly prominent trend identified in the tastes of young people is a preference for titles that are not specifically aimed at their demographic. While children’s programs rarely ranked as the most viewed, often (family) comedies, soap operas, dramas, and light entertainment typically dominated any observations of the viewing habits of the young (ibid.; Fleming & Rickwood 2005: 371; Gunter & McAleer 1997; Lemish 2007: 18; Valkenburg 2004: 5, 34). Similarly, recent claims that Australian children practically feast on a diet of reality TV (Knox 2011b) would also appear to be wide off the mark. Instead, we see a much more balanced picture in terms
of the consumption habits of the young people in this study. Although there is ample evidence that my participants are engaging with programme titles that can be described as being particularly appealing to an adult or family based audience, they also clearly demonstrate preferences for content that prioritises children’s culture.

These findings would seem to represent a degree of success for the advocacy of a dedicated children’s channel in Australia (as discussed in Chapter 2). It also counteracts arguments that television in general leads to a movement away from children’s engagement with their own televsional culture (Postman 1983). The Australian Children’s Television Foundation (ACTF), the national non-profit organisation working in relation to policy and production, has long advocated the development of a PSB channel exclusively for children, as they believe it would provide the best means of promoting locally produced children’s content in a market that has traditionally struggled due to its size and subsequent lack of funding. With two of the top 16 titles favoured by young people produced domestically (Dance Academy and Good Game), two others being broadcast on the PSB children’s channel ABC3 (Horrible Histories and Life With Boys), and the channel itself being recognised as a preferential destination by 3.2% of all children for consumption, the 2009 launch of ABC3 could well be considered a success (albeit mitigated). Despite the channel’s achievement at reaching “its target of 50% Australian content,” the levels of animation made available in relation to live action are considered by the ACTF (n.d.) to be somewhat problematic.

According to the work of Bennett et al. (1999), a consideration of the range of television titles that consumers engage with is a useful indicator of the tastes of differing classed groups. The children in this study favour a far smaller range of titles than Australian adults normally engage with. However, there are differences among the children. The girls in my study favour a greater range of titles (approximately 10%) than boys. As well as gender, class position also determines the scope of their tastes. Children drawn from the lower classed schools, Finley Central and Highland Primary, consume a greater number of programmes per child compared to those drawn from higher classed schools. This greater omnivorism on the part of these lowest class children would appear to contradict the general pattern of consumption that Bennett and colleagues identify among adult populations, since they point to lower class groups as typically displaying univorous tastes. According to these authors, the “range of cultural interests and activities” is meant to increase in direct correlation to one's elevating class position (ibid.: 209). However, the OFCOM indicate that children from the lower classes are generally television’s greatest consumers (OFCOM 2013: 53). Such
omnivorous tastes could, therefore, simply be a reflection of the increased time spent with this form of media use.

Figure 5-3: Vicky Wane 11yo girl Finley Central - "This is a picture of my favourite show - Horrible Histories"
Children’s Television Tastes Through Genre

It is clear that patterns of consumption depend upon a number of differing factors. Class, gender, and age are all useful indicators to contextualise the consumption habits of these young people. Given that cartoon titles are an important part of the culture of my participants, and that animation can be said to hold universal appeal for childhood cultures, it is worth asking how the extent of their engagement with this genre compares with that of children in differing national contexts. Figure 5-4 (below) displays the rates at which children in this study favour animation and other types of programming. Overall, we can see that these types of titles comprise almost 34% of all young peoples’ preferred programming choices.

![Figure 5-4: Favourite programme types of overall sample](image)

At these levels, children’s engagements with animation content are dwarfed in comparison with those of young people from differing regions around the world. For example, across the Latin American area, nine out of every 10 seven to 11-year-old identifies animation as their favourite form of programming type (zonalatina.com). Similarly, in India, this form of content accounts for 85% of children’s viewing practices (Ernst & Young 2012), whereas in Canada this figure falls to 59% (Caron...
et al. 2010: 11). Instead, the level of interest found among my participants bears the greatest comparison to the most developed of children’s free-to-air markets, the UK. Here we see these types of programmes account for 39% of children’s viewing choices (Atwal et al. 2003: 58). This indicates that these Australian children as being some of the lowest consumers of animated programming in the world, despite fears exhibited by the Australian Children’s Television Foundation.

As my research indicates, although animation can be described as offering universal appeal, the extent of its popularity between genders is hardly uniform. Boys prefer animation twice as much as girls, who in turn prefer comedy and drama based content three times more than boys. For Patti Valkenburg (2004), this gender bias in favour of particular forms of content is already in evidence among preschool children, while becoming more firmly entrenched as children age and become embedded within gendered peer cultures. Calvert and Huston (1987), exploring the appeal of the differing formal characteristics of content for children, identify sound effects, fast pacing, and quick editing style (all principal features of animation) as holding greater attention for boys, whereas girls tended to be more attentive towards slower camera dissolves and background music (ibid.). In other words, girls tend to favour the formal elements typically found in more narrative-driven productions.

In discussions with children, it is apparent that salience or relevance to their lived experiences are an important factor in why young girls favour to these types of programmes over animation. Being able to see issues and relationships pertaining directly to their own lives are often signalled by the girls of this study as important reasons for preferences of these types of genres. In contrast, the boys in this study often attributed engagement with cartoons as being premised on their entertainment and fantasy properties, above that of being markers from direct experience. Figure 5-5 below features examples of how young girls (all aged 11) are drawn to these genres of drama and situation comedy. The first two, Lilly and Bella, are both from Bayview Primary. They talk about how *Dance Academy (DA)* and *Modern Family* are more relevant to their lives. In comparison, the third of trio, Hatty Hyness from Shawcross Road, talks about how *DA* holds relevance for her because she is passionate about the performing arts and hopes one day to make a career in the field.
This type of gender “polarisation” of genre, despite critiques that authors such as Hill and Gauntlett (1999) may level at the notion, is further evidenced in how the children of this study take to the consumption of soap operas. Although they argue that men in the UK have become increasingly open and confident about expressing their fondness and interest in this genre (ibid.: 226-230), a substantial body of work has addressed how this form of programming is particularly favoured by females (Ang 1985; Rodgers 1991). Where the animation genre is said to favour particular modes of viewing, typically described as “distracted” consumption (Morley 1991), or within a “video mode” (Abercombie in Bennett et al. 1999), the implication is that women can access these programmes at differing points during its narrative arch without encountering any substantial narrative loss or any diminishing in its value to women as a cultural form (ibid.).

These discourses cast viewing as premised on modes of power in the home, rather than on any gender essentialism (Brunsdon 1986). Where Morley identifies a more “focussed” consumption of soaps by women that is only possible when the work of the home is completed or when viewing “occasions” can be orchestrated (Morley 1991), consumption of both of these genres, soaps and sport, are identified by Lelia Green as one of the ways of constructing differentiated viewing practices within households in Western Australia (Morley 2000: 96). Although Green argues the children she encounters are “recruited” into the viewing of these forms of television by same-sex parents who are often “at odds with others in their age groups” (ibid.: 96), it is clear both that genres serve as a way

Figure 5-5: Young girls describing their preferences for drama and comedy type programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lilly aged 11:</th>
<th>Bella aged 11:</th>
<th>Harri Hynes aged 11:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>I love drama, because I love drama. It's just good because I don't know... it gets you in and... when something goes wrong like... when they can't practice or something, for the ballet, or something happens to one of them</em></td>
<td><em>It's just relates a lot to my family and I just really enjoying watching it... with the similarities and it's funny. My family is like them, in some aspects we are, but not all...</em></td>
<td><em>I'm a dancer and I really like ballet stuff so it gives me inspiration and stuff and it has drama in it and I like that. It's just kind of everything I like to do. And they're the exact same [dreams and ambitions]</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of gendering viewing practices between parent and child. Below is an example of how this recruitment can be mutually reinforcing. It opens space for bonding over content, facilitating opportunities for mother and daughter to come together at the exclusion of all others within the household:

Laura: Not every day, but I do it most of the time coz my mum comes home from work now, coz before she didn’t... because she changed jobs, so now I sit with her and watch neighbours after dinner ... that’s what we do

Me: Is that something other family members take part in, or is it just you and your mum?
Laura: Most of the time it’s just me and mum. I prefer it with just with my mum, coz I like being around my mum, she’s really nice and stuff, and coz we’re kind of similar and personality so we kind of always think the same thing

As with the way in which social class can be seen as an indicator of children’s engagements with The Simpsons, so it is indicative of children’s overall use of animation content. Again, we see those children situated within the lower classes (at Finley Central) demonstrate increased preferences for animation as a programming genre. When compared to children at the two higher classed schools, students overall at Finley prefer animation between 28% and 38% more (see Appendix E for breakdowns of content consumption by school).

Similarly, sport programming also displays a class bias, but one that is geared towards the higher classes. Students of the two higher class schools favour this type of content three times more than those from the lower class. They present a contradiction to the omnivorous narrative presented by Bennett et al. (1999: 78, 253), who argues that engagement with sport, whether televised or at live venues, is particularly favoured by those of the lowest classes.

Figure 5-7: Ozzie 10yo boy from Bayview watching AFL
If wishing to understand this anomaly within a classed narrative, the increasing commercialisation of
sport in Australia, as elsewhere, provides the opportunity to contextualise the broadening middle
class appeal of viewing sport. Aussie Rules Football, the most prominent form of televised sport that
children from higher classes identify as preferring, has, despite its origins of being founded on “class
and local loyalties,” made strenuous efforts to sanitise its image as a spectator event in order to
broaden its demographic appeal to one that is “essentially classless” in nature (McGregor 1997: 297-
298). This “declassing” of AFL, alongside sporting tastes that can be associated with both high and
low social capital, help to explain the omnivorous nature of the higher class children of this study.
Thus televised fishing, wrestling, ultimate fighter competitions and motocross, which were all
mentioned by lower class children, are also among the preferred choices of children from the highest
classes. Meanwhile, tennis and cricket, sports traditionally considered to be appropriate for the
middle class, are solely mentioned by the higher class children in this study. Alongside this, soccer,
the sport with the greatest global appeal, is the one that is most prominently favoured by children
within the most culturally heterogeneous of all our groups, those at Finley Central.

As well as this ability to view children’s engagements with televised sport and animation
within a narrative of classed tastes, ethnicity may also be seen as a useful indicator of children’s
programming tastes. With respect to the range of titles discussed earlier, lower classed children
exhibit more omnivorous tastes, posing tensions towards the overall hypothesis advocated by
Bennett et al. (1999). A similar observation can also be made when considering the programme types
young people consume across the differing cohorts of this study. Groups that can be described as
more culturally homogenous or Anglo-centric focus their consumption within a narrower band of
programming genres. If taking account of the top four programming types identified by both boys
and girls at each location, we see children within the more ethnically diverse settings concentrate
consumption at the lowest rates, and within a smaller number of genres.

The Aging of Children’s Tastes

As is evident from the discussion above, young boys take to the consumption of animation at much
greater levels than young girls. With this obvious gendering in place in relation to animation, it makes
sense to question the relevance of this genre to children as they age across the years of childhood
covered in this study. Are there generalisable changes in tastes that can be applied to both boys and
girls, or between children in differing classed contexts? Figure 5-8 and Figure 5-9 below display the differing ways in which children’s tastes develop across the age cohort of my participants.

Figure 5-8: Type of programming favoured by girls by age
We can see that boys continue to maintain stronger attachments to this genre as they age when compared to girls, while reducing their overall interest in these forms of content. Thus boys’ preferences for animation halve as they age, whereas girls’ interest is reduced to a fifteenth of its level over the same period. The most pronounced decline in interest is present among students from the two higher class schools, Bayview and Shawcross Road, while children within the lower class settings maintain their interest at similar levels.

Considering in greater detail the changing patterns of boys’ and girls’ tastes towards animation as they age, we also see that there is little commonality to how this emerges between genders. Boys forsake G-rated cartoons for those that possess appeal to a broader age demographic, such as The Simpsons and Adventure Time. At same time, interest in titles targeted more specifically at more mature audiences, such as Family Guy, increases with age. In comparison, girls show no interest in MA rated titles, and actually increase their engagements with those rated as G (SpongeBob Square Pants). We also see, however, that girls from the more culturally diverse group at
Finley Central respond differently to animation as they age when compared to those from the more Anglo-centric schools. Unlike the more homogenous population groups, they show no interest in *SpongeBob* or *Adventure Time*, the only two titles within the genre that girls engage with throughout the whole of this period of childhood. This is possibly reflective of the nature of the cartoons under consideration. Both of these titles have provoked issues of controversy due to the nature of their content. Concerns over offensive language have surfaced in relation to the latter, resulting in the editing or deleting of scenes broadcast to Australian subscribers of Cartoon Network. Fears have circulated towards the title’s suitability for young audiences due the surrealism way it presents its diegetic world and characters (adventuretime.wikia.com).

This is in addition to attacks from religious circles such as that of Christwire.org, which has characterised the show as titled in an online article, *A Gateway Drug to LSD, Homosexuality and the Rave Lifestyle*, as well as being beloved by “20-something serial killers.” Likewise, *SpongeBob* has encountered attacks on a number of politically correct fronts. These particularly centre on the lead character’s being declared as a gay icon by James Dobson, the head of the Christian group, Focus on the Family, in 2005. Lack of engagement with these two titles by the girls at Finley Central could well be seen as a rejection of the more permissive values that may feature in the narrative worlds of these programmes. This disinclination towards consumption of a “morally” liberal cartoon such as *SpongeBob* is further reinforced when considering that boys at Finley Central only engage with the title in their earliest years. This is a period of childhood Valkenburg (2004) describes as one where children’s engagement with content is primarily focussed on actual representations as opposed to any abstracted qualities within their construction.

The reasons for diverse taste patterns in relation to programmes like *SpongeBob* may also relate to its kitsch value or statement of fashion it holds for some of the older respondents of this study. Sarah Banet-Weiser (2007) points to the multiple coding structures utilised within these types of Nickelodeon titles, which, in addition to displaying obvious tropes that appeal to younger viewers,
possess significance for those older as they work at being playful in eliciting interest through the qualities of campness and cuteness. It is the growth in these “smart” cartoons that Banet-Weiser argues has provided the principal impetus for how this brand of producer has sought to define itself in relation to children’s culture and entertainment. These sentiments have been previously described by Messenger Davies (2001: 73), who pointed out how production considerations have become preoccupied with appealing to the widest possible demographic rather than focusing on explicitly meeting the needs of child audiences. By creating an appeal across diverse viewing constituencies, the “commodified kitsch” that these titles play on offers a guilty pleasure borne out of both knowingness and irony that attracts those who understand such qualities. Thus classmates Audrey Smith and ZB, both aged 10 from Highland School, acknowledge that titles like *SpongeBob* are better suited to younger viewers, yet they are happy to acknowledge their devotion and “love” towards the character and cartoon, for it fits into a narrative where its “uncoolness” launches it into the realm of “cool.” It does so to such a degree that it allows the title to generate high levels of commitment. For example, Audrey is drawn into immersion into the property’s supersystem across a number of consumption streams: wearing its branded clothes; purchasing its branded goods; and even visits to its branded world:

*Audrey Smith:* I love *SpongeBob* so much. I’ve got pyjamas of him, toys of him, bed lights, I really like him. [My interest in the cartoon] started last year when I went up to the Gold Coast and I went to Dreamworld and there’s *SpongeBob* everywhere. And at SeaWorld, they had his house and stuff. I always watched the show and I really liked it.

*Me:* So before you went to Dreamworld were you watching the show as well?

*AS:* Yeah. But going to Dreamworld made me like it more

*Me:* So do you play any *SpongeBob* games as well?

*AS:* Sometimes I play on the computer on a Nickelodeon website, and I’ve got season 5 the set and I watch that on the TV, the TV show

If saliency can be understood as a factor driving the consumption of content (e.g., Hodge & Tripp 1986; Lemish 2007), it can be assumed from the findings of this work that the relevancy of texts works differently for the boys and girls encountered. Thus animation would appear to be a genre that is especially applicable to younger boys, but which also remains applicable to some degree as they age. In contrast, it appears that situation comedies fill this role for girls. The increasing importance of
such titles to children, particularly those centred on the family, would seem to lend weight to researchers’ observations on the importance of these types of family-centric representations for children as a learning tool (Alexander 2009: 130-1; Lemish 2007). This “theatre” of the family and for family, as Silverstone describes the sitcom (Silverstone 1994: 41), is the space where, according to Alexander, young people gain their greatest insights into family relations (ibid.: 131).

Thus a text like *The Simpsons*, despite being widely recognised as focusing on the family unit (albeit one that is dysfunctional at least to some degree), may well still be described as a form of programming that caters to this desire of observing familiar housing situations. With animation’s ability to successfully assimilate differing genres (Kline 1993: 131), a title like *The Simpsons* can be said to serve the dual purposes of providing insights into increasingly important familial situations, while at the same time maintaining strong attachments to the animation form that boys clearly favour. A similar function can be ascribed to the increasing popularity of the mature-themed animation title *Family Guy*, premised as it is on depicting family tensions and relationships. Thus when Gavin, an 11-year-old boy from Shawcross Road, identifies *The Simpsons* as one which depicts “people living normal life,” it is possible to see how saliency towards the family is being activated in a similar fashion to that described by Bella earlier in relation to *Modern Family*. For Bella, this particular programming form is appreciated as it “relates a lot to my family.” Here the schemas of personal experience (Fiske 1989) can be said to work through differing television forms to fortify and reinforce the expectations and inferences that are involved in any televisual consumption.

With animation commonly found to follow particularly gendered stereotyping within its content (Leaper et al. 2002; Thompson & Zerbinos 1995, 1997), it is somewhat surprising to find among the Australian boys and girls of this study tastes in animation that are similar, but which show greater divergence when considering the genre of comedy. Survey responses show girls and boys share preferences for 24 animation titles, while they have only 16 comedy programmes in common. Each gender consumes an equivalent number of these types of shows exclusively, at 19 for males favouring animation and 20 for females favouring comedy. However, girls have higher rates of exclusively viewing particular animation titles than boys do of comedy titles. The implication is that, despite the fact that animation is a genre that brings genders together, it also maintains the largest level of segregated viewing. This problematizes any simplified characterisation of children’s viewing as being un-gendered (Connect Research 2008: 23; Morley 2000: 96).
Likewise, if considering the range of individual titles these young people engage with, we see ample evidence of a common children’s culture, but also a picture in which tastes are clearly segregated along gender lines. On one level, the children of this study engage in an extraordinary range of titles, slightly in excess of 150 (157 for boys and 152 for girls). Almost half of these (77 titles) are favoured by both boys and girls, but even more are found to be the exclusive preserve of one gender (83 titles for females and 80 titles for males).

**A Dearth of Educational TV**

Content that focuses explicitly on informational goals rarely figures among children’s favoured choices. News, science, and current affairs titles, all of which register as genres recorded by children, account for only a tiny proportion of children’s overall responses—just 1.5% for girls and 1% for boys. However, when considering documentary and factual programming, these genres take on greater importance as children age. Thus children mention these titles a third more during their later years than they do when younger. This surge in interest is largely premised on the choices of boys, who mention the genre three and a half times more than girls as they age. This contradicts observations by Lemish (2007: 47), who describes a scenario in reverse where it is boys who increasingly vacate these forms of consumption as they mature. However, a straightforward demarcation that claims that these genres can be described as “principally favoured by the boys of this study” would ignore an important anomaly in relation to the girls at Finley Central. Among these lower class children, girls are by far the most voracious consumers of this content irrespective of location and gender: four times more than boys at the same site, and between 46% and 94% more than boys at any of the other schools.

At the overall levels at which children express a preference for factual based programming, it may be possible to conclude that genres possessing more explicit learning goals are not particularly favoured by the young people in this study. With less than 5% of participants indicating such content

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24 Of course, the hybridisation of content can complicate this argument. For example, to again take a title such as *Horrible Histories*, highly watched by young females, for the purposes of this study it has been regarded as a comedy due to its entry in IMDB.com and Wikipedia. But with an aim that can be regarded as “provid[ing] entertainment while also informing its audience about history” (Wikipedia.org), it would be difficult to argue against the educational potential this show may offer.
as preferential, this genre ranks second to last of all the ones mentioned. However, such an outright
dismissal of this form of programming should be tempered against the limited amount of screen
time given to these genres specifically targeted at a child audience (Atwal et al. 2005: 29), limiting
the potential avenues for consumption.

**Domestic Favouritism vs. Cultural Imperialism**

In analysis of the favoured programmes expressed by the children of this study, we see boys and
girls, unwittingly or otherwise, show stronger preference for American-produced content than that
originating from elsewhere (Figure 5-13 below\(^{25}\)). Across both genders, four out of every 10 titles
children name can be classified as wholly produced in the USA. This is almost twice as much as titles
from Australia, and close to two and a half times more than content produced in the UK.

Unfortunately for efforts to encourage interest in domestic productions (as discussed in Chapter 2),
both boys and girls express an increasing preference for titles produced in the USA as they age. If
solely taking account the top 20 titles that each gender mentions, this picture of US dominance
among these children is even bleaker. Whereas these 20 titles account for between 60% and 69% of
the total number that children mention at any of the school sites, the rate at which US produced
titles are mentioned more frequently to two and half times that of domestic ones. This reflects the
difficulty of any endeavour that attempts to direct younger Australian audiences to content produced
locally.

From these findings we also see a gender discrepancy in children’s tastes towards domestic
content. Young girls express stronger preferences for Australian-produced content almost twice as
much as boys. However, caution should be noted when considering the specific Australian titles that
boys and girls prefer. A more detailed analysis of the domestic titles preferred indicates that the
overwhelmingly majority of these are reality shows, either original local productions such as *The Block*,
or internationally franchised versions such as *The Voice*. Of the top four Australian
programmes that girls prefer, all are reality-based except *Dance Academy*, the ABC produced title
that has enjoyed considerable success in making this media “project” relevant to its target C
demographic (Rutherford & Brown (2012)).

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\(^{25}\) These figures do not include cases where children have indicated a response of ABC3, as the channel broadcasts a
variety of content originating from a number of different regions.
Considering the remainder of the top seven titles young girls prefer, only the soap opera *Neighbours* and *H2O: Just Add Water*, a children’s/teen fantasy drama based on the growing pains of three mermaids, are the only other non-reality TV programmes to feature in that list. Likewise, half of the boys' top eight preferred domestically produced content are also reality shows, with AFL, *Good Game*, and *Prank Patrol* rounding out their favoured choices. The implication is that although Australian children may be seeking out productions that could be described as presenting a “native” culture, such as AFL or *Neighbours*, there is a dominance of a form of programming, albeit featuring Australian people, accents, and perspectives, that is heavily reliant on transferability into other international markets, problematising the notion of creating content that can be described as uniquely Australian.

When considering the type of content that children prefer from differing national contexts, a particular picture of consumption also emerges. Boys who are infatuated with American titles are principally only interested in the genre of animation. Of their overall list of the seven top programmes they prefer, *Modern Family* is the only title from a different genre. In addition we also see that content originating from the United Kingdom, the largest children’s PSB market in the world, tends to offer the greatest diversity for these Australian children. Of the top three programmes
favoured by boys and girls originating from the UK, none are animation titles. Instead, drama, sitcoms, comedy, and documentary all feature among those most commonly mentioned.

Beyond gender, social class figures as an additional narrative to contextualising children’s programming choices. Once again taking the top 20 title choices of children from each of the four schools, we can see that those of the highest class can be described as more omnivorous as to the origins of their favoured content. Overall, they cite productions from the three principal Anglo nations, 30% more than children from the lower classes. In comparison, the most predominant Anglo-Celtic groups, students at Highland and Bayview, indicate a much stronger engagement with American productions (by almost 25%). In contrast again, children that can be described as coming from more cosmopolitan settings demonstrate stronger attractions to Australian and UK content, replicating findings by Bennet et al. (1999) among adult populations.

These findings indicate the importance of American productions in the cultural diet of the Australian children in this study. In spite of the implementation of protectionist measures to enhance
children’s exposure to their native culture, young people favour content produced overseas four times more than that originating in Australia. This is despite the comparatively high levels of domestically produced content available on free-to-air. Figure 5-14 below shows the levels at which the ABC, Australia’s principal public service broadcaster, provides domestically produced content, ranking it particularly favourably in relation to other children’s broadcasters around the world. In a globalised marketplace for children’s culture dominated by American productions, British children consume between 66% and 70% of domestically-produced content via free-to-air services, depending on the number of channels one wishes to include (OFCOM 2007: 97). This level is approximately three times greater than the amount that Australian children prefer content from their own country.

**Conclusion**

As Australia has developed as a nation, its assumed cultural ties to its British motherland (Bennett et al. 1999: 203) appear to have be replaced, in televisual terms at least, by “North American cultural products” that have now become “the dominant ingredients in the cultural menus of the young” (ibid.: 221). Although these authors were speaking in relation to the broader cultural tastes of young Australian adults, a single plank of which is television, undoubtedly this comment still carries some poignancy when considering the television diets of children in Australia today.

However, as a caveat to this, the once unidirectional flow of cultural goods that Richard White argued define this culturally-dependent relationship (ibid.) may be, at least to a modicum of a degree, in recession. The success of the Australian children’s titles *H20: Just Add Water* and *Dance Academy*, both acquired by the Nickelodeon channel in the USA, interrupts this one-way flow of cultural goods from the USA. *H20: Just Add Water* is the first non-American title to achieve this status (Ward & Potter 2009), and *Dance Academy* has received much critical success, having been nominated for an international Emmy award.

Thus we encounter a situation among the Australian children of this study in which, although their consumption opportunities may not be dominated by American cultural imports to the level once encountered by Patricia Edgar some 30 years before, content from the USA continues to dominate young people’s choices. Hence, while quota systems may seek to determine the minimum amounts of locally-produced content and drama that are broadcast on Australian free-to-air

26 This is in a context, however, where the level of domestically-produced content in the UK is much higher.
television screens, gaining and maintaining children’s attention on this type of content falls short of the goals of advocates. The possibilities afforded by YouTube further complicate these desires. Despite these measures and opportunities, the children in this study favour US-produced titles more than twice than those from Australia. If considering the tastes of boys alone, this differential actually increases by almost 150%. Thus, where Cunningham and Jacka assert that “US programs lead the world in their transportability, and even manage to dominate schedules in some countries,” the belief that such imports “are rarely the most popular programs where viewers have a reasonable menu of locally produced material to choose from” (quoted in Bennett et al. 1999: 207) does not carry the same weight of authority. Likewise, when Graeme Turner (2009: 52) states that, in this post-broadcast age, “local programming... continues to attract stronger audiences than imported programs in just about every market one might care to examine,” this scenario is not wholly applicable to the Australian children encountered in this work. Hence despite regulatory efforts to signal the importance of children “seeing themselves” through television content, children’s greater engagements with overseas productions mirrors the scenarios that were in existence before the advent of quotas and C classifications. As a caveat to this, when examining the types of content some girls consume via YouTube, girls at two of the sites, Bayview and Shawcross Road, tend to mention engaging with domestically produced more in this televisual space than any other form of content.

We also clearly see in terms of the way children utilise televisual content that their consumption practices cannot merely be described as a mindless aping of adult tastes. This indicates that how children make use of televisual content cannot solely be thought of in terms of its practices of use within the context of the home (Morley & Silverstone 1990: 32). In seeking concurrence with Hartmann, it is possible to observe how content works to “become part of a set of different messages” when analysed as substantive in its own right as an articulation of media use (Hartmann 2006: 86).

If taking televisual storytelling as “having a social, and socialising” impact on younger viewers (Messenger Davis 2001: 68), working as it does between the world outside the home and individuals within it (Silverstone 1994; Silverstone et al. 1994), then it is narratives that privilege a child’s positioning with a foregrounding of the experiences and concerns of the young that hold the greatest interest for the children of this study. Although it would be possible to classify animation as the universal genre of childhood, an argument that can be made when considering overall patterns and especially when taking into account data from other national contexts, doing so would be to miss the
many nuanced taste patterns that children exhibit. Children’s tastes change as they age. An interest in animation declines with maturity, although boys maintain a much stronger attachment to the genre throughout this process. Children from the lower classes can be described as exhibiting the strongest interest in this kind of content as well as stronger levels of commitment to the genre as they age. However, any simplified narrative of the tastes of lower class children as narrower in relation to those from the higher classes would again fail to miss the diversity of children’s practices. In one respect, we can describe the tastes of the latter as being more omnivorous. They prefer to consume more televised sports than children of the lower classes, as well as preferring content originating from a wider range of production centres. But children from within the lowest class can also exhibit broader tastes than their higher classed peers. They engage in content from a wider range of genres and consume a broader range of titles. Alongside this we also see a gendering of tastes in place in relation to drama and teen comedies. These genres were predominately consumed by the girls in this study, reflecting either the paucity of these offerings that have cross-gender appeal, or an entrenchment on the part of boys who concentrate their consumption within a smaller range of titles.
Figure 5-14: Rates at which domestically produced children’s content is made available by public service broadcasters in selected countries

Sources: Canada - Caron et al. (2010); Europe - D’Arma & Steemers (2011); Australia - ABC (2011: 52).
Section III:

Participation:

Practices and Spaces
Willows lives with her 10-year-old brother, Steve Stevenson, and two parents in a modest two-bedroom Victorian terrace just a short distance from the Eastern Highway / Alexandra Parade. This is the busy artery that snakes its way from west to east, passing close by the gates of Finley Central, and which also acts as a boundary to the suburb where Shawcross Road Primary is located. This is the same house her mother and father bought when getting married more than 20 years ago. Despite adding space to the home via the addition of a rear extension, it still seems jammed full, with its CDs, vinyl records, board games, books on culture and politics, art and trinkets from around the world, “Stop the Toll Road” posters, an upright piano, art materials, and many other objects that encroach upon the available living space the family can call upon. It does so to such an extent that the siblings share a room together, one that as well as being dominated by a large, heavy-framed bunk bed, also features cupboards packed with even more board games and slews of clothes mainly belonging to Willows. Although both children share a passion for the reality TV show *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, one which they consume via Foxtel on demand due to its late evening screening times, Willows’ style choices are sharply in contrast to the high-end fashion world depicted in the show. Her penchant for head-coverings, knit prints and generally colorful clothing all originate from op-shop (charity store) castoffs, recycled clothing ranges, and closing down sales. She cobbles all of this together into her very own unique fashion sense that she captures in a monthly Wordpress blog detailing her “look of the day.”

Despite the best efforts of her decidedly left-leaning parents, both Willows and her brother are able to call upon an extensive range of convergent devices for their televisual needs. Whereas the children describe there being no difference between the differing screens at their disposal—an iPod each, family iPad, PC desktop computer, mum’s iPhone, and the digital TV with its Telstra
supplied T Box27 the last of these is definitely placed at the top of their consumption choices, regardless of the opportunities for portability she discusses later in this chapter. In the words of Willows, the largest of these screens provides content that is “much more accessible” when compared to any of the other devices she has access to. She identifies streaming via YouTube and downloading free content through the iTunes App Store as reasons for its centrality. This screen acts as a hub of consumption, whereas the other devices she engages with can be perceived as access nodes that offer a form of redundancy in case the principal is unobtainable. In Willows’ own words she describes the hierarchy of her televisual ecology as:

> say if I miss something on TV, then I would then go on ABC and then I go to iView, then if I miss something on iView, I would go onto YouTube (all via the TV), then I would keep going back.... All the programmes are much more accessible than on the iPad and iPod. You can do more on a TV than you can do on an iPod.

![Figure 6-1: The screen Willows Henderson places at the top of her chain of televisual consumption](image)

Willows and Samuel, whose vignette begins this thesis, are counterparts at the two higher class schools in this study (see Chapter 4) and are similar in their attitudes to the televisual. Willows details a televisual ecology that highlights the importance of convergence in the ability to consume

27 Telstra is Australia’s largest telecommunications corporation managing and building networks across a range of services including voice, mobile, Internet access, and pay television.
the televisual, despite the centrality she equates with the TV screen. The largest of the family’s screens helps avoid the “squishiness” she describes as experiencing with her brother when having to be in close proximity when watching via the iPad. However, the ability to experience the televisual on smaller hand-held devices allows her to seek the “comfy” surrounds of her parents’ bedroom. Thus the “friend in the pocket,” albeit a larger screen than the one Samuel tends to makes use of, offers the potential of portability to her televisual use, which the TV screen does not provide. However, the added attraction of consumption around the largest of the screens demonstrates the interactive way in which the family approaches this cultural practice. She describes her experience of the family watching TV collectively and interacting as being “nice,” a time “when you talk about TV.” Her “family likes to pause and explain it to each other,” and for Willows’ this “…really makes [the viewing experience] interesting,” as well as mitigating her worry of “wasting so much power and energy” when individual household members take to individual devices. Having discussed how children make use of televisual content in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on how the participants of my study make use of the televisual via the Internet as a means of increasingly self-managing this media practice. In doing so, they subvert the temporal and spatial terms that typically define such use in the household in order to accommodate more flexible consumption patterns. At the same time, we also see how, in pursuit of these engagements, children call upon objects of technology as a means of establishing claims to power within the structure of the home. Alongside examining the extent to which these forms of televisual use are present in these children’s lives, class, age, and gender are all held as useful indicators to understanding how young people engage in these practices. At the same time, we also see how access to material objects does not, in itself, define the extent of this practice, nor how children develop relationships to the tools that facilitate this. Opportunity is provided to observe how these practices are particularly important to some children as they offer engagement with taste interests or ethnic cultures not often encountered in their everyday lives, offering compensation for some of the alienation they encounter through the absence of these forms of off-line participation.

“Of Course We Watch Telly On the Internet”

As discussed in Chapter 1, the possibility of “infinite choice” (Ellis 2000) that television in a contemporary digital landscape offers is, for some commentators (e.g., Newman & Levine 2012), symbolic of the way television has been transformed through digitalisation. For Katz (2009), this is a scenario that offers a privileging of individual choice over those more collectivist in nature. For others (e.g., Gentikow 2010; Spigel 2004), the ability to access content via the Internet merely marks a new
phase of television rather than its evisceration. As such, intermediate technologies such as programmable guides, cable and satellite services, and DVRs have all presented possibilities to increasingly self-determine televisual use through more interactive uses of technologies that supplement the television set.

For some in the broadcast industry, children as viewers\(^\text{28}\) in this contemporary landscape are at the vanguard of these practices and are the ones who increasingly dictate how traditional content broadcasters manage online engagements. According to Mark Scott, the Australian Broadcast Corporation’s (ABC) Managing Director, it is the frequency and proliferation of practice with which young people take to the Internet for their consumption needs that has come to shape the organisation’s emergent online presence (Scott 2012). As a recent \textit{ABC Annual Report} identifies, children’s programme titles are the most viewed on tablet devices and are some of the most popular content on its ABC iView free programme catch-up service (ABC 2012: 54). This gels with observations that the ABC4Kids website, primarily aimed at pre-school children, generates some of its highest levels of online traffic (Knox 2011). In conjunction, these would appear to provide every reason to believe that children are leading the charge in this evolving televisual landscape.

When we examine the consumption habits of young people in Australia there is much to support the claims advanced by Mark Scott of children being a particularly prominent demographic in the use of the televisual online. In a recent study conducted by Screen Australia (2014: 6) exploring the viewing patterns of Australians aged fourteen and over, they found “around 50% of Internet-connected Australians currently watch some kind of professionally produced film or television content online.” This in contrast to previous reports that place overall population use of streamed or downloaded content as varying between 20% and 21% (ACMA 2012: 20; Screen Australia 2011: 3). Among the eight- to 12-year-olds who participated in this study we see engagements with the televisual via the Internet at levels still higher than reported in other Australian studies.

Of all the young people who responded to the question “Do you watch any programmes\(^\text{29}\) via the Internet?” (n=517), more than half indicate that they are utilising online spaces for their televisual use. Overall 54% of all those children gave a positive response to participating in these practices, with boys and girls doing so in practically identical numbers (54.7% and 54.4% respectively). These levels rank these Australian children as some of the most prolific consumers of online televisual content in the world when compared to young people in the UK and USA. Among

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\(^{28}\) See Chapter 1 for a definition of Dan Harries’ term and how it is utilised in this work to describe how television consumption is marked by the self-management of a user’s experience.

\(^{29}\) As discussed in Chapter 3, during the administration of questionnaires added context was given to this question so as to include “any content watched via the internet” (excluding films).
British eight- to 11-year-olds, only 34% engage in televisual use on an Internet-ready device that is not a TV set, 7% down from the figure reported the previous year (OFCOM 2014: 40). Meanwhile, in the US, where there is no direct age comparison with American children, The Kaiser Foundation indicates that only 48% “of all eight-to-18-year-olds say they have ever watched TV online” (Rideout et al. 2010).

As Figure 6-2 (below) shows, children’s participation in these activities are already firmly entrenched from a young age, with more than half of the female and male participants in my study aged eight engaging in such practices. This would seem to suggest that, despite the general decline witnessed in the amount of time children spend with a television set as they age, young people increasingly turn to the Internet for their televisual needs. If comparing the rate of engagement from the beginning of this concrete-operational stage of development (aged eight and nine) to the end (aged 11 and 12), we can see that within my study participants across all sites increase their participation in such activities by almost 40%.

However, it is also clear when examining these figures that these convergence practices across a cohort of children within differing socio-economic settings has as much differentiation in place as features in common. This reinforces previous discussions (Chapters 1 and 2) that consider neither convergence nor childhood as universal, even when considering a particularly focused context. In this case, among the pupils at Bayview and Finley Central, schools described as higher and lower class respectively, girls more so than boys are greater consumers of the televisual in this manner as they age. Across all school sites, with the exception of Highland (the middle class school), the use of the televisual via the Internet is between 54% and 63% of all respondents.

However, at Highland (the most rural of all school settings), substantial variances are in place, both in the overall level of use, but also in the extent of use by gender. Compared to their urban and suburban counterparts, students at Highland are engaging in these practices little more than half as much as students in the other locations. Similarly, where there is little variation between genders across the other sites (between 2.3% and 4.1%), at this location boys take to online-based televisual consumption 35% more than girls. The first of these discrepancies is explained by the children themselves. In discussions, they generally indicated that their overall televisual consumption was low because they preferred to participate in a variety of other activities. Children pointed to playing outdoors, sport, craft activities, or reading as other interests that tended to occupy their leisure time before the televisual. Although no specific enquiry was made into the gender discrepancy in use of
Internet-based televisual engagement, a similar disparity with respect to gender in television use has been observed by Casas (2001) in Spain.

Children situated in differing economic and cultural settings take to this form of media use in differing ways. Thus children at Finley Central, a school I describe as occupying the lowest class positioning within this study, engage in these Internet-supported televisual activities second only to those children at Shawcross Road. Although the latter school is classified as higher class, within this study it occupies a thoroughly alternative cultural position to the other higher class school in this work, Bayview, which can be described as more conservative and traditional. This lower class school and the one that can be described as more technologically phobic also represent the locations where use of online-based televisual consumption is most consistent as children age. At Highland and Bayview, children tend to increase this form of media use by two or three times as they mature, whereas at Finley and Shawcross the increase over this period by students is only 5% and 8% respectively.

30 This school is also found to possess the highest incidence of single parent households among the children of this study, a factor which, according to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (No.3 2008: 8), disadvantages young people in terms of access to technology.
Further adding to the differentiation of the two higher class schools (in addition to those already discussed in Chapter 4), alternate positions on cultural capital are also further in evidence. Children who attend Shawcross Road encounter greater restrictions on time spent with screen-based technology, and it is the only location where children live without a television set within the home. This status of television non-ownership also echoes earlier findings by Patricia Edgar and Ray Crooke (1976) who, when exploring Australian TV use, as detailed in their report Families Without Television, found that households where the rejection of technology ownership is most common are among the better educated and better renumerated professionals. These characteristics were identified in Chapter 4 as being more present in the neighbourhood ecology of Shawcross when compared to Bayview. Edgar and Ray (1976) go on to point out that, within these types of television non-ownership households, this non-use is largely determined on philosophical grounds and a range of cultural and creative practices are typically employed in order to mitigate the absence of this technology (ibid.). Unsurprisingly, where non-engagement with television is more common and corresponds with the most severe restrictions on “screen time” (discussed further in the next chapter), the Internet provides a powerful alternative to engaging with the televisual—a form of participatory practice in which children across the social spectrum of this study engage.

The Value of Choice and the Pursuit of Communities of Interest

Regardless of where a young person in this study resides, there are many similar motivations underpinning their desire to use the televisual via the Internet. Children viewed technologies as offering the ability to take control over their consumption habits and permitting access to a greatly expanded range of choice than that provided by broadcast television services (BTV). Whereas the early television set became the new hearth where the “family circle” provided a setting for the expression of familial power relations in the home (Morley 1991), engagement with the televisual in the contemporary context provides opportunities for children to port their consumption across devices as well as differing temporal and spatial terms than those experienced under a broadcast era. The following sample of comments taken from children’s surveys offers insight into these experiences of portability that children encounter when consuming the televisual in this manner, as well as signalling how convergence is central to this ability:

David 8yo boy (Highland): There are more things and you can watch anything

Lisa 10yo girl (Bayview): I like using the Internet because you can pick what you want to watch

Tiger 9yo boy (Finley Central): The Internet has much more things than the TV
JimJim 12yo boy (Shawcross Road): I like watching stuff on the Internet because if a programme isn’t on TV and I want to watch it, I can type it in on the Internet

The ability to engage in content beyond the provisions of the broadcast schedule allows children to support interests that are not easily accessible via broadcast systems. Where families decide against investment in subscription pay-TV (STV) services, leaving households to contend with a narrower range of content provided free-to-air, young people come to rely on televisual consumption via the Internet as the sole means by which to explore a more diverse range of offerings. Here the Internet facilitates engagement with a very specific “genre of participation” whereby specialised interests and hobbies are able to be indulged and extended with the added qualification of forging social networks and peer relations (Ito et al. 2010). The pursuit of these “taste constituencies” or “communities of interest,” as Hartley (2009) describes them, offer young people the opportunity to deepen and broaden their interactions with media texts across a variety of media technologies. In essence, this represents the ability to “migrate” their online behaviour in pursuit of their own experiences and interests, regardless of their class positioning.

A particular case in point is found with David, an 11-year-old boy from Bayview Primary. For him, a long-term interest in all things military means he is a voracious consumer of anything he can find in relation to the subject. In his bedroom he has a number of books that have been given as gifts at various times, or obtained from the local library, to which any visit is only complete if he can uncover a text he hasn’t previously stumbled across. But with the use of the Internet via the family laptop he is able to look up in more specific detail items of interest he comes across in one of these texts. However, going online primarily facilitates the ability to access his favourite type of programming that supports his interest, particularly a show entitled Battle 360 that is only available via STV:
David: Because one of my interests is military, I usually watch documentaries about military stuff. I usually watch it on the computer because it’s on the History Channel, which is a channel which is not on Australian television so I have to watch it on the computer. I usually go on to YouTube... it comes like a documentary, but it’s a series of programmes. It’s telling the story of an American Aircraft Carrier called the USS Enterprise during the Second World War in the Pacific Ocean against the Japanese. It was known as one of the most revered, one of the most feared ships in World War Two and that’s how it became quite famous. Since my interest is military I like watching and learning certain things about this ship and the battles it fought and stuff like that.
Alongside this ability to consume televisual content online in relation to his favoured pastime, David also furthers his interest through engaging with military-themed massively multiplayer online games (MMOG). Platforms, as Grimes points out, offer opportunities for “socialness” between users of similar interests as well as facilitating forms of collaboration (2008). For David, “hanging out” with like-minded souls, ones who he struggles to encounter in his everyday offline activities, is performed through the MMOG World of Tanks and War Thunder. Here, as well as gaining engagement with the objects of his interest, he appreciates the way in which he gets to interact with other enthusiasts, whether through just working cooperatively within the process of game play, or communicating through the software’s chat-box facility. Below is David’s account, both visually and in his own words, of the experience of participation in these types of MMOG:

David:  *This is a representation of a computer game called War Thunder. It is a CO-OP multiplayer air combat game, where you can purchase and battle with World War Two aircraft against other players. ...It has World War Two aircraft ....you can purchase with credits which you earn in the game and you get higher ranks in certain air-forces. And you battle against other players... the creators are eventually going to add things like tanks and warships to the game, but at the moment it’s just aircraft. And it’s quite a fun game, I quite like it... [The] game it’s got a chat-box, so you basically type words in the chat... obviously there’s other players even the other side of the world playing the game [who sometimes I chat to]*
Interestingly in David’s account, although he is quick to note the participatory aspects of his game-play—the ability to act in collaboration and interact directly with geographically dispersed players—he also expresses easy acknowledgement of the transactional system in which these spaces are framed. He identifies the “hierarchies of access” that Grimes and Fields (2012) discuss, in which advancement in these types of online worlds is dependent upon making financial transactions. Thus the presence of “pay to play” (ibid.), in this case the purchase of “packs,” is available to allow deeper immersion with not only the “tools of war,” but also insights and tasters into the premium features that the site offers.

Whereas online televisual consumption can be characterised as providing for participation in communities of interests not fully realised offline, for other children it also offers the opportunity to (re)engage in spatially distant cultures. As racially segregated viewing patterns are an observable feature of television audiences globally (Buckingham 1993; Kau & Yang 1991; Morley 2000), satellite services have traditionally provided an important means of staying in touch with indigenous cultures. At the same time, they work as obvious markers of household’s ethnicity and immigration (King & Wood 2001; Morley 2000; Riman 2009). But whereas satellite TV to Australian homes, such as the Sat Pro India Hindi service, can cost upwards of an annual Internet connection,31 for some families acquiring an online connection can provide for the easiest and cheapest means of escaping back to geographical locations that hold the greatest cultural appeal or belonging. In this guise, the televisual, rather than mediating an escape to worlds unknown as Raymond Williams’ (2005) observes through the process of mobile privatisation, offers the opportunity to experience comfort and familiarity. This comfort does not spring from the surroundings from which the journey begins, but rather occurs in the context of the destination through the use of online televisual consumption.

Hazy is a quiet and shy 9-year-old girl who is a student at the lower class Finley Central School, and who was born in India and is a native Hindi speaker. For her, familial engagement with domestic Australian cultures is not significant, and the Internet facilitates the ability to participate in cultures left behind. An only child, she has little interaction with friends outside of school, and with no other immediate family connections beyond her mother and father, the Internet provides one of the few means to engage with the Hindi language beyond speaking with her parents. Both of her parents work long hours, resulting in little free time. Although the family possesses a television set, its use revolves around the consumption of movies and is not equipped for the reception of domestic

31 A basic Sat Pro Hindi satellite package can be purchased for AU$700, while an unbundled and unlimited broadband package from a no-frills supplier such as Dodo, can cost AU$29.90 per month or AU$59.80 if also taking a phone line.
free-to-air services as they feel these offer little of interest. Not engaging with domestic television in this manner also provides a means of protecting the cultural identity they attempt to hold onto:

Hazy:

_We don’t have a television. We do have a TV but we can only watch movies on it, it means that TV is not connected or we can’t put anything like a show or any type of show on it... I watch movies (on the family laptop) by myself but on the laptop we watch it as a family when we have dinner... We watch my country’s languages like... Indian languages like Hindi, we would watch comedy things, dance shows, singing shows, yeah. I was born in India (and speak Hindi)_

David and Hazy, despite occupying different class positions, utilise televisual consumption via the Internet as an opportunity to conceive of, and participate in, communities beyond their immediate locality. They admit in conversation that they struggle to engage with these communities in everyday contexts. For them, convergence provides the tools to follow their unique individual tastes. It enables their interaction with culture and communities that are largely inaccessible in their offline lives, but which can also be described as “not divorced from their off-line realities” (Holloway & Valentine 2001: 156). Utilising David Morley’s description of “psychological neighbourhoods” (Morley 2000: 177-8) to describe the generation of belonging through communication networks as being premised on the fostering of what Meyrowitz and Leiss (1990) points to as a Bigger “Us,” we can see how the possibility of “strangers becom[ing] partial neighbours” without leaving the confines of the home can appeal to these young people (Meyrowitz & Leiss 1990). In this light it allows these children to reverse some of the alienation and isolation they experience in their everyday, while at the same reaffirming their cultural identities as valid and catered for.

**The Re-Figuring of Time**

Alongside this ability to pursue marginalised interests and tastes, as well as greatly expanding the televisual content available for use, these tools of convergence also offer the ability to accommodate the varying lifestyles of children by providing the opportunity of televisual engagement at times more compatible with these demands. Freed from the fixed temporality of broadcast and programme flows, access to these dis-embedded texts offers interruption from the routines, schedules, and broadcast time-slots that have determined and governed how audiences have come to engage with TV. The levels at which we see children taking to the Internet for this form of consumption would seem to problematize the assertions of Messenger Davis (2010) and Gripsrud (2004) that “liveness” and broadcast schedules determine the playing out of life. Such liberation can
simply involve catching up on a favoured missed show. As Willows alluded to earlier, and the following comment from Brian, an 11-year-old boy from Bayview points out, viewing does not need to be bound to pre-determined schedules, but instead can be flexible:

Brian: Well... If I’ve missed an important episode that I really wanted to watch, I [can] find it around the Internet

However, for many of the young people of this study, access to the televisual at non-broadcast times acts as a sort of recompense to the extended periods spent outside the home once school has finished. For some children, the delay in reaching home is a result of being placed in after-school care due to parental working patterns, or where there has been an inability to make suitable pick-up provisions. For many others it is due to busy extra-curricular schedules that dominate their time outside of school, encompassing activities such as dance classes, AFL or soccer practice, and chess club, to name just a few. Whichever the reasons, many children found themselves returning home much later than the broadcast times of their favoured shows. This resulted in a need to time shift desired viewing. A common theme among children, but most notably of those within the locales of Bayview and Shawcross Road, was the experience of “concerted cultivation,” a concept introduced by Annette Lareau (2011) that describes how the leisure lives of young people from more affluent families are increasingly dictated by organised after-school activities. In these scenarios, children explain how the Internet facilitates their ability to remain in touch with content they would rather not miss, while at the same foregrounding their agentive potential in a context that privileges the detailed and intricate managing of other aspects of their lives:

Tabatha 11yo girl (Bayview):

*I use the computer... because I do a lot of sports and I don’t really have the time to [watch] ... the shows I normally do, so I watch it on the computer when I feel like it*

Olivia 9yo girl (Bayview):

*I find it really helpful when you have a website that helps you look at all the videos and stuff, coz I have a lot of activities. I have dancing and there’s a big show I really want to watch and I’m at dance class dancing, I miss it, I can just go onto it. The channel I usually watch is Disney Channel, I can just go onto and type Disney Channel dot com on the computer and then it comes up, you can watch the videos and there’s some things you can watch them right after they happen, so it’s like good, so it really helps me watch them*

Hatty Hynes 11yo girl (Shawcross Road):
Undoubtedly the Internet extends consumption choices to young people in relation to the televisual. It provides increased access to content, temporal flexibility, and the ability to manage the nature of interactions with media texts. Thus instead of tolerating in-programme advertisements, a particular bugbear commented upon in relation to consumption via broadcast schedules, many young people saw the Internet as offering liberation from the constant stream experienced in these spaces. This is in a climate where the Australian regulator under the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice permits twice the amount of advertising during peak viewing times than OFCOM regulations in the UK. Supporting findings that demonstrate young people within this period of childhood are no longer as enthralled by the nature of advertisements as when they were younger, and tend to adopt a negative stance towards the appearance of advertising (Gunter et al. 2005). Children here see little benefit from advertisements except as an interruption to the enjoyment of their screen time:

Gail 12yo girl (Shawcross Road):
* I like to watch TV in the Internet because there are no ads *

Angela 11yo girl (Bayview):
* There are less ads so you don’t need to see ads you only see 2 or 3 [on YouTube] *

Anthony 10yo boy (Finley Central):
* You don’t waste time with ads and you can watch what you want when you want *

**Objects of the Televisual and the Manipulation of Household Space**

As with other studies that have pointed to the home as being the principle location of Internet-based televisual consumption (Ericsson ConsumerLab 2013; Screen Australia 2014), so too do the children of this study point to the household as the primary setting in which this form of media use takes place. When asked whether they preferred their televisual consumption taking place inside or

32 And was a common comment as to why children chose to watch a BTV channel such as ABC3.
outside the home, of the 504 children who recorded a response 90% indicated a preference for doing so inside. Across the four school sites, students attending the lowest class school indicated favouring consuming the televisual outside the home the greatest.

Whereas the home can be perceived as the primary location where televisual consumption takes place, portability still retains key importance for young people as it provides the opportunity to relocate to differing household spaces as the need arises. Thus place-shifting within the family home can often simply mean time away from parents or siblings, providing the opportunity to meet more personal consumption choices rather than compromising one’s preferences or have other people’s preferences imposed upon them. With the time of children increasingly recognised as being finely managed by parents (Lareau 2011), their movements reliant on transportation provided by private caregivers (Buckingham 2000: 70-71), and with general parental fears circulating around young people’s presence in public spaces (ibid.; Valentine 2004), finding these moments of personal direction become increasingly difficult, but highly prized. The sense of opportunity that these consumption practices provide would, in this context, appear to be attempts by young people to make claims on the Internet as a public space, sentiments highlighted in a group discussion with children at Finley Central:

Antonia 9yo girl: I think its freedom coz I’ve been spending a lot of time with my ... family and sometimes we get chances to do stuff of our own and what we want to do

Mich 9yo boy: I think it’s more freedom on the iPad coz my mum and dad are not really active, my dad’s really busy and my mum doesn’t drive, so we have to walk everywhere

Todd Martin 9yo boy: I think more freedom because first of all if you just want a break of everything around you, for example you come home from school and you’ve had a really hard long day and ...you’ve had hard work, let’s say you’ve done like a Naplan test or something and you’re just tired you can just jump on your iPad do whatever you want. So sometimes when I’m feeling like “urrrhhh” I might go on YouTube and watch different programmes and stuff

In many ways, these comments reflect the discomfort at the highly managed and cosseted lives that contemporary Western children are said to live. Whether hemmed in by the demands of family or the highly structured and formalised school day, these cultural practices and the devices that support this participation add some sense of relief to the pressures that have been described as constraining modern perceptions of children and childhood (Jenks 1996).
In this manner, Willows Henderson’s ability to call upon a diverse range of devices on which to consume televisual content—many of which are mobile in nature—provides the opportunity to engage in consumption practices within more privatised spaces, such a bedroom or a playroom. In so doing, potential liberation is offered from annoyances and distractions present in the wider household. In many ways, this can be perceived as a “time-out” from individuals or routines of the home, but it can also signal escape from household spaces where children often have little or no control and are thus subjected to numerous rules and regulations (Wood & Beck 1994). In essence, this can also be seen as a reading of televisual technology, which, when in use by adults outside the home, can be viewed as an extension of private domestic space into public arenas (Groening 2010). As such, Groening’s focus is centred on fostering the private individual through the use of mobile technology through his re-conceptualising of Williams’ (2005) identity formation through mobile privatisation.
The televisual provides opportunities where children can exert decision-making powers and thus claims to status in scenarios that have tended to favour the more dominant parental positions in the household. This furnishes children with the ability to participate more actively in those spatial relations, as well as providing them with further opportunities for trying out differing elements of self that communication technologies are said to offer (Katz & Aakhus 2002; Ito et al. 2010). Adding some affirmation to Willows’ comments on seeking out these privatised moments, the following children concur with the potential for freedom these participatory practices offer:

Lauren 11yo girl (Shawcross Road):  I would rather watch TV on mum’s laptop because I can watch it by myself

Tania 10yo girl (Bayview):  Everyone’s talking downstairs so it’s just easier to do it on my bed in my room

Zindy Marks 8yo girl (Finley Central):

Me:  When you use your iPad like that [for televisual consumption] do you tend to use it in the main room or your bedroom do you think?

ZM:  Sometimes in the living room, but mostly in my bedroom, that’s where I get privacy ...I don’t like people looking at what I’m doing, coz they’re like “Hey what are you doing? What’s this?” And I have to explain all this and [then] it’s time to get off my iPad

These actions, however, are not entirely based on the pursuit of privatised goals. Displacement to other spaces of the household can also simply be seen as an attempt to make the experience of engagement with mobile technology more comfortable, one which Rochelle Jones (2009) has demonstrated can be cognitively and ergonomically more problematic when compared to desktop computers. Thus Gentikow (2010) argues that the division of labour that is present between more purposive and relaxed modes of technology use is now fractured due to the low cost, power, and functionality of Internet-ready devices. These devices facilitate a status as a “friend in the pocket,” as well as adding further textures to the ways in which technology shapes household spaces (Lally 2002). However, it is the relationship to these technological objects that allows for expression of self (ibid.), providing children like Willows the opportunity to “make” themselves from objects which
they can claim “symbolic” ownership over. Hence, when she talks about taking the family iPad into her parent’s room, the one purchased by her father and, until her appropriation, primarily for his use, she places emphasis on describing the device as “my” and “mine.” Hence in a household set-up where space is tight, to the extent that she must share a bedroom with her younger brother (someone with whom she also shares many common cultural reference points), her claim upon the “rights” to the iPad can be read as an attempt to eke out responsibility towards a “personal” object in a context where little else can be described as such.

Under the guise of seeking comfort, these children’s actions, or appropriations (Lally 2002), possess the potential to be viewed as agentive within the process of finding “relative independence” within the home (ibid.). Willows’ use of her devices can be perceived within this realm of mitigating her economic dependence upon parents or other responsible adults who inevitably shoulder the material cost for participation in these and other media practices.

Willows’ school friend Paul Bond, aged 10, can justify his appropriation of the family laptop at times of his choosing into the private spaces of his bedroom to watch content like Family Guy because it fits into this more palatable discourse of seeking “comfort” as opposed to meeting a desire for privatised use:

PB: It’s just more relaxing, no-one’s there making noise which is gonna disturb me, in the lounge room the whole family is there talking and its everyone...also where I live it’s cold and my bed has my electric blanket

Me: So it’s more comfortable, more cozy?

PB: Yeah

This privileging of “comfort” as a process of objectification is also further evidenced in how it provides ways for young people to retain security in difficult family situations. Hence Internet-based televisual consumption via particular devices offers the ability to be viewed as modern transitional objects, replacing the teddy bear or blanket that Donald Winnicott (1971/2005) identified as offering security in difficult circumstances to infants and toddlers. Where Collins and Janning (2010) describe how “familiar” material objects can be utilised by young people as ways of defining “home” in trying circumstances such as divorce, media devices can similarly be observed as offering this same “comfort.”
Thus objects like laptops from Finley Central act as a constant in continually shifting situations. ROD, a 12-year-old boy, moves between the differing homes of his divorced parents. Describing his life at home in a form of socio-economic self-assessment as “below average” in comparison with other children in Australia, he admits to being more “settled” in the more “permanent” setting of his mother’s home due to its proximity to his cousins and school friends. There, the laptop retains value as a resource to be shared between himself and his parent. But while at his father’s, its subjective positioning is altered as it becomes incorporated as part of “my” possessions. This represents a change in its symbolic value as he moves into a space he feels less embedded and secure. The laptop provides him with the opportunity to retain some form of control in situations where children of his age can often feel a sense of rejection and powerlessness (Google eBook n.d.: 25).

Me: Whose laptop is it?

ROD: That’s mine

Me: Where is it usually kept?

ROD: When I’m at my dad’s it’s usually kept on my desk in my room, and when I’m at my mum’s house it’s usually in the lounge room, coz my mum uses it as well

Me: So you take it between the two houses?

ROD: Yeah

Just as televisual consumption can, on occasions, offer privacy of engagement, in many other instances it also provides the opportunity for familial bonding and the coming together of household members. It reflects the multiple and diverse ways that technology is incorporated into the household’s fabric (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1994). Where children point to the availability of a number of Internet-ready devices in the household on which they are able to perform televisual consumption (Figure 6-6 below), there is often mention of being able to meet diverse technological and online demands within communal household spaces, often with others present, in a sort of coexistence of screens. Hence rather than the terms of “escape” that Willows and Paul Bond describe with respect to engagement with these practices with “their” iPad and laptop respectively, some children, like Greta Anderson and Olivia, both girls aged 10 and nine from Bayview Primary, perceive these practices as largely defined by the presence of or engagement with others:
GA: Well, sometimes if we [me and my sister] miss a show, then we might watch it on the Internet. There’s not like one show we usually watch. Like... I can’t remember each individual show that we watch. Probably on my sister’s iPad, it’s bigger than mine. Mine is smaller than my sister’s. Her one is for school, so she needs a big one. I’ve got like an iPad mini.

Me: Where are you watching (referring to picture drawn)?

GA: We’re watching it on the couch [in the main living space]. We’d like crowd around. There we’d probably watching YouTube or something... [If I use my iPod it’s] mostly in lounge room and then like just randomly on the floor next to the charger.

Olivia:

Me: Where is the computer?

O: In the study, but ....we bring it out onto the main table so we’re not in the study area so that all the family is linked kind of so everybody can all be together

Me: Do you use it in your bedroom at all?

O: No

Me: Would there usually be somebody else in this room?

O: Yes

Figure 6-6: Possession of multiple devices on which online televisual consumption occurs
In addition to the socialisation within the home that technology can offer (Lally 2002), consumption of the televisual also provides the means for young people to engage in similar practices related to technology use outside the home that have been observed with mobile devices and older youths (Katz & Aakhus 2002; Ito et al. 2010). Whereas mobile phones are not a particular feature of children’s personal ownership of technology in this study, there are other devices that provide the opportunity to test out how technology can be utilised within the context of social relationships. The following image captures how televisual consumption facilitates a coming together with peers for Sarah Spencer (aged 11 from Shawcross Road), reflecting how “play dates” or friend visits can become increasingly media-centric (Livingstone 2002: 132).

Figure 6-7: Sarah Spencer engages with televisual consumption at her friend’s house

Sarah admits to not being an avid fan of the ABC teen drama *Dance Academy*, noting, “well I’m not that interested in it, well I like it... [but] I don’t really get around to watching it at my own house.” However, on visits to her friend’s home they end up viewing it together “because she really likes it.”
Since she describes their interactions centred on other aspects of technology as non-existent, televisual consumption provides the sole means through which they digitally “hang out.”

Besides helping to shape social relations, the televisual’s situation in varied spaces or locations within the home also help frame the way in which technology is put to use in varying contexts (Lally 2002). As Maria Bakardjieva (2005) points out in relation to communication technologies such as the networked computer, the accepted wisdom is that there is no “rightful” placement for its use. Some of the myriad of spaces (e.g., ibid.; Horst 2010, 2012; Lally 2002), identified as markers of “wired” spatial arrangements, such as the basement, den, and the family media room, are present for the children of this study. However, the areas utilised can be defined in a number of ways: central and accessible, semi-public, liminal, as well as ones that are more isolated or that can be considered “dead” in nature (Lally 2002; Facer et al. 2001). The following images and extracts provide an insight into the multifarious ways that children utilise household space in their typical engagements with televisual consumption. Some retain degrees of fluidity, indicating that communication technologies have to adapt when demands are placed on space due to changing household circumstances:

Lucy Green 8yo girl (Bayview):

LG: I’m watching in my toy-room.
Me: What other things are in your toy-room?

LG: Urm... Well... like lots of games...

Me: Is it just your stuff in there is there other stuff as well?

LG: It’s mainly my stuff

Me: Do you mostly use that room, or do other people use that room as much as you?

LG: Urm... well ... I mainly use it, but whenever my friends come over they always come in, when my sister comes home, she mainly comes in there when I ask her to come and play a game with me [and watch shows].

David 11yo boy Bayview: “[Originally] It was located in this room which we called the workroom coz this is where we had the computer, but it’s not there anymore, because it’s now turned into one of my brother’s bedrooms. And that computer is packed up, but I still watch some of my shows on the laptop which is located in-between the living room and kitchen”

Figure 6-9: David from Bayview using the family computer to consume the televisual

Anna T. 9yo girl (Finley Central):

Well we have the studio in our shed, that’s where we have two computers, my dad uses one for work sometimes, and I use ...me and my brother use that one for whatever we wanna use

Me: That’s physically outside the house in the shed?

AT: Yeah, but my dad’s usually in there, he’s cleaning up the shed, as most of the stuff is his
Me: Is there a TV in that shed as well, or is it just computers?

AT: Just computers

Me: If you had a choice of using these computers or using your iPad to watch something on, what are you going for do you think?

AT: Probably the computer as it’s easier to handle, if you’re trying to look up something, sometimes it won’t work (the iPad)

Among my participants I also encountered a particularly regionalised experience of bedroom culture. Unlike the media-rich bedrooms that Sonia Livingstone (2007) points to as important locations of media consumption, among these Australian young people the presence of technology would appear as related to storage rather than individualised and privatised use. Although children point to retaining the ability to store devices for televisual consumption, and media devices more generally, within their private spaces or in close proximity (e.g., landing outside a bedroom, or another room close by) they also pointed to very specific rules being in place with respect to their use. These typically involve expectations that consumption will be principally limited to the public spaces within the home. Although there are obvious instances where children’s bedrooms are maintained as important sites for consumption, as many children’s drawings depicting this would attest, at play generally is a process of sociality where the majority of children neither express the desire nor inclination to do so. And, when present, it would appear young boys tend to express stronger levels of engagement with these modes of private consumption.

As a way of capturing these many nuances in the way in which televisual consumption can figure in the shaping of the structure and rhythms of the home (Facer et al. 2001; Horst 2012; Lally 2002; Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1994), I wish to return to the words and a photo (Figure 6-10 below) of Samuel who provides a particularly detailed account of this practice within the context of the household. In a conversation relating to how he typically consumes the televisual, we see how he makes claims upon objects, incorporates technology into the fabric of the home, and how sociability acts as an important determinant of his engagement:

S: I refer to it as my laptop because I’m the only one who uses it at home

Me: Where does the laptop usually stay when it’s in the house?

S: Upstairs in the spare bedroom33... [I]n the spare bedroom, we have 3 computers, two laptops, an Apple and a desktop one

33 In actuality this is a sort of large corridor space that exists between bedrooms as described at the beginning of this thesis, and which performs the function of the family’s technology hub.
Me: Would you use it in your own bedroom?

S: Not at all. I use it in the spare bedroom

Me: Are they for different people, how does it work?

S: I don’t really know why we have so many. I know why we have the laptop so we can take it away out with us. I don’t know why we have more than one. Probably because the Apple is the one... it’s better off coz it’s faster

Me: Do the kids tend to use one computer and the adults another?

S: Well. My Dad and Mum tend to use the older PC, like.... Computer, but my mum will also use the Apple

Me: And you’re watching ABC3 (relating to a picture drawn) is that the usual way you watch on the computer?

S: We usually [do]

Me: So when you’re watching ABC on the computer, do you tend to be watching by yourself or with someone?

S: If I watch something on the computer my sisters would usually join in, come up and watch with me

Figure 6-10: The “technology space” in Samuel's house existing in a first-floor corridor
To conclude this section, Samuel provides a useful example of how portability and convergence act as important signifiers of televisual agency. Common among the children in this study (as Olivia indicates earlier) is the ability to utilise larger mobile technological devices in household spaces as well as “pocket friends.” where appropriate. Wi-Fi signals or power outlets can also be accessed. Children are able to make use of household spaces, which, although appearing innocuous in the first instance, become favoured locations due to the privacy they engender. These include the one Samuel identifies in Figure 6-11 below, which he can use without having to shut himself away in his bedroom. Despite the non-obvious appeal of the space underneath a table, Samuel claims to “find myself quite comfortable under there” as well as providing the added benefit of being “darker than the bedrooms, so I find that good if I’m watching things.” However, unlike some of Lally’s (2002) encounters in Australian homes, where space is often reconfigured in order to make the use of technology more comfortable and appealing, Samuel is clear that he makes no particular effort to adapt this space for increased hospitality:

Me: Is it comfortable [this space], can you make yourself comfortable down there though? Would you get cushions or something else to make yourself comfortable there or just as it was?

Samuel: I would usually keep it as it is. And just lie under there, yeah

Like Samuel, a number of other children in this study attest to how they are able to utilise household space and technology in ways that would not be immediately apparent. Thus rather than have to rely on technologically suitable spatial arrangements that are fixed, or adapt and change over time (Lally 2002), portability of technology provides the opportunity to respond more immediately to situations as they arise, offering greater flexibility in how space can be appropriated and technology incorporated within it. Thus where David attested earlier to being able to “watch some of my shows on the laptop which is located in-between the living room and kitchen,” he is also able to retreat to his bedroom, utilising the possibilities of household space as well as being able to receive “better Internet connection, as that’s where the modem is.” Thus the incorporation of portable and convergent technological devices into the fabric of the home can be described as an on-going process of re-domestication.
Tools of the Televisual

As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, Australian children have some of the highest levels of access to Internet-enabled devices compared with other young people in Europe, including the UK. What we see among my research participants is the ability to call upon an extensive range of technological devices that facilitate the ability to use the televisual. If focusing specifically on the 282 children who indicate consuming in this way, they collectively point to more than one thousand devices being at their disposal for this form of media use. Literally mirroring findings by Green et al. (2011), the children I encounter identify the use of 3.6 devices in these online practices, with boys showing a slightly greater range than girls (3.7 vs. 3.5). Thus, unlike a “digital gender gap” being in place as with the early migration of computing technology into the home and found among adult ownership (Cooper & Weaver 2003), little discernible difference is in place (at least in relation to these objects of access) when considering the number of devices these children can call upon. However, as Figure 6-6 (above) demonstrates, a divide of sorts does persist when considering multiple ownership of devices. Many scholars view socio-economic status as the most prominent factor defining technological divisions, whether among adult populations (ibid.), children (Clark 2013; Gutnick et al. 2010; Seiter 2005), or in Australia generally (Willis & Tranter 2006). This division can also be seen among the young people in this study.
Pupils at Finley Central, those lowest on the socio-economic scale of our four schools, possess the fewest number of devices that may facilitate this form of consumption practice. Their access rates are between 19% and 43% less than those of students at the other, more affluent, schools. However, when observing the children who have access to the greatest range of devices, it is those categorised as mid-tier that demonstrate this greatest propensity. Thus children at Highland School possess slightly more devices than the students at Bayview, but nearly 22% more than those of Shawcross Road. Social class is also a factor in the types of devices young children can call upon. Despite the increased presence of tablet devices among the children of Finley Central, explainable by the school’s participation in the *iPads for Learning Initiative* discussed in Chapter 4, the convergent “friend in a pocket” devices that can most be described as individualised or as personal luxuries, that is, iPods, have by far the lowest incidence of possession among these children. Conversely, the types of convergent technologies that offer more communal forms of consumption within the household feature most prominently. Hence laptops and Internet-enabled television sets are found at comparatively high levels among the children of Finley than at other schools, and computers, the most established of all such technologies, are present by as much as 70% more than in some other locations.

Just as we have already observed how cultural capital influences the extent to which children engage in televisual consumption, so too does it figure in children’s access to technologies and their preferences for engaging with this form of media use. Thus the students at Shawcross Road, despite occupying the same socio-economic class as those at Bayview, exhibit relationships to these engagements with technology and preferences for this form of media that are more similar to those we saw with children at Finley Central. In relation to access to technology, laptops feature at the lowest rate among the children at this school, while the more communal forms of televisual use, computers and TVs, feature at the second and first highest rates respectively.

In many respects, it would appear low socio-economic status can be equated with particular forms of cultural capital among my participants. This manifests in their relationship to this form of media use that, despite varied reasons for its occurrence, is a scenario in which this form of consumption is not tied to the type or number of devices at children’s disposal. Any of the devices that children possess or have access to will be utilised in pursuit of these practices. Thus graduations of use are more likely to be in place, whereby inequalities in the quality and nature of access are more likely to be present.

Rather than these media practices being driven by access to or the availability of technologies, it would appear that the reverse is in fact true (Figure 6-12 below). The indication is
that engagement with these activities takes on less importance for the children of this study when the material tools for consumption are in place. Conversely, where a young person can draw upon fewer resources, there is an upward trend to these engagements. At the same time, these children express an increased desire to engage in these types of practices. Thus, at the lowest class school, these children exhibit the strongest preference for engaging with the televisual via the Internet. Again, students at Shawcross Road, despite the lower availability of technological devices, express the second strongest preference for this form of media use (see Appendix C for detailed information of these preferences). Put in base terms, we can surmise this relationship between practice and tools of access as the “have-nots want to” and the “haves are not bothered.”

Since those who have access to the fewest devices express the strongest desire to engage in this form of media practice, my findings would appear to support those of Nairn and colleagues’ (2010) review of the literature on children and materialism. These authors claim that “the more unobtainable something is, the more desirable it appears” (ibid.). Discussing how the desire for consumption circulates through social relationships, Narin et al. suggests that, as well as this desire to consume being determined by social-economic status (as they conclude from an evaluation of the work in the area), cultural capital would also appear to be an important determinant. Thus, rather than the importance placed on material goods that circulates within the cultures of Bayview and Highland being perpetuated through the consumption habits of the family unit as Nairn et al. describe, the children at Shawcross reflect the reduced emphasis on technology that the school itself upholds and transmits as an important site of the cultural ecology of which it is part.
The Gendering of Technology

Although there are only small variations in the different devices boys and girls can call upon for televisual consumption (Figure 6-13 below), the way in which console devices are used would seem to re-affirm that they are the most-gender specific of all pieces of technology that young people have access to in the home. Although not included in this graph, of the 4.8% of respondents who mentioned console devices in relation to this type of consumption, none of them was a girl. This reflects the increased presence of games consoles among households with boys, as reported by the Kaiser Foundation in the USA and by OFCOM in the UK (Rideout et al. 2010; OFCOM 2013). However, beyond this particular gender bias in terms of console devices there is little to suggest any other such bias is present. If taking those devices that can be considered as being more individualised in their use (i.e. iPods, smartphone, and tablets), against those of being more communal in nature (computer, laptop, and TV), little difference is present to the types of devices boys and girls can draw upon. However, the increased presence of Internet-ready televisions among the boys I encounter would appear to offer some support to the arguments of Levine and Newman (2012) that television in a digital context can be increasingly described as a masculinised activity. Thus the enhanced forms of interactivity these specific “technologies of agency” afford is representative of the “mode of

Figure 6-12: Rate of use and preference of televisual consumption and possession of devices

![Figure 6-12: Rate of use and preference of televisual consumption and possession of devices](image)
approved agency” that these authors argue is central to transferring television consumption out of the realm of the feminine (ibid.: 132, 139).

Where there is no clear separation between the types of devices the boys and girls of this study use for this form of media consumption, there is, however, the presence of emergent attitudes and uses towards technology that are observed within adult groups (Livingstone 1994; Skog 2002). Although there is much commonality in how young people choose to describe their relationships to devices, there are particular themes that emerge as being more prominent among one gender when compared to the other. The way in which these are appropriated by some children indicates their acceptability, and familiarity is premised upon regarding these objects as a multi-varied tool (Silverstone & Haddon 1996: 2), facilitating particularly instrumental uses including social interaction. This stands in contrast to perceiving devices as a ubiquitous presence, where greater emphasis is placed on the formation of a personalised relationship between the individual and the technological object. In this regard, it was common for young girls to see their devices as supporting their education or used to facilitate particular goal-orientated tasks, as 10-year-old Alison Brown from Bayview comments:
They’re important to check things that you wouldn’t normally find in other things like newspapers and books, it’s something you just click on. Search things up to research them. We need them for our ERPs and reports. ERPs are our Education Research Project, every term people have to… they pick an interest and then link it to these intentions that the teachers give us, this term it’s communication, so we’re all working on that to try and do a project but we need to research about our interest, and we need devices to do that.

In a similar vein, the potential for communicative and social engagement with wider peer networks that devices can provide was again most pronounced among the young girls in this study. This supports findings by more detailed research identifying trends among girls, female youth, and women (Kasesniemi & Rautiainen 2002; Puro 2002; Süss et al. 2001; Tufte & Rasmussen 2010). The girls of this study tended to view technology as supporting broader online networks, demonstrating an increased use of social networking software such as Kik Messenger, FaceTime, Instagram, and Skype, all of which facilitated an ability to stay in contact with family and others, typically people already found in their offline social networks:

Laura 10yo girl Bayview:
If you’re at home and you’re bored you can go on the computer and you can communicate with your friends, and you can call your friends, you can text your friends …

Michelle Tanner 10yo girl Bayview:
So… they help us… let’s say during the holidays and we are doing nothing and we’re kind of bored, we can go on an iPod or something and talk to our friends on messages or FaceTime or something
Tess 11yo girl Bayview:
Being social, well just you know ... coz I don’t really call people I text them [via Kik]

Isabella Ring 11yo girl Highland:
Coz I have FaceTime on my laptop, if I talk to my mum as she’s normally away, I’ll talk to her on FaceTime, I wouldn’t be doing anything else. I’ll basically be asking her questions about her day and whatever else I do...

For many young boys in this study, possession of mobile devices signals, as Katz and Aakhus observe in relation to mobile phones, an opportunity to find “liberation” from their immediate surroundings (2002: 7). They characterise their devices, particularly iPods, as an object offering companionship. They are a constant presence that they can call upon whenever the need arose:

Stewie Stuart 10yo boy Highland:
I carry it (iPod) around with me a lot of the time... Sometimes I bring it to the shopping centre coz sometimes I get bored, sometimes to my friend’s house coz I like to play different games with them... show them new apps

Trevor Marks 9yo boy Finley Central:
I find them important because it’s got a lot, it stores a lot of information, it’s like a mini-computer you can take it portable, sometimes you want to search up something really quickly instead of having to start up the computer and put in a password and stuff like that, and it takes a while to set up, it’s just pull it out your pocket and you’re away

Tony Whatt 11yo boy Highland:
I reckon because they’re mobile and... they’re a lot easier to take around than taking like... for example for a PC or computer they have to sit in one spot because they’re not mobile unless you’re moving houses or something.... I take my iPod out regularly as we like to play, I like to play with my friends on my iPod, I like to show them new apps. I iPod is nearly everywhere I go except for school (I usually keep it with me when I go to my friend’s house). They’re your mobile friend...Almost like your mini-friend in yer pocket. Yeah your little mini friend in your pocket

Devices or “mobile pocket friends” appear more commonly among the boys of this study (see Figure 6-13 above) and offer a sense of perpetual contact. But instead of the relationship to others that Katz and Aakhus (2002) argue is present with mobile phones, an object such as an iPod provides a way of perpetually maintaining a sense of belonging to self (Glennie & Thrift in Lally 2002:30). It offers them the means for contact across multifarious “spaces and times” without being dependent on membership of any particular social network (ibid.). Thus boys make use of these devices as a stand-
in for interpersonal relationships beyond the communication potential it offers for staying in touch with others. As with Willows and her school friend Paul Bond, as well as children like ROD from Finley Central, engagement with televisual consumption through the devices they use serves the purpose of extending self (Lally 2002). This occurs both through the object itself, as with children like Tony Whatt, but also through the processes it can support, as with people such as Laura above. These observations raise interesting questions as to the nature of the trust that children place in these “object relations,” thus building upon Silverstone’s reading of Winnicott on the place of objects as aiding security in separation from the mother-figure (Silverstone 1994). With the ways in which Silverstone frames his discussion of Giddens’ ontological security, achieved via television’s everydayness and ritualization, the technology stands in place of the loss incurred through this process of a child understanding themselves as separate from their nurturer and provider. This psychoanalytical framing would, in this context, appear to offer interesting nuances to those discourses circulating in relation to technology use in later life. If, as Silverstone contends, individuals through their early years act “as both the product and producer of symbolic acts of communication,” it is social relationships that play a key role in the development of affections towards technology. It is trust and confidence (instilled) in oneself and between these relationships that negotiates the trauma of this separation, and thus a later need for security achieved via technology.

**Conclusion**

As we have seen in this chapter, convergence and portability supports the personalisation of the televisual experience for the young people in this study. We see the children engaging in these practices across the whole period of childhood upon which this study focuses. More than half the children in this study acknowledge participating in televisual consumption across the social and cultural spectrum. However, children in more rural settings are the least engaged of all cohorts, whereas children within the lowest socio-economic class are some of the most active practitioners of this form of media use. Additionally, we see this form of televisual consumption more commonly among these Australian children than among their peers in the US and UK.

However, within this form of consumption practice, we also see, to borrow a term from Patricia Lange, that “not all digital youth [are] created equally” (Jenkins 2014). Differentiation is in place, not only in the extent of engagement, but also with respect to the tools of access that children can draw upon to facilitate this consumption. This form of media use also reflects the differing ways that technology can be incorporated into the household, dependent upon social and cultural differences and allowing for the construction of differing relationships to media in differing ways.
Just as boyd and Hargittai (2013) demonstrate how parental background and income impacts attitudes towards their children’s use of networked technologies, and as the work of Hargittai’s (2010) on *net geners* points to many nuanced patterns that show how technology use is evident when considering a specific demographic, so too are there varying patterns of use and engagement in place among the children in this study. For example, students within the lowest socio-economic setting have the fewest, and smallest range of, devices to draw upon for these activities. Moreover, in these less advantaged settings, available technologies are principally the ones that can be described as more communal in nature, and where those personal “friend in a pocket” devices are at the least frequent. Similarly, children at Shawcross Road exhibit a heightened propensity for this form of media use. They possess access to a similar range of devices despite occupying a higher class position, a situation that is reflective of parental / school attitudes that circulate within this ecology. However, despite having comparatively fewer tools of access, these two groups express the strongest desire and level of engagement with these televisual practices.

Economic capital and cultural capital are therefore important determinants to how these Australian children come to this form of media practice.

It is also clear from the children of this study that televisual consumption confers a fracturing of practices traditionally rooted in the organisational structures of the home, both spatially and temporally. It provides liberation from broadcast schedules and bestows increased possibilities to access broader ranges of content. It also offers the ability to stake claims to household spaces and objects in cases where children can appropriate technology to incorporate it into exploring aspects of self. Since children’s outdoor spaces and opportunities for the exploration and circulation of cultures that are free from adult guidance and management are increasingly on the wane, these forms of consumption practices can be viewed as new landscapes that provide for experimentation with, and consolidation of, differing identities. Thus the varied devices and subsequent household spaces that children can make use of in order to pursue these activities allows them to develop more personal relationships towards media as it works between the public and private spheres. These are areas of participation that have often struggled to accommodate young people’s claims to power and authority (Jenks 1996). The retooling of household space is also made possible through convergence and portability. They offer more relaxed modes of consumption and the opportunity to replicate similar or identical functionality across any household space. At the same time, they privilege the agency that children can experience as they navigate their televisual use.

The opportunities provided by a range of technologies that can facilitate the same televisual functionality is one that is not based purely on the pursuit of an individualised experience, as Katz
(2009) would seem to indicate. Instead, many children in this study point to these engagements as being framed in communal or social terms. On many occasions, these are the technologically mediated forms of interactions that support the “hanging out” with friends on visits to each other’s homes, as well as the coming together of family members offering the opportunity of “being together.” Togetherness can be achieved either through the sharing of consumption with siblings, as with children like Olivia or Samuel, or in supporting differing forms of individual consumption within the same physical space, using one of the many convergent screens in a typical household. Beyond these relationships centred on the home, televiual consumption offers the pursuit of marginalised taste constituencies and engagement with native communities, opportunities that are not often encountered in children’s offline experiences. Thus young people like David from Bayview and Hazy from Finley Central are offered the opportunity to seek out, reacquaint themselves with, and bond with cultures that are too small to be catered for by typical broadcast services. In short, the televiual as accessed via the Internet offers children the ability to self-manage this form of media use in ways that are only hinted at in previous phases of television consumption. Access to a range of televiual ecologies offers more complex ways in which to frame relationships to self the household, and to more widely-dispersed networks.
7 YouTube as an Enhanced Televisual Mode

In the previous chapter I set out the varied ways in which the children of my study utilise the televisual via the Internet as a tool to self-manage the practice of televisual consumption. In this chapter I frame children’s participatory potential in the principal online system of their convergent televisual ecology.

In the previous chapter we saw how these young people made claims to convergent portable devices as a way of adopting agency within the structure of the household. Children utilised these technologies of the televisual to offer differing ways to challenge the temporal and spatial arrangements that typically frame when and where such media use can take place. Through the ability to find engagement with dispersed taste and ethnic cultures, the children I encounter also make use of Internet-enabled televisual consumption as a way of bringing others in the household together through the sharing of televisual tastes and of physical household space.

More than half of the participants in my study indicate accessing the televisual via the Internet, and YouTube is the primary mode of interface through which this takes place. As I explained in Chapter 2, YouTube is the most common space through which to access the possibilities of “infinite choice” in this convergent heightened televisual ecology. Despite its place within the market economy, however, this video sharing site offers a different mode of address to young people than that found in other media worlds, particularly in relation to commercial branded media spaces but also to public service “media projects.” This chapter seeks to present YouTube as an enhanced televisual mode offering four distinct engagements within this media system: *browsing, TV Alternative, “The Best YouTubers,” and Concerted Viewsing*. I will argue that all of these offer children differing forms of participation within this televisual ecology, and that these are dependent upon a child’s consumption opportunities and circumstances. Where socio-economic class stands as inconsequential to young peoples’ engagement with these practices, gender (as discussed in Chapter 5) does influence the types of content that children engage with in this space.
The Possibilities of “Infinite Choice”

As already observed in Chapter 6, the opportunities afforded by convergence technologies provide for the possibility to access content disembedded from the context of broadcast flows. As we saw Paul Bond hint at in the previous chapter, convergent technologies provide for the ability to access content that is typically denied to young people through broadcast schedules due to watershed viewing restrictions. YouTube facilitates increased opportunity for content consumption, but children are not protected in the same manner from inappropriate content as provided for within a broadcast system. Thus Paul is able to consume the animation title *Family Guy* despite its adult themes and language. Its typical viewing rating is for mature audiences aged 15 or over (M or MA) on Australian television screens, which ensured within the “older” televisual system that screening times are restricted to at least 8:30pm as laid down by the 2009 Commercial Television Code of Practice. Scenarios for other children, such as JM, an 11-year-old boy from Finley Central, also make this clear:

*Me:* Do you watch other stuff on the iPad as well?

*JM:* I watch *Family Guy*, South Park, *The Walking Dead*, a lot of TV shows [via YouTube].

*Me:* Is that your preferred way of watching stuff?

*JM:* Yes. Because I don’t have Foxtel I just usually watch it like that.

*Me:* Most of the stuff you said you mentioned is for older audiences? How does that work then, does anybody come and see what you’re watching?

*JM:* No, my parents let me watch most stuff except R.

*Me:* They know you’re watching *South Park* and *Walking Dead* for example?

*J:* Yes (and it’s not a problem)... [I also watch *Embarrassing Bodies*. They show you things that are really embarrassing on TV, sometimes it’s M, sometimes MA, and my parents first showed me this, and they talked about stuff, like if they have a deformed body and they get free surgery and that’s what all happens on it.

Although this extract from my discussions with JM possibly says more about the types of mediation his parents employ in relation to his televisual use than his own preferences, undoubtedly the possibilities of “infinite choice” that are available in his televisual landscape offer access to what may be deemed “unsuitable” content for a child of his age. Thus his televisual ecology does not
incorporate the inability to access these types of content, since his family does not possess subscription pay-TV services (STV). Government restrictions are thus made redundant by the Internet.

This “threat” to the security of television that YouTube can be said to usher in is also in evidence through the ability of children to navigate to unwanted content. Seemingly through the use of innocuous search terms, children can be presented with content that they did not intend to find and that is offensive, facilitating issues such as the following:

Georgie 11yo girl from Shawcross Road:

*I don’t like YouTube that much. You can just pretty much put anything on that, like... yeah... if you search up something it doesn’t necessarily come up with that, it can come up with absolutely anything*

With curbs not present in the same way in relation to offensive language, such as is contained within bounded “safe haven” systems such as Cartoon Network or again those furnished by broadcast regulations, YouTube presents young people with the possibility of encountering language they would rather avoid. Thus where the activation of the YouTube safety mode allows for the filtering out of inappropriate content for the vast number of children, it appears to not be in operation and parents tend to be unaware such forms of mediation are available (OFCOM 2014: 169). In these situations, children in my study expressed surprise and discomfort at language that they would not expect to be presented with during their TV consumption:

John 9yo boy from Highland:

*There’s this YouTuber on YouTube [Smosh] and he’s made a lot of videos on YouTube and they do very well and very popular ... and he does swear sometimes. The first time I saw Smosh I was surprised it wasn’t blocked, and then I saw comments for some of his earlier videos which were more cruder that said that was really rude and it should be blocked. And now I think it’s great as there is not so much swearing, but I think for YouTube to keep going and no one to complain ... there should be ratings and they should block things*

These children’s observations act as backdrop to contextualising the extent to which engagement with YouTube and Internet-enabled televiusal consumption more generally is preferred by the children in my study. In contrast to the high levels of participation children record with this form of media practice, when asked to indicate how much they preferred engaging with the televiusal in this manner a differing picture emerges. Of the 517 children who recorded a survey response to a question about whether they preferred to consume the televiusal via a TV set or via the Internet,
only 24% indicated a preference for using systems like YouTube or online media worlds. Boys
displayed a stronger commitment to engaging in these forms of Internet based consumption than
girls (28% vs. 20%). Classed responses also emerged. Children at Finley Central, particularly boys,
prefer using the Internet for this consumption far more than students at the other schools in this
study (51% of boys at Finley Central vs. 32% of girls). Similarly as presented in the previous chapter in
relation to the extent these practices appears among the children of Shawcross, students here
display the second strongest preferences for this media use, with boys again displaying a much
stronger commitment to these practices (see Appendix C for a detailed breakdown of these
responses by school and gender).

**YouTube Modes**

Although my study contains no specific data on the extent or frequency with which the Australian
children I encounter engaged with YouTube, figures from the UK provided by OFCOM (2013) may
provide a useful barometer, bearing in mind that Australian children are considered to be earlier and
more promiscuous adopters of Internet practices than children from the UK. Among British young
people aged eight to 11, 29% are found to consume televisual content via YouTube at least once a
week, making this form of online access more popular than activities such as social networking and
the downloading or playing of music (OFCOM 2013: 76-7). The only forms of Internet use more
popular than this were found to be completing homework and playing games (ibid.).

Within this specific mode of televisual consumption it is possible to identify four differing
forms of engagement used by the children encountered in this study. These experiences can be
categorised as Browfing, TV Alternative, The Best YouTubers, and Concerted Viewsing. These
practices most support notions of online choice and personal self-expression for the children in this
study, as well as facilitating the negotiation, sharing, and creating of culture with peers and others.
Corsaro (2005) describes such features as central to formulations of childhood. These televisual
modes are the spaces that facilitate the ability to electronically “hang out” (Ito et. al. 2010). It is
through hanging out in this way that children are provided the space to most explore differing
“publics.” Through the pursuit of “friendship-driven” or “interest-driven” interests (ibid.), the spaces
children encounter can be conceived of presenting participation within the broader culture
circulating within YouTube (Burgess and Green 2009: 61). At the same time, they reflect how the
Internet generally acts as a public space claimed by children for the circulation of their own culture
more broadly (Sjöberg 1999; boyd 2008).
In these authors detailed study of YouTube and its participatory cultures they identify viewers engagement with broadcast content to be twice as much than with UGC.

Figure 7-1: Mich’s impression of “watching television on the Internet”
Within this YouTube mode there is a more spontaneous form of consumption evident in which a link or comment attached to a video and the “Up Next” system provide recommended viewing. These mechanisms all act as cues for ongoing consumption. Here, as with all the other YouTube modes, it is these “traces” of participation, including view counts and user recommends, that often lead to varied and segued consumption streams. Isabella Ring, aged 11 from Highland School, describes this scenario as: “[on] YouTube they have stuff that says ‘Click here to watch the next video’, and normally you click on it.” Utilising these currencies of exchange within the YouTube community, participation as a “YouTuber” can be considered as a form “of lightweight hanging out” where, despite the physical absence of another, users are able to signal their presence in these varying ways (Horst et al. 2010: 46). In Figure 7-1 above, Mich, a 9-year-old boy from Finley Central, discusses how this form of consumption is relevant to his televisual experience. The image is of his iPad screen, a device handed down to him from his father for use at school where tablet devices are intended for integration in everyday school-based learning but which, as he mentioned in Chapter 4, struggles to be fully integrated into “legitimate” educational goals.

**Me:** What type of stuff do you like to watch on YouTube?

**Mich:** ...all sorts...experiments and stuff like that. Or if go to [a friend’s] house sometimes and he watches something, and I have a look at the rest of the stuff

**Me:** So you’re exchanging stuff to look at between friends?

**Mich:** Yeah

**Me:** And how often would you visit YouTube to do something like that?

**Mich:** Ahhh maybe five times a week or something. I’m not a person who stays on the iPad for like two hours

As with the circulation of culture described by Horst et al. (2010) as taking place within those practices of hanging out through the sharing and forwarding of links of interest, so too are these children able to maintain these connections both interpersonally and via communication technology. Hence the playground, which has traditionally served as the locus of children’s culture generally (Opie & Opie 1969; Opie 1993), and media texts (Grudgeon 2004; Marsh & Bishop 2014; Opie 1969; Willett 2014) retain value for promoting the sharing of culture online. The social networks to which Mich alludes above, in terms of encountering possible streams of content via visits to a friend’s home, demonstrate the value of both offline and online connections as a means of driving televisual
participation. John Bradley, a 9-year-old class-mate of Mich, explains how this YouTube culture circulates in both these avenues of experience:

**JB:** I get most of my YouTube stuff through a friend, he’s on the computer watching YouTube 24/7 and he just tells me all the best YouTube videos. Before school starts we talk about it [in the playground]... I go to YouTube [and] I like watching new ones [episodes of Star Wars Clone Wars]... I would prefer [using the iPad] coz I could just email the videos to other people. I could email it to some of the other people, coz I’ve got my aunties email, and she’s really into Star Wars and stuff like that, so I’ll be sending her emails of stuff of that.

For the majority of young people it is these types of social relationships and interactions that define how they discover content on YouTube. According to OFCOM (2014: 98), advice by friends, moreso than search terms, is the main driver of how young people consume within this televisual system.

**TV Alternative**

Beyond Browfing, as Horst et al. (2010) encounter among college students in Silicon Valley, there are children who utilise YouTube as a means of extending or even replacing traditional TV viewing. This TV alternative typically derives from a position where opportunities to access devices is generally limited within the household, and where strict rules are in place governing the amount of time children can spend with varying forms of electronic media. In other cases it can also act as a replacement for a TV where one is absent from the household altogether. Although this YouTube mode is found among children from all four population groups in this study, its occurrence is most prominent among those from Shawcross Road. This is somewhat unsurprising when considering the ecology of the school and its lack of engagement with technology in its curriculum.

Children at Shawcross Road encounter restrictions on their “screen time.” These restrictions are typically lessened over the weekend, but during weekdays their allocated screen technology time tends to stand between thirty and sixty minutes, often with a very firm form of enforcement in place. These types of controls on media use are reflective of the empowerment and cultivation theses that Clark (2013) and Lareau (2011) propose, as discussed in the previous chapter. Both argue that these scenarios are particularly prominent among children of the higher social classes, who are increasingly encouraged to make productive use of their time. This has the implication that certain forms of media use are viewed as being more problematic than others (Clark 2013). Lisa Tripp (2010) reflects that these scenarios are present among working class immigrant
parents who express concern that their children’s limited access to online opportunities should be focussed on pursuing educational goals.

Although many young people tend to find these restrictions onerous, they understand and even take particularly reasoned approaches to their imposition. However, due to these restrictions, children often find they do not have sufficient time to view their desired texts when these are consumed as part of traditionally embedded television flows, since in-programme advertising and opening and closing credits typically increase consumption. Children who find themselves struggling with viewing restrictions therefore often find themselves turning to alternative sources of broadcast content that reduce these overall run times, as well as offering the ability to access differing televisual forms altogether. The following interview excerpts provide insight into children’s perceptions of these regulations. Harry, a 12-year-old boy from Finley Central, presents a particularly philosophical position regarding the firm hand his parents have adopted towards his access of the televisual:

Harry: ... [M]y dad is very anti-screen ... The only screen he really only uses is his computer to check emails so he has this rule where you can only have half an hour on a screen a day...

Me: When you say screens what does it apply to?

Harry: iPod, computer and TV

Me: Say you’ve got your 30 minutes in a day, what would you normally... what would you spend your 30 minutes doing?

Harry: Probably the first thing I would do is go and check my Kik, coz I also have Kik. Then I check Instagram, and then if I still have spare time from that I’d probably go on YouTube

Me: In terms of your 30 minutes, how is it monitored, do you check to see how long it is or does someone check?

Harry: I normally.... sometimes I get the stopwatch, I use the stopwatch on my iPod or sometimes just look at the clock, so if I started there, I finish around half an hour more.

Me: So how happy are you with that arrangement; would you like it to be shorter or longer...?

Harry: Obviously if I could I’d have it longer. But it doesn’t necessarily mean that I’d be on it all the time which my dad seems to think

Me: So you’re saying you would like more of a choice?
Harry: Maybe like 40 or 45 minutes a day but I wouldn’t necessarily use it all as soon as I could. I’m fine with 30 minutes it doesn’t have to be changed immediately, if it stayed the same

Me: When you tend to come to your friend’s house …do you tend to go to the TV or the computer?

Harry: I do do that, but then I … I realised I kind of get bored after half an hour, coz I only have half an hour a day I’ve … my brain is kind of locked onto that half an hour. I get bored after half an hour

Me: So you’re used to the idea of watching whatever it is for 30 minutes?

H: Yeah

The images and words of Anna Friedman, a 10-year-old girl who attends Shawcross Road, explore how these time restrictions lead her to tailoring her viewing experience to the time allotted. Anna describes her experience of TV Alternative:

Me: Do you have rules about when you can use your devices or how long you can use it for?

AF: We have screen time and we normally have to read for half an hour before we can have [it], and we can only have it for an hour, we can’t go on our screens to much

Me: So you drew a picture of you watching YouTube on a computer, what things do you watch?

AF: Funny [things] really, I also like watching… I like training my dog, sometimes I look at dog training videos and funny animals and also if I want… if I find a specific video I wanted to watch then I’d watch that

Me: Is that part of your time regulation to be able to use devices?

AF: Yeah, screen time
“The Best YouTubers”

The third of the YouTube modes to be discussed can be described as being premised on an engagement with video sharing channels composed entirely of collections of related or unrelated segments that are generated by individuals or specific groups of users. This particular form of engagement with YouTube use is particularly important to how young people engage with the televisual when compared to a TV set. Again, returning to recent OFCOM findings, 29% of eight-to-11-year-olds express a preference for accessing content via YouTube channels compared with channels found on the TV (OFCOM 2014: 68).

These are the types of Internet spaces that can be described as most clearly facilitating a democratization of fame, whereby possible aspirants are afforded an opportunity of becoming world
famous on the back of a concept (Burns 2009). For particularly successful YouTube entrepreneurs, channel subscriber numbers are generated in the millions, total views are in the hundreds of millions if not billions, and their creators have the potential to earn seven-figure annual revenues (Jacobs 2014). The undoubted kings of channelling among my participants are the comedy duo of Ian Andrew Hecox and Anthony Padilla, better known as the YouTube stars Smosh. Beginning in 2005, both aged 16, the pair’s initial video postings focussed on lip-synching to theme-songs from popular children’s cartoons. Since then they have gone on to be recognised at differing times as the most subscribed YouTube channel. As their videos approach 3.5 billion views, they are currently ranked as the tenth most viewed video producers of all time.

Their productions would not be categorised as true examples of Jenkins’ work on fan cultures per se (2012), since a great amount of their output is not strictly derived from established texts. They have undoubtedly made use of the cheap tools of digital production to facilitate their own constructed or reconstructed texts. What is clear, however, is that they have benefited from easy software availability to allow the blending of audio and video formats from a variety of sources that can then be published to audiences dispersed geographically. In the process, the duo has expanded their team of protagonists, posting videos on a weekly basis to an array of Smosh affiliated channels. It is these screen personas that provide children with an insight into the available cultural possibilities that potential authoring may afford (Jenkins 2009). The words of John Bradley, who we discussed earlier in relation to the circulation of YouTube culture both online and offline, provides an indication of how this televisual mode presents the types of technologically mediated identities on offer:

Me: What is your drawing of?
JB: its Smosh, they’re like the best YouTubers I think they’re called, and urmmm....
Me: Why do you think they’re the best YouTubers?
JB: They say they’ve got the most views and they’ve got the most subscribers too, so they got the most of both
Me: And what is it about them that you like do you think?
JB: Is that they’re really really funny, and one of them is still under 18 which is really cool
Me: Why is that do you think?
JB: He might of started early, like when he was really young, and might have got better and better at YouTubing, making videos and might of just came absolutely awesome
**Me:** So you like the idea someone quite young might being able to do that sort of thing?

**JB:** Yeah

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**Concerted Viewsing**

The last of these specific YouTube modes centres on situations where young people incorporate their televisual consumption into other areas of their media use. Particularly prominent among the boys in this study, these forms of participation are mainly utilised in relation to gaming culture. Children watch others play across a wide range of games and platforms. Sometimes they consume this material to aid in the acquisition of skills in order to facilitate their own game play progression, but also as forms of stand-alone consumption spurred on by their interest. As an instructional video, these videos make use of what John Hartley (in Dawson 2007) has called the “redacted text,” the creation of new material from already-existing content. Aided by improved capabilities on newer console devices for the recording and sharing of game-based exploits, these redacted texts tend to

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Figure 7-3: Glen Parker from Finley Central and his impression of “The Best YouTubers”
be uploaded with additional audio and/or video commentary, and also offer the opportunity to be incorporated into extended texts such as those featured on Smosh. Borne out of “lifecasting” with its desire to document individual experiences through online video (Spangler 2014), it is the construction of these differing elements—game-play and the interactions of those present on screen—that become the key forms of attraction for these young viewers. Aside from the fashioning of YouTube stars, the capturing of game-based play has in itself fostered a lucrative market. This is so much so that Google, in a proposed acquisition, has valued the 45 million monthly users who utilise the live streaming gaming site, Twitch.tv, at US$1 billion (Brustein 2013).

The following image (Figure 7-4) from classmates at Finley Central illustrates how young people make use of these types of game play segments. Following on from this is an annotated conversation outlining how these boys, Todd Martin (TM) (aged nine) and Charlie Brown (CB) (aged eight) engage in this form of consumption:

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**Figure 7-4: Todd Martin and Charlie Brown’s interpretations of Concerted Viewsing**

**TM:** Watching YouTubers and they play certain games and stuff

**CB:** Well, I watch other things but Minecraft is one of the things that I normally use

**Me:** Is that a process of watching the game play and going back to the game?

**TM:** Yeah
CB: Not really, with some of my other games that’s what it’s about, but with Minecraft... It’s just to... fun video of what people do on Minecraft

Me: What other stuff would you watch online [like this] do you think?

CB: There’s this game called Dragon City and I like get tips on how some guys might do stuff like breed dragons. [Sometimes it’s] Just general information [as opposed to being stuck on anything]

Me: So is this on Minecraft or other games as well?

TM: [For me its] Minecraft but also other games as well

Me: So... would you go backwards and forwards ...between watching YouTube and going to play on your Xbox or whatever device?

T: Maybe if I was gonna stay on there for two hours I might spend like half an hour on YouTube and play the rest on my Xbox... When I get stuck on something then I go and look

Me: When you want to get to a higher level or section on the game, would you go to YouTube [to get cheats]?

T: Nah, it usually spoils the experience for me then it’s just all easy

As should be apparent, this form of YouTube consumption is not specifically premised on the pursuit of meeting targeted learning goals or skill acquisition, although this purpose can also be served. Instead, it can act as a form or entertainment or “fun” in its own right. It affords the ability to uncover points of interest as all these other YouTube modes provide, whether defined as taking place as a filler of time, a replacement for the older medium, attachment to a particular “broadcast channel, or commitment to pursuing a particular interest. All of these can be perceived as being utilised by participant children as a way of recognising themselves in relation to others, and in which YouTube functions in a similar fashion to other social media sites for young teens (Livingstone 2008: 394). These forms of participation can be recognised as spaces for interaction and identity building.

Through the processes of seeking, looking, and following that each of these YouTube modes occupy, ability is afforded to participate in more formalised types of learning, as Drotner (2008) describes. In this context, the skills these children can be said to acquire revolve around contributions to “larger patterns” of knowledge and conceptualisations (ibid.), whereas in this YouTube system subjectivities are created that open up the possibilities for the creation of content. In this light, children, as with all viewers, can come to “understand their place in the media ecology differently because they know how easy it is to contribute content... [whereby] YouTube as a
platform... inspires a new kind of subjectivity that transforms all consumers into potential authors” (Jenkins 2009: 116). This sense of the possibilities for creative participation that these YouTube modes can offer is articulated by Josh Brown (JB), a 10-year-old boy from Highland School. Here he recounts how being able to view material acts as a form of inspiration, while at the same time his comments highlight the curbs on access to deeper participation that children can encounter:

Me  What’s the attraction of using YouTube?

JB:  It’s the only site when you can make videos and place them on, it’s not like iView and stuff, it’s not like them. It doesn’t work like them, you can make actually make videos, funny parodies like them and put them on. That makes it more interesting than the others

Me:  Is that something you ever do at all, make videos?

JB:  No no, I don’t have a YouTube account and my mum won’t let me

Me:  But you like other people...?

JB:  Yeah I like other people being able to make videos

Me:  So you don’t create any videos yourself but you like the idea that other people create the videos and do parodies and stuff

JB:  I’m gonna make an account soon.

Me:  So is that something you’d like to do, make videos and put them up there?

JB:  Yeah. So I can make people laugh and stuff

Me:  Do you have any people you know, friends or family that actually do that?

JB:  My best friend in class makes videos, he makes gaming videos and stuff. He’s one year younger than me

In a sense, the types of participation that Josh hopes to achieve is to express himself through this televisual system in ways that are not achievable through other media worlds or televisual systems. Reflecting the possibilities of participating through a “technological identity” (Lange 2014), young people gain insights into the required tools and roles needed to create texts and the value of being able to present themselves in these spaces. Thus the opportunity afforded to “broadcast yourself” within YouTube offers the possibility to participate in a culture that is not offered within other televisual systems, such as the pre-formed and highly managed media worlds of platforms like Cartoon Network.
Antecedents of YouTube Modes

The purpose of this framing of televisual modes such as YouTube is not to identify them as representative of revolutionary interjections to the televisual form, but rather as evolutionary spaces embedded, to varying degrees, within more established televisual practices. Unlike bounded systems of the televisual (such as those initially structured by nation states or branded media worlds), YouTube offers an open access method that other incarnations of the televisual can only partially, if at all, allude to. Thus YouTube is familiar while also extending engagements with the televisual in a digital context. The modes of *Browfing* and *The Best YouTubers* are particularly clear extensions of this.

The first of these, the leisurely browse and surf of the net, can be viewed as originating with the custom of grazing using a remote control device within a broadcast system. Principally viewed in relation to programme and advertising avoidance, it can also serve the purpose of sampling content before commitment (Bollier in Eastman & Newton 1995). Whether considered in a broadcast or post-broadcast sense, these modes of consumption can provide what I describe as a “stumbling through” quality towards consumption due to the un-intentional forms of engagement they can inspire. With no specific consumption goals in mind, engagement is determined by happenstance and the offerings of the system at any given moment. This system determinism can also be observed as being present in the YouTube mode of “*The Best YouTubers*.” This in itself is dependent upon the creation of differentiated points of address with the intention of offering a sense of familiarity for viewers as they move between older and newer televisual systems. In this digital context, “*The Best YouTubers*” takes its cue from narrowcasting brand recognition and channel loyalty, and the desire on the part of broadcasters to create captive channels of consumption whereby consumer expectations and tastes are met, facilitating identification and loyalty with an individual network brand. In this digital landscape, which renders the tools for production and access democratically available, the individual is the brand, allowing for a system where (practically) every body has the potential to be a broadcaster and become a televisual star.

These varied televisual modes can be considered as supporting those claims of Newman and Levine (2012) that television in a digital context is essentially placeless. Contemporary software systems (media worlds and YouTube) offer the possibility to support this consumption as it is only limited to the availability of a functioning Internet connection. Thus convergent technology, its portability, and these televisual systems act as the mediators for the publicness and improved agency that Newman and Levine argue is key to reconceptualising television. However, just as the home acts
as the principal site for viewers’ televisual consumption (as supported by those reports from the Ericsson ConsumerLab [2013] and Screen Australia [2014]), so too do the participants of my study reflect this rootedness to the home.

The “security” of the home in relation to this consumption is also in place when we consider how these contemporary televisual spaces attempt to situate the “regularity and sequenciality” that Silverstone (1994) argues are key determinants of the television system. Invoking the importance of remediation as “interpreting the work” of earlier televisual systems (Bolter & Grusin, 1999: 55), YouTube (as well as media worlds) operates to maintain its users’ presence through the application of system-determined flows. Suggestions by the system, under headings such as Latest,” “Popular,” “What to Watch,” or “Recommended,” which are made irrespective of a user's profile, seek to maximise the “grazing” potential of people engaging in consumption. With the use of a login account, this system determinism becomes even more targeted, since system suggestions become based on past consumption habits. In effect, this allows for the system to dictate possible and supposedly relevant paths of consumption for the viewer. Perhaps more telling, however, is the Autoplay function within YouTube. Although the viewer can decide whether this is activated or not, irrespective of whether a person is logged into an account, its default setting is set to “on,” allowing for the system to automatically select and play a new video related to the content currently in use. This effectively provides perpetual cycle of consumption beyond the initial point of engagement. In contrast to the varied “centres” that aim to maintain viewers' attention within the institutionally convergent “matrix” as Curtin (2009) describes, YouTube can be perceived as a single coherent system that attempts to maintain viewers' attention not only through individual user-flows, but also through paid for channels, and the broadcasting of live-events and originally produced content that are now a feature of the platform (as discussed in Chapter 2).

**Conclusion**

The possibilities of infinite choice that YouTube can provide threaten the security that children have come to expect in their televisual consumption. Whether experienced under a broadcast system or within “safe” media worlds that privilege the sensibilities of the young (as well as their commercial value), the ease with which children can encounter offensive and unwanted content could be said to undermine the participatory value YouTube may offer. Thus, where television under a broadcast systems can be described as acting not as “an open window, nor is at open sluice” (Silverstone 1994: 103), viewing watershed restrictions and national regulations with respect to content, language, and imagery are not in place, so users choose the YouTube's “safety mode” or make use of other filtering
mechanisms. Thus where the broadcast television system serves a “taming” function in its ability to deliver textual messages that seek to reassure rather than threaten its users (Silverstone 1994), such security is not present and enacted in the same way within the YouTube system. In short, the trust that conventional television has built up in its ability to rationalise the chaos and anxiety that pervades the everyday is not present within the YouTube televisual mode.

Although we see particularly class- and gender-based patterns of preference for engagement with the televisual in these types of Internet-enabled systems, YouTube does offer potential for the children in my study to find connections with others more so than that provided under other systems, as with branded media worlds and within broadcast systems more generally. Through differing modes of engagement, such as Browfing, TV Alternative, “The Best YouTubers,” and Concerted Viewsing, young people are presented with the opportunity to participate in the circulation of culture, whether driven incidentally by happenstance as with Browfing, or by peers or personal interests. Through engaging with “The Best YouTubers,” as well as with the other modes, young people are offered insight into the differing ways in which young people are able to present themselves within these spaces. Similarly, with the ability to manage screen time restrictions, or to overcome a lack of specialist broadcast content, children, as we saw with David and Hazy in the previous chapter, are provided with the opportunity to affirm membership of varied and marginalised taste cultures. Thus YouTube, in its ability to bring geographically dispersed individuals together, foregrounds the possibility of these taste constituencies as being neither particularly unique nor especially individualised, where even those more marginal interests can be recognised as contributing to the wider circulation of YouTube culture (Lange 2014). Even where the creation of YouTube content is not a feature of children’s practice of this study, the ability to “read” within these spaces rather than “write” retains equal value within this “media ecology” (Jenkins 2009). This holds despite the focus on creativity (e.g., Hartley 2002, 2009) that this contemporary televisual landscape may offer.
8 Conclusion

Young people are agentive beings who actively contribute to the on-going determination of their cultural lives, including the contextualisation of the contemporary televisual landscape. The Australian children discussed in this study make meaning through the technological convergence and portability that are central factors to these acts of consumption. Institutional convergence functions to drive televisual consumption across a number of varied “centres,” whether within a branded online media world such as with Cartoon Network or the YouTube system, to create a flow-based matrix similar to that encountered under broadcast systems. Technological convergence offers young people the devices and tools to engage with an expanded range of televisual consumption. This offers interruption to the temporal and spatial terms that broadcast set-based use renders, providing children with the opportunity to pursue their televisual use in ways that flow between older and newer media forms.

In this thesis I contend that despite the portability and ability to self-direct with the televisual, the home continues to act as the principal site and organising focus around which conceptualisations of the televisual should continue to be framed. Rather than reading the household as the central mediator of the value systems that give rise to these media practices, I draw attention the ways that the home is connected to children’s schools, and how the neighbourhoods that give rise to them are proxies for the incubators of children’s lives. Thus the ecology of the televisual that this study presents incorporates not only the “spread” of televisual use across differing systems, but also the wider social structures that work to culturally position and shape a child. Focusing on four contexts differentiated by socio-economic class and cultural capital, as well as taking account of age and gender, I have examined televisual consumption as an important signifier for defining the self. Through the use of convergent media tools, young people find connection with others where common interests and values can be found and shared (Arnett 1995).

Chapter 6 demonstrated how children utilise the televisual as a means of more easily participating in friendship-, interest-, or culturally-driven taste constituencies. Through the ability to pursue differing communities of interest in this manner, young people are afforded the ability to engage in experiences they often struggle to encounter in their offline lives. Utilising a range of convergent technologies, children are able to make claims towards these objects in ways that foster integration into household space, while also facilitating agentive potential to seek out more
comfortable consumption experiences when necessary. With the ability to increasingly self-determine consumption, my participants are able to re-figure televisual time in ways that are more conducive to personal choice, decisions, and life-styles. Likewise, they demonstrate the ability to utilise household space in imaginative and unexpected ways in a constant process of negotiation and renegotiation with technology in the home. Utilising a range of devices, children actively seeking to bring other members of the household together in order to collectively participate in televisual consumption. This leads to scenarios in which multiple media uses among family members can be accommodated within the same physical household space due to the ubiquity of these devices in the households we typically encountered in this research.

We also see how the material objects that provide access to the televisual figure in this relationship to consumption. Children are able to draw upon a range and a wide number of devices through which to engage in this media use. However, children’s ecologies also determine the types of devices available, and which ones are used for televisual experiences. Children within the lowest socio-economic setting have the fewest devices at their disposal for televisual use, and they have access to the smallest number of pocket devices (iPods) on which this can take place. Instead, socially convergent devices, such as computers and internet-enabled television screens, figure prominently among these children. Likewise, particular forms of cultural capital that are present in higher economic ecologies mimic this pattern of access to devices in this lower class setting. For example, the case of students at Shawcross Road (one of two higher class schools, but in terms of higher education of household members and equivalised household income would actually be considered the highest of the four schools of this study) illustrates the complex ways in which relationships to consumption and material objects develop. Reflecting the value systems of the school, where technology access and education hardly figure in the curriculum, students at Shawcross Road have access to the second lowest number of convergent devices within the home that could facilitate their televisual use. At the same time, preferences and the prevalence of engaging in Internet-enabled televisual consumption follow this same pattern based on class and cultural capital. Thus children within the locales of Finley Central and Shawcross Road engage in this form of media use the most, and express the strongest preference for doing so among all four schools. With these two schools being the most dominant practitioners of this form of media use, questions are also raised as to the status of legitimisation that Newman and Levine (2012) argue are conferred in this digital televisual landscape. Thus the “sophistication” and “coolness” that these practices are meant to engender are not the sole preserve of “a higher and more elite class,” as these authors suggest.
Regardless of any claims to multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism that the city of Melbourne may proffer (Chapter 4), there remain additional markers of social class that permeate the televisual habits of the differing cohorts of this study. For example, animated televisual content is a much stronger determinant of the viewing diets of lower class children than children situated within the other classes of this work. This relationship to animation remains consistent throughout the differing ages of my participants, while children situated in the different classed contexts turn to other programming genres as they mature. In contrast to previous studies on cultural tastes in Australia, we see a reversal of findings in relation to class position and a range of tastes. Thus where Bennett et al. (1999) describe univorous tastes as being the preserve of their lower class participants, we see children within the lowest socio-economic setting engaging in content across a broader range of genres and titles than higher class children.

Gender also stands as a limited factor for understanding how children participate in their televisual ecology. In one respect, gender bears no consequence on the rate at which young people engage in this media use. However, boys do express a greater desire to engage in the televisual, particularly those attending Finley Central and Shawcross Road, the lowest class and more “alternative” higher class schools of this study respectively. Similarly, girls and boys are able to draw upon an equivalent number of convergent devices through which to engage with the televisual. However, some devices, such as consoles and iPods (devices which some boys have come to regard as “pocket friends”) feature more prominently among the technological options of young boys. Likewise, differentiation is in place between genders when considering the televisual content consumed, despite some grounds for commonality being in place. For example, The Simpsons cartoon is the universal title favoured by children regardless of gender or socio-economic class. Apart from this, however, gendered patterns and genres emerge as signifiers of differences in taste. Drama, sport, and soap operas reflect gendered viewing patterns. Similarly, among children’s engagement with content accessed via YouTube, girls favour content forms that emerge from conventional broadcast systems, while boys tend towards content produced by other users.

There are also significant distinctions for Australian children’s televisual consumption with respect to content choice. Rather than a disappearance of childhood, as some have advocated in relation to the impact of television on children’s consumption habits, a far more balanced relationship between adult, family, and children’s viewing choices emerged. Thus, across the whole cohort of this study, children prefer content that privileges children’s culture at much higher levels than that which appeals to family viewing (Chapter 5). Where children are foregrounded for their active roles as citizens, US content productions provide the cachet of being “cooler for kids.” If we
are part of the global village, as McLuhan (2001) argues, then our television sets are likely to be tuned to an American cartoon if these Australian children are in charge of the remote. The implication of this phenomenon is a pre-occupation with content that can be said to foster ideals and values, foregrounding a tradition of individualism and consumerism. Produced through an industrial complex that, as Raymond Williams first made clear, emerges within commercial interests, its contemporary incarnation is, as Marie Messenger Davis points out, prone to “inevitability” in the way in which stories are presented and the functions that they are intended to have (Messenger Davies 2001). For Lemish, this is a situation that familiarises and popularises a particular discourse emphasising the “dominance of the life styles and culture” of the American “white middle class” (Lemish 2007: 124). Likewise, if awareness and loyalty to the (American) brand is paramount within this form of children’s televisual culture (Banet-Weiser 2007), its ability to permeate young people’s lives is likely to reduce the ability of other, more local, cultures to percolate in the same manner and extent. This is an emphasis that the Australian regulatory authority attempts to impose through the use of quota regulations on the level of domestic content that Australian children can access.

Alternatively, others argue that the production and the protection of the “local” is no longer a viable proposition and that any attempt at privileging a domestic culture is always an exercise in futility. For Appadurai (1996), any such “cultural bedrock” that can be said to be “made up of a closed set of reproductive practices and untouched by rumours of the world at large” is highly unlikely to be achieved in a world that is increasingly globally connected. Thus, in Appadurai’s terms, any understanding of one’s locality is just as easily found in the spatial terms of the neighbourhood as it is across those that are virtually and globally dispersed. In these terms, the conglomerated media spaces that populate children’s culture across a number of national contexts and global regions offer as much of a viable version of childhood as any that can stem from more localised experiences.

Despite the geographical remoteness of a territory like Australia, it is still very much part of any global movement, both individually and culturally. In a country where residents increasingly leave on a short-term basis (ABS 2014b), the lion’s share of citizens who indicate a permanent departure return within the year (ABS 2012d). With 28% of its population born overseas (ABS 2013c), any attempts at identifying a uniquely Australian culture are always likely to be problematic. Instead, a hybridised version of children’s culture is implicitly likely to be pre-eminent, as the “migration of information, myths, languages, music, imagery... [and] above all people...” serve to “bring even the most isolated areas into a cosmopolitan global framework of socio-cultural interactions” (Chambers et al. quoted in Morley 2000).
If we follow Jeremy Tunstall’s observation that “home audiences are seen to prefer a programme that is attuned to their sense of who they are” (quoted in Moran 2009: 152), the “familiar” can just as easily be attributed to the more universal setting of childhood, as opposed to any privileging of culture that can be defined by locality or geographic context. Thus six of the children’s 16 favourite programmes emanate from the children’s domestic market, half from the US, and the remainder come from UK and Canadian markets. If television can be considered to be a “window onto the world,” it can also be described, as Silverstone does, as offering an “education” into “all aspects of contemporary culture” (in Hartmann 2006: 88). Thus among the locally-produced content children that identify as preferring, reality TV genres dominate, whether emerging from Australia or globally franchised.

This thesis has also focused upon the differing subject positions that children encounter through the alternate online spaces can facilitate their televisual experience. Online branded media worlds offer my participants interactive Internet spaces that present a universalising version of childhood that simultaneously works to reinforce children’s consumer enculturation while limiting the possibilities for participation these young people can encounter. Thus, despite presenting themselves as “safe havens” of children’s culture, children are foremost addressed as consumerist beings in these media matrixes. At the same time, the scale of opportunities for participation are carefully managed according to national context, but also limited to prescribed interactions dictated by the system itself.

We have also seen how YouTube as a platform functions as an enhanced televisual mode (Chapter 7), thereby providing the opportunity for televisual consumption as a more social experience, in line with how Cook (2010) and Pugh (2009) define consumption (Chapter 1). Children within the YouTube space are afforded the opportunity to participate more broadly in culture beyond the narrow proscriptions provided by those media worlds such as Cartoon Network. This system, as a reflection of the process of remediation, highlights practices that can clearly trace their antecedents to those of the broadcast era. Although giving rise to four identifiable modes of use, Browfing, TV Alternative, “The Best YouTubers”, and Concerted Viewsing (two of which clearly emerge from previous practices), the system as whole refashions the televisual rather than lending itself to its reinvention. Thus the use of channels and the ability to browse and subscribe to them, along with system-determined consumption streams, highlight a contemporary framing of the televisual as “interpreting the work” of an earlier televisual system (Bolter & Grusin, 1999: 55). However, within the YouTube system, as opposed to those branded media worlds, children are afforded a greater ability to participate in media identities and dispositions. These provide opportunities for presenting
oneself and developing skills and roles that are necessary for this creative potential. Thus the value
of “reading” is foundational and fundamental to participation in the culture of this system as a
whole. This is especially evident in the case of children in this study who are offered limited
opportunities to participate in creative production accessible via a YouTube account. Their
experiences contrast with those of children whose parents support and participate in their efforts to
engage with other social networking sites (boyd et al. 2011; Kennedy 2013). However, within this
“evergreen cavalcade of content” (Bennett 2011), it could be argued that YouTube’s facilitation of
access to content via database-like structures and hyperlinks is problematic for the televisual
experiences of some children. With restrictions on language, offensive material, and age-appropriate
content not enforced by default in the same manner as with regulatory frameworks of broadcast
systems, there is increased potential for children to access material that they would rather not
encounter.

In many respects, it may be tempting to take young people’s engagement with the televisual
in these spaces as exploratory or transitory practices that are geared towards more technically
engaged forms of participation (Ito et al. 2010). These modes of YouTube engagement should, in
their own right, be considered as central to the formation of technological identities or “media
dispositions” (Ito et al. 2010; Lange 2014). The learning potential through these interactions is
therefore enormous. The need to “hierarchize, categorize, and filter infinite choice into accessible
and desirable media flows” (Meikle & Young 2011: 112) within a televisual mode like YouTube gives
rise to a gamut of skills and tools that the children can utilise. Commenting about how these spaces
and interactions aid young people’s media literacy, Buckingham describes such engagements as:

In learning with and through these media, young people are also learning how to
learn. They are developing particular orientations toward information, particular
methods of acquiring new knowledge and skills, and a sense of their own identities
as learners. They are likely to experience a strong sense of their own autonomy, and
of their right to make their own choices and to follow their own path…In these
domains, they are learning primarily by means of discovery, experimentation, and
play, rather than by following external instructions and directions (Buckingham
2008: 17).

Children and the Televisual

In the opening vignette of this thesis, ten-year-old Samuel describes his televisual use. His refrain,
“it’s all just television,” is symbolic, for it represents how the content he enjoys can flow and spread
from his Apple TV system to his (friend in a pocket) iPod or to the family iPad. This spreadable quality
is equally applicable to how he can also engage in differing systems, such as YouTube and Cartoon
Network, to furnish this experience. Just as importantly, regardless of the tools at his disposal, he accepts that television is a cultural tool that can be utilised in a variety of ways, regardless of medium, regardless of context. Separation is not present between the varying screens he can call upon. His consumption of the televiSual is determined not by fixed practices attached to a specific medium, but rather by the determinants of the moment of consumption. As Samuel says when asked what television means to him:

...It can be changed to different screens... urmmm.... Yeah, it's gone from just having a TV set to being able to being able to watch anywhere, which has changed quite a bit, so you can watch anywhere... it can be anything anytime.

Thus, to quote Diana Oblinger and James Oblinger when describing how children utilise the media around them, “They don’t think in terms of technology; they think in terms of the activity the technology enables” (in Herring 2008: 77). In establishing the everyday practice of televiSual use through convergence and portability, the key has been to demonstrate how children actively contribute to the cultures circulating. Situated within the context of their lived environments—school and neighbourhood—children utilise their own social relationships in complex ways to further their own lived experiences. As such, they engage in cultural exchanges beyond the scope of the household. From the sociology of childhood perspective, children come to understand, adopt, revise, and utilise the cultures they encounter in the exploration of their own identities. As with culture generally, so too with the televiSual. Hence the “savvyness” that children exhibit with this practice appears as a shock to some parents, for the skills and ability to navigate this technological landscape appears to emanate from sources beyond parental direction, as Samuel’s mother attests:

They [her children] watch that [Adventure Time], they usually watch that online, I don’t know how they do that whether it’s through YouTube or something. I just I don’t know... sometimes they watch it on TV too, but I’m just... I don’t know how they [watch it online]... say in this instance of Adventure Time I don’t know how they found how you could watch it online, coz as far as I knew it was only on TV and it was only a couple of weeks ago, I was like ‘What are you watching?’ and they were like ‘We’re watching Adventure Time’. I was ‘Ohhhh....’ I don’t know how you get that, but yeah, and I don’t know how they realised how they could get online. I mean yeah, my kids are resourceful, they realise you can get most things, if you want something you just find it.
Thus a televisual ecology represents an important site for the articulation of children’s culture. Whether through self-exploration, exchanges with peers, or others or any other modes that facilitate the transference of experience, children make use of the televisual as a way of establishing themselves in the world. Searching, viewing, managing, and interacting with the varied contexts of the televisual provide the opportunity for young people “to be” rather than “become” through their televisual use.

**Emerging Questions and the Future of the Televisual**

As personal, mobile, Internet-ready devices become an ever more ubiquitous presences in the lives of young people, both generally as well as in the context of schools, what could the televisual look like in the hands of children to come? If the Internet fulfils its promise as the new public space that the young can reclaim as their own, then public access may well present a key to increasingly unlocking this potential. Thus, with the growth in public Wi-Fi hotspots in Melbourne, already six-fold from 2009, the Victorian Government’s implementation of the county’s largest free public wireless network under its VicGovFree initiative may well further stimulate the everydayness of the televisual, facilitating its greater embeddedness within public space. With the increased availability of free Internet provisions, the likely implication is that young people have increased opportunities to share and co-consume televisual content, providing for ever more innovative ways for their participation in televisual culture to take place. In so doing, the televisual in a public context may well pose a more obvious break from the confines of the home than currently observed. However, such a statement should also be tempered by an acceptance that, in order for children to participate in this aspect of digital opportunity, a similar increase in their visibility and presence in public spaces must also occur.

With schools in Victoria, given that even primary schools are increasingly asking children to Bring Your Own Devices (BYOD) to more fully participate in state- and nation-wide initiatives for digital learning in the classroom, the possibilities for televisual use as a tool for explicit learning goals may well appear limitless. Opportunities may be provided to better integrate children’s informal media practices into more formalised educational settings, as those calls by Buckingham (2008), Jenkins (2013), and Tapscott (2009) already implore. Alongside this, however, greater attention must also be paid to the pedagogical value that the televisual can offer. Thus, while the 2013 Digital Education Advisory Group report commissioned by the Australian government points to “The walls of the classroom ... expanded by social media, the cloud, wikis, podcasts, video conferencing etc.” in a document that claims to address “the potential of digital technology to support new approaches to innovative learning centred around the development of 21st Century Learning skills” (2013: 4), not a
single reference is made to the televisual or its content, except to recognise the existence of YouTube as platform. Hence despite the interest, primacy, and centrality of televisual use children exhibit as part of their cultural lives, in this digitally-enabled landscape a greater focus on re-purposing content may well be needed in order to tie aspects of children’s play and learning more closely together.
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Appendix A.
Rates of participation of televisual consumption by school

Highland

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Girl</th>
<th>Boy</th>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
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<td>100.0%</td>
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Bayview

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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
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Finley Central

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</thead>
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<td>54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Shawcross Road

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Girl</th>
<th>Boy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B.
Type of devices used by site for televisual consumption
## Appendix C.

**Rates at which children express a preference for consuming the televisual by school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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[Bar chart and table data as shown in the image]
## Appendix D.

### Top 10 programme title by location

#### Highland

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#### Shawcross Road

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Appendix E.
Favoured Programme types by school

Highland
- Girls: Cartoon 33.9%, Reality 21.4%, Comedy 16.1%, Drama 9.1%
- Boys: Cartoon 44.3%, Reality 23%, Comedy 11.5%, Sport 4.9%, Doco 3.3%

Bayview
- Girls: Cartoon 51.1%, Reality 22.5%, Drama 15.9%, History 6.9%
- Boys: Cartoon 15.9%, Reality 14.2%, Drama 15.9%, Sport 12.8%, Comedy 10.1%

Finley Central
- Girls: Cartoon 27.3%, Reality 13.7%, Doco 9.1%, Drama 9.1%
- Boys: Cartoon 61.8%, Comedy 9.8%, Gaming Prog 5.9%, Sport 5.9%

Shawcross Road
- Girls: Fiction 40%, Comedy 35.8%, Drama 15.9%, Reality 14.2%
- Boys: Cartoon 37%, Reality 23%, Comedy 15.9%, Sport 18.8%, Doco 5.7%