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Table of Contents

ANZCA Editorial

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We are delighted to introduce this special issue of *Platform: Journal of Media and Communication*. This issue continues a longstanding partnership between *Platform* and the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association (ANZCA), presenting a selection of outstanding papers authored by postgraduate students at the 2016 ANZCA Conference hosted by the University of Newcastle, NSW.

In her keynote about graduate employability at this year's pre-conference for postgraduates and early career researchers, The Thesis Whisperer Inger Mewburn noted that the maxim of "publish or perish" remains true in the contemporary academic job market (Pitt and Mewburn, 2016). Through this special issue we are therefore very pleased to be able to provide emerging scholars in the field of media and communication with an opportunity to disseminate their work beyond the conference. These papers are a testament to the interesting and high-quality research being undertaken by postgraduate communication students in universities across Australia and New Zealand.

This year's ANZCA conference invited papers around the theme "Creating Space in the Fifth Estate". Scholars and practitioners were asked to consider how the Internet and digital communication technologies have altered interactions, practices, perspectives and collectivities, and what these shifts may mean for communicators and for societies at large. This resulted in a broad range of submissions around issues both new and old in the field of communication, four of which are presented in this special issue.

Ashley Donkin, Donell Holloway and Lelia Green examine the new and uncertain terrain of participatory netnography involving children in their paper, "Towards Participatory Netnography: Collaborating with Children in Virtual Worlds Research". The authors discuss the ethical and methodological challenges they encountered while seeking to conduct a participatory netnography in children's virtual worlds, and describe a novel approach which resulted in a child participant successfully capturing screenshots of their online activities. They argue for clearer policies around conducting netnography with children—policies that balance the protection of children in virtual environments with opportunities for enhancing their agency and autonomy through participatory research.

Caitlin McGregor's piece, "Protecting Camden's Rural Heritage: Rural Discourses in the debate over a Proposed Islamic School in Camden, NSW" reminds us of the enduring relevance of the Fourth Estate. Her paper presents a discursive analysis of the local newspaper coverage concerning a proposed Islamic school in the western Sydney community of Camden. Through a content and discourse analysis of over 300 articles referencing the issue in the *Camden Advertiser*, McGregor identifies how various discursive participants drew on rural discourses to counterpose Camden's rural heritage against the construction of an Islamic school in the area and, ultimately, with the larger Muslim community.

In "Seen but Unseen: Missing Visible Indigenous Women in the Media and What it Means for Leadership in Indigenous Australia", Tess Ryan investigates media representations of powerful Indigenous women. The paper contends that although there is currently a multitude of strong Indigenous women in leadership roles, traditional mainstream media either ignore them or only report on a select few individuals. Ryan has found, however, that Indigenous women are creating space for themselves in the Fifth Estate. Her paper investigates why the mainstream media are not interested in offering similarly positive coverage of these women.

The final paper from Diane Spencer-Scarr, "Cybernetics of Digital Engagement: Optimizing the Self for Social Networking", examines the relationship between humans and digital networked technology. Her paper describes this relationship as a second order cybernetic system, and explains how concepts such as time, memory and space are altered in the Fifth Estate and may affect human behaviour. Spencer-Scarr concludes that certain personality traits are closely related to successful digital-engagement, and she argues that greater understanding of the Fifth Estate as part of a second order cybernetic system will allow humans to better manage digital networked technologies.

As guest editors for this special issue we would like to thank Thao Phan from *Platform* for her support of this joint venture between *Platform* and ANZCA. We are also grateful to Dr Janet Fulton, co-convenor of the 2016 ANZCA conference in Newcastle, for her guidance during the pre-conference planning and the assembly of this special issue, and the peer reviewers who assisted our contributors with refining their papers for submission. We must also extend our thanks to the ANZCA Executive for accommodating a change to postgraduate representation on the Executive in the lead-up to the conference. As postgraduate students, we have found that being members of ANZCA has significantly aided our professional development. The opportunities to present at collegial conferences, publish, and network with some of the pre-eminent scholars in the communication field are hugely beneficial.

We look forward to continuing the vibrant discussion begun in Newcastle this year at next year's ANZCA conference, hosted by the University of Sydney. We are particularly excited to see the diverse and interesting contribution of postgraduate scholars and practitioners continue and be supported, as always, by the ANZCA Executive, members and conference convenors, and journals such as *Platform*.

References

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Elizabeth Goode is a PhD candidate in Communication and Media Arts at the University of Newcastle. Her thesis examines the life stories and cultural identities of intercountry adoptees in Australia. Her research interests include identity construction, adoption and cross-cultural migration, narrative inquiry and autoethnography.

Caitlin McGregor is a PhD candidate in Communication and Media Arts at the University of Newcastle. Her research interests include discourse, the Other and identity. Her thesis is investigating discursive representations of Islam in Australian newspapers, particularly in relation to proposed mosque developments and Islamic private schools.

Towards a participatory netnography: collaborating with children in virtual worlds research

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The new sociology of childhood has encouraged social researchers to incorporate children in as much of the research process as possible. However, whilst some success has been achieved within traditional ethnographic studies, netnography has been slow to make this a reality. This article discusses the previous online research into children's virtual worlds, which has rarely incorporated young children into the data collection or research analysis processes. The opportunity for researchers to use participatory approaches to collaborating with their child participants and collecting online data is limited due to ethical constraints. The ethical challenges of conducting netnography are compounded by a lack of clear policy about researching with children online. The issues of informed consent, the protection of children's identities and the private versus public debate about the nature of the Internet have made conducting online research an ethical minefield. In many cases children's voices have been excluded altogether, and researchers' experiences within virtual worlds have been minimal. This article discusses all these issues, impacting online researchers' ability to obtain ethics approval and conduct a participatory netnography with children. This article also explains the authors' current netnography of investigating children's use of virtual worlds. The ethical challenges of conducting a netnography and using a participatory approach to including children during the data collection process, is described. Whilst it can be challenging in overcoming the ethical barriers to conducting a participatory netnography, the authors describe one case in which their first child participant successfully captured some of their own online data. The collection of this data and the discussion that ensued, demonstrated the value of child participation in the data collection and analysis process.

Introduction

The new sociology of childhood has supported the importance of child participation in research claiming that "we no longer have to defend the involvement of children in research" (Darbyshire et al, 2006, p. 468). Previously children were viewed as either passive receivers of culture, from a sociological viewpoint, or as developing along predetermined biological pathways, from a psychological perspective. In this sense, the notion of children actively participating or being given any sense of 'agency' within the research process was not thought of (Czymoniewicz-Klippel, 2009; Darbyshire et al, 2006; Prout and James, 1997). However, children's participation within ethnography is still limited. Darbyshire et al state:

> We are, however, at an important juncture in the development of participatory research approaches with children. We maintain that there is now a broad general agreement among researchers and scholars that such approaches are both theoretically and methodologically valuable and legitimate (2006, p. 468).

Participatory research, which aims to involve participants within the research design and implementation stages (Khanlou and Peter, 2005), has had some success in traditional ethnographic studies (Abebe, 2009; Evans, 2012; Kellet, 2005, 2011; Levy and Thompson, 2015). However, online ethnographers have had difficulty overcoming the ethical challenges of conducting netnography within children's virtual worlds, particularly netnography with an element of participatory research.

Virtual worlds, according to Bell are "a synchronous, persistent network of people, represented as avatars, facilitated by networked computers" (2008, p. 2). Examples of popular virtual worlds played by children, include: *Minecraft, Club Penguin, Neopets,* and *Star Stable*. These spaces are persistent in that they cannot be paused, and continue to exist after a user has logged out.

This article will background the ethical and methodological issues of implementing a participatory netnography with children online. The authors' current project of researching young children's use of virtual worlds including the methods used, and the ethical issues they had to be overcome, are also described in this article. The trials faced by the authors demonstrate the changing landscape of online ethnography and the emerging challenges faced by netnographers when conducting Internet research, and particularly with children in virtual worlds.

Childhood studies

Article 12 (respect for the views of the child) of the *Participation* section of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 2014), claims that children have the right to participate in and freely express their views about matters affecting them. This has been one of the most profound shifts in changing views of children and childhood, which has particularly had an impact in the social research (Shier, 2001).

Pufall and Unsworth state that the new paradigm of childhood "argues for acknowledgement of the agency of children in shaping the form that 'childhood' takes as a structural element within society […]" (2004, p. 29). Thus, children should not be considered as passive objects, but should be given the resources and autonomy to actively contribute to aspects of society that are most important to them. They should thus be given more opportunities to express their ideas and concerns and to have their opinions heard. Sociological research with children is one field in which this has become a reality. Dona states:

> Recently, under aspirations for social inclusion, empowerment and social change, children have begun to be involved not simply as respondents but also in other capacities and at different stages of the research process itself: setting the agenda, choosing topics of investigation, collecting information, interpreting and disseminating findings, and acting upon them (2006, p. 23).

Children are considered active agents who are increasingly contributing and participating within research that concerns their everyday lives (Darbyshire et al, 2006; Dona, 2006; Evans, 2012; Kellet, 2011; Levy and Thompson, 2015; Prout and James, 1990; Pufall and Unsworth, 2004). Prout and James state:

> Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live (1997, p. 8).

Ethnography, according to Prout and James is a "particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood" (1997, p. 8). Ethnographic methods allow "children a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than is usually possible through experimental or survey styles of research" (Prout and James, 1997, p.8).

Mary Kellet (2005, 2011) also advocates for empowering children to have more autonomy during the research process. In her book *How to Develop Children as Researchers* she states that: "the key to a better understanding of children and childhood is children themselves—as active researchers" (2005, p.3). This useful resource has been written for young children, and instructs them about how to carry out traditional ethnographic research.

The participatory approach that has been used in ethnography, has given children greater autonomy and agency to actively contribute their ideas and experiences to better understand their situation within various contexts (Abebe, 2009; Evans, 2012; Kellet, 2011; Levy and Thompson, 2015).

Participatory research

Participatory research has become a popular approach within the field of the social sciences, which "combines research, education and action", to actively involve community groups or organisations into the research process (Khanlou and Peter, 2005, p. 2334). Khanlou and Peter state:

> People in the community or workplace control the entire research process, including identifying the problem to be studied. In participatory research, researchers can be community or workplace members. Participatory research entails the mobilization of people and enhanced awareness of their abilities and resources (2005, p. 2334).

Thus a problem is identified and the research team aims to investigate the issue from the perspective of the people affected by the problem. It also aims to empower participants with the knowledge and tools to improve the problem.

In Evan's (2012) ethnographic study of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, she used a participatory research approach to involve her young participants in every stage of the research process. Evans initially observed the Bhutanese refugees in their camps to gain a better understanding of their "most pressing concerns" (2012, p. 175), and then began to conduct training sessions to help six male and seven female refugees (researchers) aged 14-17 years old to conduct their own research (Evans, 2012, p. 176). Research assistants, who had previously been a part of the Bhutanese Refugee Camp Forum, supported the young researchers in their projects. The research methods used by the children included drama, art and other written works, and they also participated in interviews with Evans, who collected both qualitative and quantitative data (2012, p. 176). The participatory research methods aimed to empower participants by helping them to better understand their own situation and give them the tools to create change (Evans, 2012, p. 170).

To instigate change, Evans arranged for the child researchers to meet with journalists and agencies to discuss their ideas, and the research assistants helped the children to present their findings to community leaders and refugee organisations (2012, p. 177). One of the child researchers even wrote an article on the experience titled: *Effects of Child Research on Researchers*. This article examined the benefits the child participants had gained from taking part in the research project. These benefits included: "making new friends, building confidence and public-speaking skills, improved knowledge of children's rights, more respect from community members and enhanced communication skills" (Evans, 2012, p. 177).

Evans' field research at the refugee camp, which lasted three months, helped to develop a deeper understanding of the refugees' everyday lives. The children were also empowered to become researchers and were given the tools to better communicate their situation to adult leaders. The collaboration of adult researcher with child "researchers" was an approach utilised by Levy and Thompson (2015) in their investigation of young boys' attitudes towards reading.

Levy and Thompson's (2015) study involved grade one boys (5-6 year olds) partnered with grade seven boys (11-12 year olds) from three South Yorkshire combined schools. The researchers collaborated with the older boys to construct activities that would engage the younger children in talking about their learning-to-read experiences. The researchers also instructed the older children about how to use a flip camera that the older and younger boys could use to create an instructional film explaining to parents and teachers the "factors that influenced children's engagement with reading" (Levy and Thompson, 2015, p. 142). The older boys in the study took a directive role in collaborating with the younger boys, but were not treated as co-researchers by Levy and Thompson. At the end of the six-month investigative period, the researchers edited the footage the children had captured, and developed it into a DVD that was viewed by the child participants, their teachers and parents (Levy and Thompson, 2015, p. 143).

The collaboration was successful in that the younger boys were able to openly discuss their reading difficulties with the older boys, who were able to share their own reading experiences and development. Levy and Thompson state:

> This meant that they were able to understand and empathise with many aspects of the younger children's lives and experiences. The presentation of an empathetic and playful approach meant that these boys were able to communicate with the younger children on a level that suggested that a sense of genuine 'shared understanding' existed between the boys (2015, p. 147).

Levy and Thompson state that the research also helped the 11 to 12-year-old boys to develop "and use a wide range of sophisticated communication skills and strategies in order to encourage the younger

children to talk about their views and experiences" (2015, p. 147). The children also learnt research methods such as how to use a flip camera to capture footage, and how to interview their partner about their reading experiences (Levy and Thompson, 2015, p. 142).

It is through these participatory research methods that children were given authority and agency, and were empowered with the resources to develop skills that they could use in their everyday lives. Both Evans' and Levy and Thompson's studies successfully involved the active participation of children in ethnographic research. In contrast, participatory research with children in online world ethnographies has been minimal to non-existent. Whilst netnography may use similar methods to a traditional ethnography, its implementation is characterised by its own set of practices and ethics.

Netnography

Ethnography has always been a "geographic project, traditionally involving practices of dwelling in physical locations, mapping and understanding the practices within these locations, and retreating to spaces to write research reports" (Leander and McKim, 2003, p. 213). Leander and McKim state:

> Imagining where the ethnographer would go in terms of Internet research suggests an expansion or revision of social situation to include locations that are not physical settings as we have typically thought them to be (2003, p. 213).

Online ethnography or netnography is an emerging methodology of ethnography that seeks to understand various online societies, cultures and communities through participant and observational research. Kozinets states:

> Netnography is participant-observational research based in online fieldwork. It uses computer-mediated communications as a source of data to arrive at the ethnographic understanding and representation of a culture or communal phenomenon (2010, p. 60).

Netnography has received some criticism about its ethical and practical implementation (Denzin, 1999; Lugosi, 2006; Lysloff, 2003; Murthy, 2008; Shaap, 2002; Sharf, 1999). However, it has provided the methodology, and the methods for researching the range of virtual environments, which inhabit the Internet (Hine, 2000; Kozinets, 2010).

The various methods of netnography include those used in a traditional ethnography such as: "interviews, descriptive statistics, archival data collection, extended historical case analysis, and videography", as well as many other methods (Kozinets, 2010, p. 60). Online ethnographers, or netnographers, will use many of these methods either separately or in conjunction as they observe and participate within the online research field.

Participation within virtual worlds is one of the most important aspects of conducting a netnography. Participatory activities include: reading messages, following links, posting comments, emailing, and participating in various community activities (Kozinets, 2010, p.96). Kozinets explains that participation in online communities should be "active and visible to other community members" and that the netnographer should be involved in at least some online activities (2010, p. 96). Whilst the data collected may be of a different form, the netnographer still participates within the online realm as an ethnographer would participate in the offline research environment.

Whilst these shared communities may be located within the virtual realm, they are very real to those who participate in their social and cultural networks. Thereby, in order for netnographers to understand virtual communities and their users, they too must participate in these spaces.

Online research

Whilst netnography encourages researchers to participate and observe within the virtual realm, very few researchers studying children's virtual worlds have done so. In addition, of the studies researching

children's virtual worlds, and children's experiences within these spaces, very few involve children as participants in the research process.

In Kafai's (2008) study, children's virtual world play was observed and filmed in real time, however child participation during the data collection and analysis processes was overlooked. Kafai's study of the children's virtual world *Whyville* included filming her 20 child participants with two video cameras as children played both online (and offline, whilst in the same classroom) (2008, p. 4). Thus Kafai and her team did not participate within the virtual world themselves and instead relied on the footage of children's play to analyse their data. Whilst children's participation in the virtual world was of prime importance, children's participation within the research project was overlooked.

In Marsh's (2010) study, children completed an online survey about their game play in virtual worlds, and participated in face-to-face semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, to further explain their activities. Whilst the data was analysed by Marsh, children's opinions were still expressed and taken into consideration when analysing the research data. However, children were also not involved in conducting any research themselves.

In contrast, Black (2010) and Black, Korobkova and Epler's (2014) studies examined the affordances of children's virtual worlds. The researchers themselves conducted an online examination of these worlds. The study did not involve children in either the data collection or the analysis processes.

The above studies, whilst trying to understand children's experiences of virtual worlds or the affordances of children's virtual worlds, did not use participatory research approaches to involving children in the research processes. The ethical implications informing or limiting their studies were not described so it is unclear if ethics was a factor.

Nonetheless, children's participation was still considered important in understanding children's use of virtual worlds in Kafai (2008) and Marsh's (2010) research. However, in Black (2010) and Black Korobkova and Epler's (2014) research they may have had their own experiences in virtual worlds, but did not involve or consult children about their experiences at any stage of the research process. In contrast to this lack of participation, Wernholm and Vigmo's study (2015) involved their child participants in both the data collection and analysis stages of their research in *Minecraft*.

Wernholm and Vigmo's (2015) research into children's knowledge making dialogues in *Minecraft* empowered their three participants with the resources to capture their own data. Whilst only one participant was able to use the software (FRAPS) to capture online data in *Minecraft*, they were given full control to choose the data they recorded. All three children also used Skype to communicate with each other as they played, which was also recorded by FRAPS (Wernholm and Vigmo, 2015, p. 236).

At the end of the data collection period, all three participants assisted the researchers to interpret and analyse their in-game dialogue and activities (Wernholm and Vigmo, 2015, p. 237). The children only shared information that they felt comfortable with and the researchers did not ask further questions about data they did not share. Thus, the researchers empowered their participants by involving them in a more participatory research process. Therefore, children's understandings and perspectives of their game play were included in the project's overall analysis.

The ethics of conducting this online study were only briefly alluded to. The authors explained that Swedish scholars have to go against the Swedish Research Council to conduct online studies with children (Wernholm and Vigmo, 2015, p. 242). Therefore, perhaps in order to reduce ethical risk to participants and themselves, they remained offline whilst the children played their game.

Rosenberg states that allowing the research process to "be guided increasingly by those we wish to study may also lead our own conceptions to be expanded or even challenged in the process" (2010, p. 24). Children are particularly capable online users, who can sometimes display greater technical ability than their researchers (Holloway and Valentine, 2001, p. 26). However, participatory online research with children still has a long way to go.

The ethical and legal guidelines that are so important to protecting children also have the biggest impact (and limitation) on both researcher's and children's abilities to collaborate in ethnography (Bone, 2005; Cummins, 2006; Richter et al, 2007; Valentine et al, 2001; Wernholm and Vigmo, 2015). In addition, trying to venture into the online field, as an ethnographer with very little empirical research to support this methodology, is proving particularly difficult when going through the research ethics process.

Ethics

According to Mortari and Harcourt, ethics "refers to a focus on that which is deemed right and good. To adopt an ethical stance is to be concerned/solicitous in order to make that which is good" (2012, p. 235). The ethics of conducting a netnography, or any online research where children are concerned are complex, particularly regarding the issues of informed consent, and the public versus private debate.

Regarding the issue of informed consent, the Australian Sociological Association (ASA) states that it should be sought from "those individuals or social groupings directly involved in the research to be undertaken" (2016, no page). The ASA states:

> Thus, sociologists should: (1) inform participants about the purpose and nature of the research and its possible implications for them, (2) make it clear that all have the freedom of choice to participate or not. This includes students […] (2016, n.p.).

Whilst the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct on Human Research* (2015) has similar policies regarding informed consent, it does not give specific guidance about conducting ethical Internet research. In response to this lack of information, Spriggs (2010) compiled the policies around informed consent outlined by the *National Statement*, and included rules for conducting Internet research, in her handbook *Understanding Consent in Research Involving Children: The Ethical Issues*.

The emphasis regarding informed consent is based on the maturity and potential identification of child participants. Spriggs explains that whilst consent is not always required when collecting data within the public domain, "the immature judgement of some young people may mean that a distinction between public and private is not meaningful" (2010, p. 29). Children are more likely to consider their online spaces private if parents or teachers do not see them, whilst some children may not know the difference (Spriggs, 2010, p. 31). Spriggs goes on to state that if recorded and published data "is potentially identifiable, consent is probably needed" and that if there is no "identifiable information, consent may not be needed. But, arguably, it is better to err on the side of safety and obtain consent" (2010, p.29).

This private versus public debate of online data cannot be treated "as a simple dichotomy" according to Rosenberg (2010, p. 27) who also claims that it is an ongoing debate regarding Internet research ethics (2010, p. 24). Rosenberg explains that a space is considered public if (1) "it is publicly accessible" or (2) if it is "perceived as public by participants" (2010, p. 24). Rosenberg states:

> According to the first argument, online phenomena are essentially public if they can be accessed by anyone with an open Internet connection. Moreover, public discourse must always be open for scholarly analysis and critique, and, in lack of restricted entrance, there is no need for consent or even anonymizing. The second and often counter-posed view holds that, though something may be accessible, the general public (including researchers) may not be the intended audience (2010, p. 24).

In agreement with the second opinion, Rosenberg argues that virtual worlds are more private than people realise due to the affordances of the game such as the ability to build a house for example, and exist within spaces separate from other gamers (2010, pp. 29-31). Weintraub also states:

> When an individual is described as pursuing his or her private interest rather than the public interest – or a group is described as pursuing a 'special interest' rather than the public interest – the implication is not necessarily that they are doing it in secret. The criterion involved is the second one: the private is the particular (1997, p. 5).

Whilst online users may be interacting privately within a public space they are not always easily identified. In virtual worlds avatars are designed to conceal the identity of any online gamer. Bell defines avatars as a "digital representation (graphical or textual)… that has agency… and is controlled by a human agent in real time" (2008, p. 3). Virtual world avatars have pseudonyms and an animated appearance that does not resemble their real-life counterpart. Taylor states:

> In these spaces, the 'look' of any particular user can be altered fairly easily, and names are generally changeable. This means that a solid consistency of identity and body is not a given in any environment. In addition, the off-line identity of any particular user is generally unknown unless specifically disclosed (1999, p. 438).

Thereby, gamers in a virtual world are anonymous to any researcher, however, Spriggs states that, "it is safer not to rely on the idea that the Internet is a public space to justify not seeking consent" from participants (2010, p. 31). Kozinets also advocates for conducting ethical netnography and encourages researchers to obtain consent from parents or caregivers where children and other vulnerable people are concerned (2010, p. 152).

Therefore, whilst research with children has become more acceptable and accessible, there are still certain limitations and grey areas that have not been resolved. Davis states:

> On the one hand, the literature in this area often urges researchers to involve children as much as possible in research, as a moral imperative. On the other hand, researchers usually work within a range of institutional, legal and practical constraints that may limit the extent to which participatory ideals can be realised (2009, p. 154).

Nevertheless, Mortari and Harcourt encourage researchers to persist through the ethical and logistical barriers, as "no argument can resolve in any definitive way, ethical problems, since they are an arduous and endless enterprise" (2012, p. 234).

In addition to this, a large function of many children's virtual worlds is to operate as opportunities for branding and market research—where children's personal information and opinions are gathered (Grimes, 2010; Montgomery, 2000; Steeves, 2006). So while commercial entities are gathering vast amounts of user/child information, Australian researchers are finding it increasingly difficult to acquire permission to research children's virtual worlds from a variety of gatekeepers involved, including university ethics committees or educational ethics institutions (Holloway, 2014).

Current project

The authors are currently researching how young children (5-12 year olds) use virtual worlds. Children of this age group (primary school years) have previously not been examined in the Australian context. Whilst it is a broad age range, it provides more of an opportunity to understand children's online activities. The authors acknowledge that there are differences in skill level within this group, and that there is a younger group (5-8 years) and an older group (9-12 years) within the overall cohort.

In order to understand virtual worlds and their affordances for young children, one of the authors has gained ethics approval to access the sites used by young participants in this project. Therefore, this is not a typical netnography where the researcher examines virtual worlds and draws conclusions based solely on their own observation and participation. Instead, this study includes children in the data collection stage, and empowers them to voluntarily capture some of their online data, which is then discussed with the researcher. However, while knowing that this research would involve ethically sensitive issues, the authors did not foresee to which degree the ethical issues would impinge upon implementing the netnography, or if the first child participant could successfully and ethically capture their own online data.

Ethics

With regards to the current project, the ethical issue of an adult participating in children's virtual worlds; collecting participants' data whilst trying to avoid non-participant gamers; and asking child participants if they would like to voluntarily collect some of their own online data, has been met with varying degrees of ethical and logistical success.

The public versus private debate caused much deliberation and confusion when it came to defining the boundaries of what researchers were allowed to do online in this project. Virtual worlds in particular may

be seen as public, but because of their complex structures they can be used to hide or to be seen, depending on the affordances of the game.

From the authors' perspectives, virtual worlds are publicly accessible spaces within which private conversations can be held. Some online users may not use these spaces to hold private conversations, but because of the various affordances of virtual worlds, respecting the privacy of all gamers has been emphasised.

Ethics approval from various governing bodies, and parental and child consent, were obtained to conduct the current research project. Thus, only informed and consenting participants are observed in virtual worlds and only their data is recorded. All other gamers are avoided and their identities remain anonymous due to the affordances of avatars to keep players anonymous.

The possibility of non-participants' interactions being observed was one major cause for concern that had to be discussed in depth before it passed ethics approval from various organisations. Avoiding non-participants can make data collection challenging as virtual worlds are constantly changing; avatars are continually on the move and players can enter and exit the game at any time. When comparing this to a traditional ethnography it would be as though the researcher were observing their participants within a busy city square, where non-participants were sharing the same space. Therefore, when collecting online data all care is taken to only capture the activities of consenting participants.

The participation of the researcher within virtual worlds was another concern as these are considered children's spaces and again the privacy and protection of children was of utmost importance. Therefore, the researchers' participation within virtual worlds has been scaled back in order to minimise any potential risk to participants and other gamers being influenced by the researchers' presence and the capturing of data. Whilst some participation will help answer the research questions, the full netnographic experience is dulled by these ethical implications, which are necessary, but limiting for a netnographer.

Netnography

The principal researcher in this project only participates in the virtual games used by participants. It is here that the researcher creates an account and their own avatar. The child participants know the name of this avatar so they can identify when the researcher is online. Once online, the researcher tries to experience as much of each virtual world as they ethically can by participating in popular activities, and utilising the affordances of virtual worlds. Whilst participating online the researcher captures the activities of participants to better understand the affordances of virtual worlds, and risks they may pose to children, as well as the required digital skills to play online safely.

There are many different methods for capturing online data, but for this project the method of taking screenshots of child participants' online activities is utilised. The process of capturing screenshots using the affordances provided by a laptop, computer or iPad are simple. The researcher was using an iPad and therefore used the on/off and home buttons, which when pressed simultaneously take a 'photograph' of whatever is on the screen at that time. Taking screenshots is a quick and easy method for capturing data, which is automatically saved in the photo album on the iPad. These screenshots are saved in the photo album on the iPad and can be easily retrieved, or deleted, at any time. So far this method of capturing online data has proved very efficient.

Whilst the researcher's participation in virtual worlds seems sufficient enough for this project, and for now it is, in terms of conducting a traditional netnography this form of online involvement is quite restricted. The researcher limits contact with her participants so they can play their games without being distracted, and avoids all other gamers. Thus the researcher maintains an undercover approach and therefore is not "active and visible to other community members" and does not "contribute to the community and its members" (Kozinets, 2010, p. 96). However, despite these limitations, the researchers in this project have tried to advocate for more child participation.

Participation

Children's ability to contribute was carefully considered in this project. The research design was already completed separately from participants, which was to assure ethics committees and stakeholders that the

research would follow legal and ethical guidelines, and ensure the protection of children. Thus, upon following routine ethical procedures, it was permitted that child participants could voluntarily take some screenshots of their online game play. Being granted ethics approval to allow children to capture online data broadened future participants' opportunities to have some agency in becoming a (small-scale) researcher in the data collection process. Due to the purely technological nature of data collection this is really the only opportunity, at least in this project, for participants to actively contribute their own data, as well as verbally explaining their choices and actions post online data collection.

Children are informed before the research begins of their right to collect some of their own screenshots, and can do so at any stage of the data collection process. The researcher instructs children about how to take screenshots using the shortcut keys on their own device (usually a computer, laptop or iPad). All children are informed that they must only take screenshots of their own avatar's activities. Whilst this has been a contentious ethical issue questioning the ability of children to capture their own data and avoid other players, it was done so successfully with the first participant in this project.

The first child in this project, who volunteered to capture some of their own data, was instructed over the phone about how to take screenshots on an iPad (using the on/off and home buttons simultaneously). This child played in the popular virtual world *Minecraft* and was in the older age group (9-12 years) in this study, and was able to confidently take screenshots without supervision. Upon collecting these screenshots, the researcher informally discussed them with the participant.

The researcher asked the participant questions about their data, such as: "What is happening in this {image} screenshot?"; "What does this {image} mean to you?"; "Why did you want the researcher to see this?" and other specific questions related to the images. The child discussed with the researcher, the various images they had captured online. These were images of farm constructions that the child had built over a week, a much shorter period of time than it would have taken in the physical realm. These were constructions, which the child had put their time and energy into that would continue to prosper in the virtual realm.

These questions allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the perspective of the child and why the child wanted to capture this data. The screenshots also added extra insight into the benefits and digital skills this child gained from playing within Minecraft. The children in this study are not analysing their own data, and thus asking for their opinions and perspectives on their own screenshots is one way in which their views can be expressed and included in the overall analysis. It is hoped that other children who participate in this study will also contribute some of their own data to this project.

Discussion/conclusion

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, and the new sociology of childhood have both made great efforts to incorporate children's voices within social research (Prout and James, 1997; UNICEF, 2014). Ethnographic researchers have included participatory approaches to involve children in more active and autonomous roles that contribute to more nuanced understandings of children's perspectives (Abebe, 2009; Evans, 2012; Kellet, 2005, 2011; Levy and Thompson, 2015). However, despite the efforts made in traditional ethnography, netnography, involving children in participatory research, has been minimal (Wernholm and Vigmo, 2015).

Child participation in netnography is limited due to the ethical and methodological challenges of implementing online research. There is a lack of clear policy about obtaining parental and child consent, and the Internet is generally regarded as a public space and sometimes consent is not required (Spriggs, 2010). However, some have argued that the way people use virtual worlds can make them private spaces (Rosenberg, 2010; Spriggs, 2011; Weintraub, 1997).

The debate between the public and private nature of the Internet has seen greater limitations placed on netnographers to be extra cautious when conducting research with children to reduce any potential risk to researchers, child participants, and other online gamers.

According to Mortari and Harcourt trying to resolve these problems can seem futile as ethics "are an arduous and endless enterprise" (2012, p. 234). However, according to Rosenberg: "what ethical dilemmas

do is open up for increased reflexivity not only about the environments we study but our own place in them" (2010, p. 34).

Previous research of children's virtual worlds rarely incorporated children's opinions and data collection abilities during the research process (Black, 2010; Kafai, 2008; Marsh, 2010). Only one study empowered children to collect their own data and to help interpret this data during the analysis process (Wernholm and Vigmo, 2015). Although the child participants were given a large role in the research process, the authors did not observe children as they played online due to ethical constraints.

In contrast, the authors' current research is incorporating a participatory approach in its investigation of young children's use of virtual worlds. The current research uses netnographic methods to observe and participate within virtual worlds. The project also empowers children to voluntarily capture some of their own online data and discuss this with the researcher.

However, the public versus private debate and the protection of children's identity online caused ethical problems. The method of taking screenshots also caused concern regarding the protection of non-participants' online data. Nevertheless, the authors' first child participant was able to successfully capture some of their own online data and discuss this with the principal researcher. These screenshots demonstrated some of the child's digital skills and the benefits they gained when they played online.

Therefore, the academic and broader community's understanding of ethnographic research needs to extend to online spaces and include children. The protection of children is so important, and particularly to researchers, but there needs to be a clear policy about how to conduct netnography with children. Both researchers and children need to be able to fully participate within the research field and to collaborate and contribute in-depth data. Children's participation in ethnographic research gives them agency and autonomy, and the opportunity to share their opinions and reflections of society from their point of view.

The future direction for the current research project is to support children's voluntary participation in capturing screenshots of their game play. This netnographic research of children's use of virtual worlds will hopefully become a resource that can be used by parents, teachers as well as industry professionals and policy makers to help keep children safe online. Hopefully this is just one step towards further large-scale research involving child participants at every stage of the research process.

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Protecting Camden's rural heritage:
Rural discourses in the debate over a proposed Islamic school in Camden, NSW

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This article discursively analyses the ways a rural identity was communicated in the fight against the construction of a proposed Islamic school in Camden, Western Sydney. The Islamic school, to be called Camden College, was originally proposed by the Quranic Society in October 2007. The proposal met with immediate opposition from local community members, and was widely reported in the local newspaper, the Camden Advertiser. *The debate surrounding the development also received national and international news media attention. The Islamic school proposal was eventually denied by the NSW Land and Environment Court in June 2009. During these proceedings, Camden politicians, residents, and a protest group called the Camden/ Macarthur Residents' Group appropriated discourses of Camden as a rural town, generating ideas about heritage and identity as justification for denying the Islamic school. However, in contrast, similar ideas were also used, although in different ways, by other politicians, residents, journalists of the* Camden Advertiser *(through editorial writing) and members of the Quranic Society to defend the school proposal and to challenge pre-conceived ideas about identity and belonging in Camden. This paper explores the distinct ways this rural discourse was drawn on by a range of discursive participants, for very different purposes, in the* Camden Advertiser*'s coverage of the Islamic school debate.*

Introduction

The case study research this article is based on includes a critique of local newspaper reporting by the *Camden Advertiser* on a proposed Islamic school in Camden, a suburb of South-Western Sydney in the Australian state of New South Wales. Camden, which is approximately 60 kilometres South-West from the Sydney CBD, prides itself on its heritage identity. According to the Camden Historical Society, "Since the early days of settlement in Australia the Camden District was the first destination for hundreds of pioneering families starting a new life" (2012, no page). The township also traces its rural history back to the late 1700s, when John Macarthur founded a sheep stud in the area which would become Camden (Camden Historical Society, 2012). The *Camden Advertiser* is a local newspaper, published weekly by Fairfax Regional Media. On its website, the *Advertiser* also highlights Camden's rural heritage, claiming that "Today Camden still remains the birthplace of the Australian wool, wheat and wine industries" (Fairfax Media, 2016).

The proposed Islamic school, to be called Camden College, was instigated by the Quranic Society in October 2007. The proposal was met by immediate and intense opposition from the local community, and a formalised opposition group, the Camden/Macarthur Residents' Group, emerged to voice their discontent. The school debate received national and international news media attention due to accusations that racism and religious intolerance were driving the opposition. The school was rejected by Camden Council in May 2008, and a challenge mounted to the NSW Land and Environment Court was also rejected in June 2009. The *Camden Advertiser* published 323 articles on the debate, including news stories, editorials and letters to the editor.

Literature Review and Methodology

For the purposes of this research, discourse is defined by Paltridge as "an approach to the analysis of language that looks at patterns of language across texts as well as the social and cultural contexts in which the texts occur" (2006, p. 1). Discourse is interested in how some ideologies are embodied in texts, while others are concealed (Kilby et al, 2013). The articles chosen for analysis comprise a longitudinal case

study, wherein the media texts were chosen through theoretical sampling (Altheide, 1996). A search within the *Camden Advertiser*, using the NewsBank database, using the search terms "Islamic" AND "school" returned 216 results. Using the list from the NewsBank database search, the researcher visited the Camden Council Library, and used their archives to locate those texts, as well as an additional 107 texts, bringing the total news items to 323. The decision was made to end the longitudinal case study on 1 July 2008, as after this date the proposed Islamic school was only referenced in passing, and there were no further articles discussing the future of the Quranic Society's plans for the site. A content and discourse analysis was then conducted on the collected news items.

Research into discursive representations of Islam in Western media, and Australian media more specifically, has repeatedly shown that Islam has been treated unfairly, with Muslim communities often portrayed as strange, inferior and even threatening to Australian society (Abu-Fadil, 2005; Akbarzadeh and Smith, 2005; Al-Natour, 2010; Aly, 2007; Dreher, 2003; Dunn, 2001, 2004; Dunn et al, 2007; Hafez, 2002; Kabir, 2006; McGregor, 2013; Manning, 2003; Pederson et al, 2009; Said, 2003, 1997; Saniotis, 2004). In the case of the proposed Islamic school in Camden, part of the anti-Muslim sentiment was expressed through the perpetuation of a rural identity for the township. Orientalist theorist Edward Said has argued that identity is constructed in a way that "involves establishing opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from 'us'" (Said, 2003, p. 332). In a similar strain, Robins argues that "identity todays finds itself in rejection; it hardly has a positive basis any longer" (1996, p.81). Both Said and Robins therefore claim that identity is almost exclusively built as an opposition to something else, a "not" relation, for example "not-Australian". This paper argues that in the Camden case, the Quranic Society proposing the school and the related Muslim community have been constructed as being 'not-rural' and therefore as not belonging in Camden.

Rural Discourses and Politicians

The rural discourse was utilised by politicians to both support and oppose the development. For example, Camden Labor MP Geoff Corrigan used the previous approvals of Christian and state schools in rural zones to support the proposed Islamic school. He said:

> I'm sure the majority of Camden residents will welcome additional educational facilities in our area as they welcomed all other schools in rural areas… As I'm sure everyone knows, the establishment of schools in rural zones is allowable and that was shown by Macarthur Anglican School and Camden High School (Corrigan in Bowie 10 October 2007, p. 3).

In this example, Corrigan attempted to use this precedent to demonstrate that educational facilities and rural land could be compatible. The language choices appear to have been made carefully, with Corrigan not using the terms "Islamic school" to highlight the religious group establishing the school, but instead simply says "educational facilities", which could be considered to be a more inclusive description. However, it must be noted that this omission may have occurred as a result of moderation of the content by the journalist. In either case, the resulting more inclusive sentiment is evident.

However, other politicians, such as Macarthur Labor candidate Nick Bleasdale did not agree with Mr Corrigan. Mr Bleasdale was quoted as saying:

> Let me make it clear. I'm totally opposed to the development of the new Islamic school and the community has my full support on the issue. Make no mistake, this issue has nothing to do with race. It's based on the fact that such a large development will undoubtedly have an impact on our semi-rural way of life, especially without the local infrastructure to support it (Bleasdale in Kinsella 14 November 2007, p. 10).

Contrary to Mr Corrigan, Mr Bleasdale does specifically name the school as being "Islamic", highlighting this point of difference from other schools in the area, and further implying that this school would negatively affect the "semi-rural" identity of Camden.

A third case in which the identity of Camden is called upon, although without reference to the "rural", is by Jim Saleem, Party Chairman of the Australia First Party. He talks about the need to preserve Camden's character and his party called "on 'local activists' to 'fight to preserve the identity of Camden' but did not specify what that was" (no author 5 December 2007, p. 11). Despite his ambiguity in this statement in regards to Camden's identity, the fact that this statement was made during the highly controversial debate about the Islamic school, could suggest that preserving Camden's identity involved rejecting the development proposal.

The rural discourse was also employed whilst politicians were reinforcing the official procedures of the planning development process. Both Camden Mayor Chris Patterson and Liberal MP Charlie Lynn highlighted the importance of focusing on planning issues, however, Mayor Patterson said that "on the school application our heritage manger will probably be involved as well" (Patterson in Kinsella 7 November 2007, p. 9) and Mr Lynn said he would "be speaking 'purely on issues of planning' such as traffic, infrastructure, the location of the site on a flood plain and heritage values" (Bowie 12 December 2007, p. 11). It is interesting that these two politicians both considered heritage to be an important planning issue. As politicians are usually seen to speak on behalf of their communities, and reflect their concerns, it is therefore very likely that the community of Camden also consider their rural heritage to be an integral component of their town's identity.

Rural Discourses in Official Documents

The idea of Camden as a rural locality was referenced in official communications and documents, with these documents eventually being used to refuse the school application in the NSW Land and Environment Court. When the school proposal was rejected by the Camden Council in May 2008, a submission made by the Department of Primary Industries stated that "the proposal encroached on rural resource lands contrary to the State Government's Metropolitan Strategy" (Bowie 28 May 2008, p. 2). Firstly, the fact that this submission was from the Department of Primary Industries contributed increased authority to the statement; as a government department, the Department of Primary Industries is an institution which issues officially endorsed and privileged statements. Secondly, the reference above to the State Government's Metropolitan Strategy draws on the authority of government documentation and policy, which could be seen to legitimise the council's decision to reject the school proposal.

The State Government's Metropolitan Strategy is also referenced again, this time by Sue Morris, the councils' director of development and environment, who was defending the involvement of the Department of Primary Industries in the discussion. She "said it was normal to refer development applications 'for an activity in rural land' to the department for comment" (Bowie 28 May 2008, p. 2). Again, the rural nature of Camden is drawn on here as the reason for the government authorities to become involved in the school application, seemingly raising the importance of the debate. Additionally, when discussed by Sue Morris, the Metropolitan Strategy is supported by another official document, The Draft South West Subregional Strategy. The naming of both these policies as "strategy" suggests careful planning and foresight by the government, which again implies political and institutional authority, and also trust in the plan. Sue Morris was quoted as saying "The Metropolitan Strategy and Draft South West Subregional Strategy identified the importance of those rural lands [in the Cawdor Valley] given that we're losing a lot of our market gardens [in the South West Growth Centre]" (Morris in Bowie 28 May 2008, p. 2). This statement could be seen to demonstrate that the concerns about the loss of rural land were not just community concerns, but concerns raised by government, and cemented in policy.

In April 2009, one week after the NSW Land and Environment Court hearing on the proposed school and while a final judgement had still not been made, the Camden Advertiser ran the following headline: "Islamic school hinges on rural traits" (Bowie 29 April 2009, p. 4-5). This headline demonstrates the integral role that the rural nature of Camden played in the debate. The article goes on to explain that

while Camden's rural heritage was prominent in the broader public discourse, it was also firmly embedded in the relevant legislation:

> The land [the Quranic Society] has chosen for the school is zoned rural 1(a) under the council's local environment plan (LEP), which governs what can and can't be built in the area. Last week's four day battle in the Land and Environment Court focused on three objectives that a development in that zone must meet to be approved. The objectives are 'to provide suitable land for agricultural use', 'to enable compatible forms of development…in keeping with the rural character of the locality and carried out in an environmentally sensitive manner', and 'to ensure that development does not detract from the existing rural character of the area or create unreasonable or uneconomic demands for provision or extension of public amenities or services' (Bowie 29 April 2009, p. 4).

This article references the policy documents of the Local Environment Plan, to draw on the official planning policy and the authority associated with this. Journalist Alicia Bowie goes on to quote the objectives from the LEP, highlighting their importance to the Land and Environment Court in discussing them, but also bringing this official discourse to the attention of the *Camden Advertiser* readers, who had presumably not engaged with the policy themselves.

The rural zoning of the land the Quranic Society had purchased was the reason that Land and Environment Court commissioner Graham Brown eventually denied the school proposal. "In his judgment, Mr Brown said the school did not meet two objectives of the land's rural zoning so the school application had to be refused" (Bowie 3 June 2009, p. 1). In a summary of Mr Brown's statement, it was reported that "The size and design of the school did not fit with the rural character of the area surrounding the school site" (no author 3 June 2009, p. 4). From these quotes, it could be argued that the dominance of Camden's rural identity in both the public and official discourses led to the rejection of the school application.

Rural Discourses and "Othering"

Some residents of Camden formed a group in direct opposition to the proposed Islamic school, called the Camden/Macarthur Residents' Group (CMRG). This group was formed after a protest meeting about the development in 2007. The formalisation of this group with a president, Emil Sremchevich, who maintained a strong voice in the news media discourse, as well as a media spokesman, Andrew Wannet, contributed to the authority lent to their opinions, due to the privileged nature of statements by a formal entity. In one 2008 article, Mr Sremchevich said: "[Camden] is a beautiful little town and I'll support any place in this country which wants to save some of its character" (Sremchevich in Bowie 23 January 2008, p. 11). Repeated here there is the suggestion that had been made by other residents and politicians; that Camden's rural identity needed to be saved from the negative effect an Islamic school would have on the area.

The CMRG's rural discourse was also frequently mixed with a discourse of "the Other" whereby the Muslim community was portrayed as different and threatening to the Camden community. For example, "Media spokesman Andrew Wannet said the group would object to the school on environmental, heritage, planning and 'cultural and lifestyle' grounds" (Bowie 5 December 2007, p. 11). In this quote we see the issue of "heritage" raised again, but also "cultural and lifestyle grounds". This is despite numerous assertions by CMRG that they were only objecting to the school on planning issues, and that opposition was not related to the religion of the school proponents. In another case, Mr Wannet wrote a letter to the editor, in which he said: "Camden people (those living in and outside of Camden) have fought long and hard on issues that affect the town whether they are Muslim issues or not. You only have to see Camden's enviable ensemble of country town architecture and rural landscapes" (Wannet 19 December 2007, p. 8). It could be argued that this letter suggested that the fact that the Quranic Society is a Muslim group, making the school a "Muslim issue", is at least part of the reason the CMRG is fighting the proposal. The letter also seems to suggest that Camden people have fought change before in order to maintain their rural identity, and have always succeeded in the past, and will do so again in this case. This metaphor of the

fight is continued in early 2008, when the CMRG "sent out a leaflet to Camden households urging residents to 'join the fight to keep Camden rural'" (Bowie 2 April 2008, p. 16). The phrasing of "the fight to keep Camden rural" suggests that the rural identity is something the Quranic Society is trying to take away from the town. In actuality, as discussed below, the Quranic Society expressed that the rural nature of the area is one of the reasons it selected the site and therefore does not wish to change that.

Camden residents were given a strong voice in the *Camden Advertiser* through the letters to the editor and website comments published on the proposed Islamic school. It is important to note here that whilst letters to the editor are often viewed as being the individual's own words and a more direct reflection of the community's sentiment, they are still selected, moderated and positioned by editors, which means they may not be accurate expressions of actual events and/or public sentiment. In the published letters, many residents chose to highlight Camden's rural character and identity when opposing the school, suggesting that the development would detrimentally change the rural nature of the town. One such letter stated:

> Watch out, people of Camden. Once the school is approved the face of Camden will change forever. First a school, then a mosque, then shops with signs you cannot read. For those who remember, Lakemba, Greenacre and Bankstown did not always look as they do now. They were once a population of everyday Australians who remembered the days the land was paddocks and fields (Girona 24 October 2007, p. 2).

To support the idea that Camden will be irrevocably changed by the Islamic school, Girona perpetuates the common fear of "the dreaded Lakemba". A number of letters to the editor drew on the example of Lakemba, which has become widely associated with the large Muslim Lebanese community settled in the larger Bankstown area. Dunn, Klocker and Salabay argue that "the media depiction of Lakemba has been part of a racialization process identified elsewhere, in which Muslims are constructed as fanatical, intolerant, militant, fundamentalist, misogynist and alien (Dunn 2001)" (2007, p. 576). This reference to Lakemba, and the changes to paddocks and fields, could therefore suggest that there is an incompatibility between rural Camden and the Muslim "Other".

Many other letters also suggested that the school would lead to negative effects for the Camden township. Narellan resident Preston Rowles was quoted as saying "Camden is still a country town but it won't be for long" (Rowles in McCowen 21 May 2008, p. 9), while Cawood asked "What will happen to our sleepy township? What will happen to the traditional country feel that the main street of Camden brings?" (2 April 2008, p. 24). Both of these letters seem to suggest that the Islamic school would somehow change the identity of Camden, which is also what Bray feared. Bray's letter is addressed to "State MP Geoff Corrigan and Camden councillors" (Bray 5 March 2008, p. 4), and suggests:

> in not too many years from now, if Camden does have an Islamic school for more than 1200 students built on prime rural land and Camden township is no longer identifiable as a town with history and rural character, and traffic congestion and the resultant pollution is intolerable, you may feel the need to say 'I'm sorry' to your residents and votees (Bray 5 March 2008, p. 4).

Bray directly pinpointed the changing identity of Camden as an area of concern, and a reason to deny the school proposal.

Other letters from residents focused on the idea that the school would not benefit Camden. O'Brien asked "How does permitting a large school with 1200 students primarily drawn from suburbs up to an hour away enhance Camden's rural heritage and benefit the local community?" (O'Brien 31 October 2007, p. 10). The same resident one week later wrote again: "Is it an asset to the rural area it is situated in? No. There is no reason for this school to be in this location. Why would anyone build such an expensive facility so remotely from the majority of people who would use it?" (O'Brien 7 November 2007, p. 4). These letters not only lament the potential loss of a rural identity, but also seem to suggest that there was not an already established Muslim community in Camden. By suggesting that the school is "so remote" from the Muslim community who would use the school, these letters could potentially work to further create boundaries between a Camden "us" and a Muslim "them".

Later in the school debate, after the council had made the initial decision to reject the proposed development, residents began to write letters that reflected on the negative attention Camden was getting in national and even international news media. Even the journalists of the *Camden Advertiser* acknowledged that "Camden is no longer known only for its quiet country town atmosphere" (no author 4 June 2008, p. 1). However, some residents did not respond well to such criticism. A resident identified as "Get over your selves" wrote: "I bet you don't even come from this area and you all should be ashamed of yourselves for calling a rural Aussie town racist" (Get over your selves 25 June 2008, p. 4). This letter to the editor is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, it plays off the idea of belonging, in that it seems to suggest that if you aren't from the area, if you aren't a "true Camdenite", then you can't have an opinion on the debate. "Get over your selves" is, here, trying to limit the voices who are authorised to participate in the discourse. Secondly, the idea of being ashamed of "calling a rural Aussie town racist" seems to imply that "real" rural towns can't be racist. This concept can be linked back to ideas about identity and belonging, suggesting that if the community of Camden is rural then anything that is different to what already exists must be not-rural and therefore problematic.

Rural Discourses and Inclusiveness

However, not all residents who wrote letters to the editor to the *Camden Advertiser* shared these fears about the effect of the proposed Islamic school on Camden's rural identity. Some were more concerned about other negative identities Camden was being labelled with as a result of the widespread news media coverage of the debate. Lysaught wrote: "If people are so concerned about maintaining Camden's image, why are they trying so hard to base that image on racist ideologies?" (14 November 2007, p. 18). This letter also hinted at some of the other reasons being used to oppose the school, including the alleged absence of an existing local Muslim community, the idea that the Muslim community should "fit in" with the already established local schools, and that Islam is incompatible with the Australian way of life. In light of such racist ideas being spread through the letters to the editor, Brumby asked those who want to preserve Camden's identity, "What exactly is it you want to preserve? Parochialism, fear and prejudice?" (Brumby 14 November 2007, p. 18). While these letters did not actually question the rural identity being constructed for Camden during the debate, they do seem to suggest that there are other, more negative, identities being constructed concurrently in the news media discourse.

This idea of other, multiple identities for the township of Camden is supported by another Camden resident who wrote a letter to the *Camden Advertiser*. Youdale wrote neither for nor against the school proposal, but specifically addressed the ideas of Camden's rural heritage, writing: "Am I in favour of the Islamic school? Not particularly. Am I against it? Not particularly. Am I for or against preserving some idyllic notion of a rural Arcadia that we call Camden? Neither. Change is inevitable" (12 December 2007, p. 20). Youdale here acknowledges the rural history of Camden, and seems to suggest that although this may remain part of the Camdenites' identity, identities also evolve over time, and that this heritage is not a good enough reason in and of itself to reject the school proposal.

This idea of changing identity is supported in June 2008 by two powerful letters to the editor published in support of the Islamic school proposal. The first of these was published on 11 June 2008, and was written by 40 Camden residents in collaboration. In this letter, the community members acknowledged the rural aspects of Camden's identity, but also highlighted the need to progress that identity. They wrote: "We are proud of Camden's rural colonial heritage. It was once a country town but there has been significant change and this is part of a continuum" (B. Shipp et al 11 June 2008, p. 21). This letter was supported and reiterated one week later by another group of 22 Camden residents, who stated that they wanted to support the sentiments of the citizens who had written the previous week. In a very similar statement, they said: "We are proud of Camden's rural colonial heritage, but recognise that it is becoming part of greater Sydney, as a result of state and local government's planning" (Roberts-Everett at al 18 June 2008, p. 4). It could be argued that, similarly to Youdale, these two letters to the editor, and the 62 residents involved, argued for a more modern identity for Camden, which acknowledged Camden's rural past, but also integrates the changing nature of the town, including the growing Muslim community.

This growing community was formally represented by the Quranic Society who had a small voice in the *Camden Advertiser*'s coverage of the Islamic school debate. Spokesman Jeremy Bingham attempted to address community concerns, and promoted the rural identity of Camden as a reason the school should be supported. He was quoted as saying: "They want their school to be in a rural area because it is the best kind of place to have a school. It's best for the children and also best in terms of low impact on neighbours" (Bingham in Bowie 17 October 2007, p. 3). In this way, Mr Bingham did not attempt to dispute the rural identity that the Camden residents and politicians have established for their town. Instead, it could be argued that he used this discourse as a point of commonality, suggesting that the same reasons Camdenites love their town are the reasons the Quranic Society want to build their school there. As such, it could be seen that Mr Bingham attempted to break down the perceived differences between the local community and the Muslim community, through their mutual desire for the rural life.

In addition to the Quranic Society's use of the rural discourse in a more inclusive manner, Alicia Bowie, journalist and occasional guest editor of the *Camden Advertiser*, also drew on the heritage argument, in order to call for unity and understanding. She referred to letters to the editor which claim that the Islamic school and the Muslim community that would use the school are incompatible with the Australian way of life and the need to maintain our Australian (and/or Christian, depending on the letter) heritage. This was a view put forward by a number of letters as one argument against the school. Bowie, however, suggested that maintaining the Australian heritage is about inclusion. She said:

> Within discussion I'm hearing a lot about maintaining our Australian heritage. I always thought a big chunk of that heritage was the Aussie spirit of a fair go for all and mateship. But going off what has been said on our website and in letters, that mateship and fair go only applies to people with the same religion or race as ours (Bowie 9 January 2008, p. 4).

It could be argued that Bowie was attempting to remove the smokescreen of rural and heritage identity being used by some residents to oppose the school, by implying that there are some racist or discriminatory attitudes in the community. In this way, Bowie appears to challenge some of the dominant uses of the rural identity to oppose the Islamic school development, and instead suggests an alternation Australian identity based on equality through the "fair go for all".

Conclusion

In conclusion, the controversial proposed Islamic school development in Camden, NSW was debated with frequent reference to the rural nature of the township. Some Camden politicians, and residents, as well as members of the Quranic Society and *Camden Advertiser* journalists appropriated rural discourses to challenge pre-conceived ideas about identity and belonging in Camden. However, other politicians, many residents and the main school opposition group, the Camden/Macarthur Residents' Group, were able to more effectively and more frequently draw on these discourses of Camden as a rural town to generate ideas about heritage and identity to justify rejecting the Islamic school proposal. As such, Camden's rural identity was frequently established as being in opposition to the Islamic school proposal, and in a larger sense, as incompatible with the growing Muslim community in the area.

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Seen but unseen: Missing visible Indigenous women in the media and what it means for leadership in Indigenous Australia

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This paper reports on an investigation of media representation of Indigenous women's leadership in Australia. A plethora of strong Indigenous women are currently involved in leading roles, affecting policy and contributing in the areas of health, education, science and communication spheres. However, this paper contends that contemporary mainstream media seem oblivious to or ignore this fact, and only seem to report on a few select individuals. Conversely, the sphere of digital and social media is saturated with a number of highly visible Indigenous women. Why is there a disconnection between what journalists report on and what is happening for Indigenous women, and why does there appear a disconnection within commercial outlets when a picture is emerging in social media full of fascinating, influential Indigenous women? This paper investigates, from an Indigenous standpoint, the role of leading Indigenous women who are currently affecting change within Australian society. It also investigates why there is a lack of media coverage of these women, why reporting is steeped in negativity, and why the few that are reported on seem so appealing to news agencies. The paper concludes that influential Indigenous women in leadership roles are not given positive coverage in mainstream media, and this thereby inhibits their further contribution to the Australian media sphere.

Introduction

Indigenous Australian women are prolific in their endeavours to create change for their people in Australian society. Historically, these women have lead from the shadows, in background roles with great responsibility and integrity towards making conditions better and simply getting things done.

The literature supporting this paper builds on foundational and established bodies of work on leadership, media and Indigenous studies, through to more recent examples of discussion around Indigenous women, the media and leadership.

This paper draws on research conducted for a project that is exploring Indigenous women and leadership. My project seeks to investigate leadership through interviewing twenty Indigenous women from various areas of industry about leading. Using qualitative analyses from an Indigenous theoretical perspective, I use conversational analysis and draw themes from this endeavour to highlight the many-faceted forms that leadership takes for Indigenous women. An Indigenist construct enables the researcher and the participants a degree of mutual relatedness to culture, and a similar way of being, knowing and doing (Martin, 2003). Indigenous Standpoint theory is heavily utilised when Indigenous researchers perform investigations on their communities in connection with individual perspectives on politics and social and emotional wellbeing.

When defining or discussing leadership, one must make a distinction between leadership in the mainstream, and leadership as it has existed for Indigenous people both internationally and here in Australia. The many ways in which an individual may become a leader is even more complex in the context of Aboriginal people in Australia. Ivory explains:

> There were two main thoughts on the issue of Aboriginal leadership: that Aboriginal people's notions of leadership clash with white concepts of leadership, and that conflict will always arise when Aboriginal people are expected to conform to the latter. Examples of this can be seen in communities like Walgett, where 'experts' in their fields cannot always act in accordance with the wishes of 'natural leaders' or elders, and vice versa. So they are faced with the impossible task of trying to take everyone's interests into account. Who becomes a leader is a highly vexing question, and being one is a laborious task (2009, p. 28).

From discussing issues related to leadership with Indigenous women working in the tertiary education sector, it was discovered that Indigenous women appear to have a strong level of representation in the academy, from entry level to Chancellor level, yet these women are not regularly used as spokeswomen by commercial news outlets.

It is apparent that the issue of a cultural blindness in media agencies is current yet overlooked in the overall conversations regarding diversity in Australian media. Speaking to National Indigenous Television (NITV)'s Natalie Ahmat (2014), commercial television host Karl Stefanovic highlighted the inability for Indigenous individuals to be seen and heralded as contributing to public life, therefore adding to the overall discourse about Indigenous Australia. Furthermore, media coverage of Indigenous Australians has been largely of disadvantage and deficit, and Indigenous women are regularly portrayed within negative parameters that are difficult to break through.

This paper seeks to investigate the apparent invisibility of Indigenous Australian women within commercial and institutional media agencies, and the impact that this invisibility has on Indigenous women and leadership. It will firstly review literature pertaining to the issues of Australian media agencies and both positive and negative coverage of Indigenous women. Specific circumstances will be discussed regarding Indigenous women and leadership, the public sphere and social media activity as an antidote to the absence of media content in the context of strong Indigenous women in leading roles within Australia. Initial findings of the current research project will be discussed, followed by a conclusion on the subject matter.

Indigenous women in popular and media discourse

When Indigenous people are reported on in the media, it is regularly within a deficit model (Fforde et al, 2013). Kerin highlights discourse as:

> Systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of actions, beliefs and practices that shape reality by systemically constructing the subjects and the worlds of which they speak. Discourse plays a role in wider social processes of legitimation and power; emphasising the constitution of current truths, how they are maintained and what power relations they carry with them (2012, p. 26).

A number of scholars have highlighted deficit discourse within an Aboriginal context as being connected to and encompassing representation, policy and expression. This discourse is occurring within non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australia (Fforde et al, 2013). Historically, Indigenous women have been principally represented through the frames of disadvantage—family violence, poor health and socio-economic conditions—and radical activism. There has also been a tendency from early colonialism, to "continually disseminate two common rhetorics on Aboriginal women and their sexuality; as powerless victims or lascivious prostitutes" (Humphreys, 2008, p. 2). This is often seen in media coverage of issues of sexual violence in Aboriginal communities. Further, Humphreys notes that, "Indigenous academics, like Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2002), argue that the penetration of victim and promiscuous discourses in media and academia ignores the active agency of Aboriginal women in owning their own future and power" (2008, p. 8).

In literature on whiteness, such as Dyer (1997), it is pointed out that white Europeans are viewed as the norm and not named as other races and ethnicities are named in public discourse. The political agenda involved in this colour-blind construct denies the link between socioeconomic privilege and whiteness. Dyer argues that:

> The media, politics, education are still in the hands of white people, still speak for whites while claiming – and sometimes sincerely aiming – to speak for humanity. Against the flowering of a myriad postmodern voices, we must also see the countervailing tendency towards a homogenisation of world culture… Research into books, museums, the press, advertising, films, television, software – repeatedly shows that in Western representation whites are overwhelmingly and disproportionately predominant (1997, p. 3).

For example, Said examined Flaubert's "widely influential model of the Oriental woman" and found that the "historical facts of domination" allowed him to "speak for" and represent the feminine "other" (1978, p. 6). He posits:

> Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian courtesan produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman; she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. He spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male and these were the historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was 'typically oriental' (Said, 1978, p. 6).

The concept of Oriental woman, or "other", can be applied to Aboriginal women in Australia as well. Like the scenario with Flaubert, foreign, white (and male) entities speak for the Aboriginal woman, and represent her in an embodiment that tells the audience what is "typically black," thereby missing a large portion of the story. Here, Humphreys suggests, "colonial discourses have persisted in the media, but for the same ideological purpose; to highlight their vulnerability and promiscuity" (2008, p. 33).

Recent examples of this point are varied, including former Labor minister Gary Johns' comments regarding Aboriginal women, welfare and "cash cows". When discussing statistics which stated that Indigenous women were 34 times more likely to be victims of domestic violence than non-Indigenous women, Mr. Johns, speaking on *The Bolt Report*, stated, "Look, a lot of poor women in this country, a large proportion of whom are Aboriginal, are used as cash cows, right? They are kept pregnant and producing children for the cash. Now that has to stop" (quoted in Whyte, 2015, no page).

In the eyes of many notable Indigenous Australians, Mr. Johns' comments were offensive and stereotypical, to say the least. Aboriginal academic Dr. Chelsea Bond wrote a piece for online magazine *New Matilda*, stating:

> Aboriginal people have long been depicted as animalistic, not quite human, and accordingly were counted among the flora and fauna up until the 1960s. The depiction of Aboriginal women as cows more specifically suggests that we are not just animals, but that we are the most docile creature lacking agency over our own lives (2015, no page).

Perpetuating the belief that we, as Aboriginal women, are compliant victims, vulnerable to any form of abuse, exploitation or self-destruction, plays into the continual parentification by governments to fix the "Aboriginal problem" (Macoun, 2011). It also undermines any suggestion that Aboriginal women may lead—forcefully, collaboratively or with any tangible impact on Australian society.

To clarify, there is little doubt that problems exist for Aboriginal Australia. One cannot deny statistical information relating to mortality, employment and health issues within our communities. But as Langton highlights in the *Griffith Review*, the song and dance surrounding mixed messages of reporting deficit and ignoring excellence deviates from the matters at hand, and leaves one feeling derailed in their attempt to effect some form of change within the issue:

> The crisis in Aboriginal society is a public spectacle, played out in a vast reality show through the media, parliaments, public service and the Aboriginal world. This obscene and pornographic spectacle shifts attention away from everyday lived crisis that many Aboriginal people endure—or do not, dying as they do at excessive rates. This spectacle is not a new phenomenon in Australian public life (2008, p.145).

The Australian media has continually represented Aboriginal women as vulnerable, disempowered and promiscuous. Moreton-Robinson's arguments on deviance and the sexualisation of Aboriginal women highlight how the media focus on sex reflects historical representations of the "black female body... as an icon of sexual deviance" (2000, pp. 25,169). Beyondblue highlights that "Indigenous Australians overwhelmingly see the media as racist and reported the consequences of media racism as being highly negative" (beyondblue, 2015, no page).

More than two decades ago, Jakubowicz et al (1994) discovered that reporting of Indigenous issues was dominated by negative, stereotypical representations of Indigenous people. These representations focused on conflict, crisis and sensationalism, denying Indigenous people an authoritative voice, relied on police and other privileged authorities as sources and typically were presented within established, negative frameworks of interpretation (Jakubowicz et al, 1994, p. 86). I posit that little has changed for the better in the years that have passed since.

The Australian media landscape

The Australian media is currently metamorphosing, as is happening in other parts of the world, from the dominance of mainstream commercial agencies and broadsheets, towards a new realm of online news, activist blogs and campaigning style reportage which are gaining great momentum. Chadwick (2013) has provided discussion on various forms of media that exist today. Together with the 24-hour news cycle and issues relating to cost efficiency and new business models, the media landscape as we know it has changed vastly. With this new wave, new challenges and opportunities have risen.

One challenge highlighted in this era is, how does a particular media agency (newspapers, television news, current affairs or online news forums) reflect the true diversity of its audiences? How do agencies decide what is more important in what they report? And in connection with Indigenous Australia, how do we, as a population, fit in?

Schudson argues that "Journalism is an event-centred discourse, more responsive to accidents and explosions to the external world than to fashions in ideas among cultural elites" (2008, p. 55). It is with this statement that we can better understand why there is little substantive cultural and political discourse from many of the news agencies that report on cultural issues. Further, the general public are also time poor and more interested in grabbing the story that can be digested quickly over the story that contains ongoing analysis.

Conversely, the opportunities of this era lie in new social media and the utilisation of this media by Indigenous people, both here in Australia and internationally (Sweet et al, 2013; Waller et al, 2015). While there may be reluctance for Indigenous people to be included in stories in mainstream and commercial media, there are a growing number of Indigenous communication specialists, including journalists and social media activists, who are creating a new discourse for Indigenous Australia online. Luke Pearson created IndigenousX as a Twitter account discussing media and Indigenous issues and now runs a regular blog of the same name that has risen to national prominence. Celeste Liddle's blog *Rantings of an Aboriginal Feminist* is gaining popular attention amongst Aboriginal women seeking political information with a distinct Aboriginal female leaning. Using alternative media as a way of disrupting the white dominant frame has been an innovative way of dispersing information and influencing the views of those in Australian society who may not see the reality of Aboriginal life. It appears this is not an unusual occurrence, and many young and upcoming Indigenous players are rising through the ranks to create their own space within the public sphere. Avison and Meadows state:

> Aboriginal communication systems existed on the North American and Australian continents for tens of thousands of years before white invasion. As the power and influence of non-Aboriginal media has transformed the wider public sphere, Aboriginal people have continued to seek access to their own media for political, educational, and cultural reasons (2000, p. 352).

While the social media sphere is definitely growing in terms of authenticity (Carlson, 2016) and some of the players in this sphere seem to be making inroads into other more traditional forms of media coverage, there are many critics who attempt to question the legitimacy of this sphere when discussing matters of journalistic integrity and impact on the greater public.

In the lead up to the 2013 Federal Election, very little was heard in mainstream media from Indigenous women regarding political issues relating to Indigenous Australia. What was missing from the conversation were the voices of women discussing Indigenous issues that needed to be addressed in this

era of the Northern Territory intervention. Taylor, writing for online media outlet *The Guardian*, highlights:

> Noel Pearson. Warren Mundine. Mick Gooda. Mick Dodson. Patrick Dodson. Where are the women? When Rudd and Abbott speak of their Indigenous 'mates,' they always name men. There are many competent and capable Indigenous women who are thinking innovatively and deeply about solutions for their communities. Do we see or hear from them? (2013, p. 5).

The need to encourage strong female leadership in Aboriginal Australia is further highlighted by Indigenous academic Michelle DeShong, calling on more Indigenous women to become involved in politics, thereby influencing the public sphere towards more diversity and gender equality:

> Research obviously shows that women's issues are put on the agenda much more prominently when there are actually women prominent in these roles… particularly I think as a nation we need to be encouraging formal representation of Indigenous people across a whole range of spectrums (quoted in Stevenson, 2013, p. 3).

In New South Wales, Linda Burney MP has been working in public policy for a number of years, and in her current position as the Deputy Opposition Leader for the New South Wales Labor party. Nova Peris, a former Olympian, has long shouldered the responsibility of inspiring and motivating as a leader in sport, and recently retired in her position as a member of the Australian Senate. In contrast to DeShong's argument, the disconnection between these women holding strong roles yet not being seen is that these women are there, leading the way and contributing towards public life in a manner that is constructive and should be recognised more readily in the media. Within public office, there has been an insurgence of Indigenous women holding valuable roles and leading not just as representatives of their own culture, but also representing those within the mainstream. The discrepancy lies in these women not being acknowledged or recognised as being pertinent to the discourse on Aboriginal Australia.

The differences that often occur between mainstream opinions on leadership and that of leading Indigenous people is a debate between individualism and collectivism, as Maddison notes:

> Mainstream political culture understands leadership and success in individual terms. Many Aboriginal people, however, have a very different world view. Aboriginal value systems are often at odds with liberal democratic philosophy, creating tension between those assimilated to ideas of individual political equality and those who maintain that the foundation unit of society is the Aboriginal group or community (2009, p. 83).

It appears not much has changed in the outward representation of Aboriginal women. And in political life scandal sells papers while also fulfilling a stereotype that Indigenous individuals are quick to corrupt the white mainstream for their own ends.

In 2014, Senator Nova Peris was involved in a media report regarding a rumoured past relationship and suggestion of misuse of funds while she was an Olympian. This story focused largely on Ms Peris allegedly using a position she held with Athletics Australia to secure funding for an overseas athlete to come to Australia in the pursuit of an affair between the two. These allegations were immediately stated to have been false by the two parties involved, yet the damage had already been done to a Senator who had worked passionately in her position, and the real story of her work as a politician had been largely overshadowed by this news story. This reporting of rumoured scandal is not unusual within the corridors of power; however in matters of Indigenous representation the impact it can have on the reinforcement of stereotypes can have lasting repercussions on Indigenous leadership within Australia.

While there are strong females in community leadership roles, who are quiet achievers and fighters for justice and in keeping with a strong cultural identity, they are not covered by media agencies regularly, nor are their styles of leadership discussed. Helen Corbet, a Noongar/Yamitji Aboriginal adult education specialist, states:

> If you don't hear the voices of the women, you're only getting half the story. It is imperative to the survival of Aboriginal societies that we be heard. We are at the front line of preserving and promoting the Indigenous world view by our nature as the primary caregivers for our young people (2008, p. 1).

Preliminary Findings

Indigenous women in this study discussed their motivations for leading as having a passion and drive to do something, suggesting that intrinsic value was a prerequisite to them working towards strong leadership roles.

What is intriguing about the results from my research project is the issues related to followership, resonance and aspiration. The experiences of Aboriginal communities show that leading can be fraught with complexities; however, the following of Indigenous female leaders begins at the micro level—some Aboriginal women I interviewed spoke of family heroes and bearing witness to other Aboriginal women in their own communities who mentored them and shepherded them towards more education or self-belief that enabled them to take up leadership roles. Participant Katrina Fanning highlights, "When you hear someone and you're inspired by their story, the rest you see through their own individual lenses for some people it's just their ability to stay focused and strong in the face of whether its poor health or life just not being fair sometimes" (Fanning, 2015, no page).

The aspirations of these women began from these connections to others in community, and grew as they continued to higher aspiration levels of those that were in greater positions of influence.

One young woman I interviewed came from small beginnings and grew within the education sector to a position as a youth ambassador for the United Nations. The pathway towards this role was one of familial mentorship, seeing examples of those around her gaining confidence and pushing themselves to achieve more, and culminated in her travelling to UN headquarters in New York with Malala Yousafzai, the young Muslim advocate shot by extremists for her views on women and education in Pakistan. Ms. Yousafzai has gone on to advocate strongly for the education of women, and the parallels with my participant's story would have been of enormous benefit to women, and the wider community in Australia. Agencies such as NITV highlighted her attendance at the UN; however, other more mainstream agencies failed to do so. It would appear that Indigenous women's powerful stories of change do not fit with the dominant narrative of the mainstream. Indigenous issues are framed in narrow and predictable ways that perpetuate a dominant racist ideology (Meadows, 2001, 2004).

Representatives in areas of politics, government, and business, referred to a strong sense of identity and family responsibility when mentioning the beginnings of their pathways to leadership. The majority of participants did not think of themselves necessarily as leaders, but rather these women invariably saw issues that needed attention and filled the gap when others would not. One participant works in the social media sphere, discussing matters relating to social justice concerns for Aboriginal Australians and gender issues. The participant's motivations were specifically that these matters were not openly discussed in mainstream media agencies, and she wanted to use her voice to promote what was absent. Another participant explained that being able to connect on issues relating to Indigeneity through digital means is one way of gaining knowledge and mobilising power when avenues for such action elsewhere are closed, stating, "I'm not sure why that happens. I think it's just the influence of the internet and globalisation and all the social media outlets, it's just an easier way to connect with like-minded people" (Hurst, 2015, no page).

Women explained that this lack of visibility creates a sense of injustice for them in their efforts to lead and change. To only see part of the story through the eyes of the media creates a major discrepancy regarding the wider community's acceptance, and it also disempowers younger black women as it prevents them from seeing a healthy example of leadership which they can aspire to.

There is a blindness in Australian communications and media that needs to be addressed. Indigenous women are less visible in reporting about Indigenous issues, even though many of these women are in high-level roles within important areas of industry—the very areas that are being reported on. The reconciliation debate is one example. Kirstie Parker, Co-Chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, is heavily involved in Reconciliation Australia. From a journalistic background herself, it is rare

that Ms Parker's face is seen on television, or her commentary read in newspapers. Dr Jackie Huggins, another Co-Chair, is a strong advocate of matters relating to the health and well-being of Indigenous Australians, and was recently present at the 2016 Closing the Gap Report announcement at Canberra's Parliament House, yet there was no coverage regarding her input by major Australian media.

Voice and leadership

Indigenous women vocalising the needs of their community is nothing new. In 2014, a group of Indigenous grandmothers banded together to form the group "Grandmothers Against Removals" to focus attention on the issue of Indigenous child removals through the child protection system. Due to there being an over-representation of Indigenous children in the child protection system, this group of women has actively been campaigning for change regarding the removal of children through agencies such as The Department of Community Services so that Indigenous families have more opportunities to have their children returned, and to avoid another stolen generation. Once again, this has received little media attention. I suggest that this is partly due to the complexity of the issue.

There is scope for further research regarding female leadership within Indigenous and mainstream communities, including those women who lead from within their community roles, as Ivory posits:

> Bell (1983, p. 23) argued that it was not just a man's world that women also were able to maintain 'gender-specific power bases'. Strong women within community lead by nurturing and teaching the children, including the young boys before initiation. In more contemporary times, women grew to hold more positions of leadership in areas of social and political justice and areas of health and education (2009, p. 18).

While there is much to be proud of in terms of the work being done in Indigenous society, the silence outside of the Indigenous arena is deafening. This silence seems incongruous to the amount of grassroots and frontline work many Aboriginal women perform every day, and is simply not being highlighted or further encouraged. Be it in overcoming disadvantage in community, creating a sounding board for other Indigenous women or shepherding non-Indigenous audiences towards better understanding, a stronger comprehension of Indigenous women and how they lead can be further used to encourage greater dialogue within Australia. The research also contributes to a mainstream arena by allowing non-indigenous Australians an insight into individuals and groups in terms of best practices for working with Indigenous Australians as a whole.

The initial findings of this research suggest that Aboriginal women hold strong voices, and strong positions, when discussing leadership and visibility. They have also continued on their pathways to build capacity and success, regardless of the lack of examples of Indigenous female leadership within media reportage. They have found their own ways—listened to elders and asked for assistance and mentorship from other Aboriginal women that have shown strong leadership—without having much reported on in commercial news agencies.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to investigate the apparent lack of representation of Indigenous women in the Australian media sphere, or rather the inability for these women to be seen and celebrated. The research finds that in the context of Indigenous women, representation has particular meaning regarding active voices and strong participants in society, creating agency and empowerment for both themselves and community. Focusing on leadership, this paper examined the perils of the absence of media reportage on Indigenous women and how this impacts on Indigenous female leadership in Australia. The negative images of Indigenous women within media reports further emphasises the deficit discourse of Aboriginality as a problem issue, and ignores the expanses of Indigenous women in strong and influential leading roles within Australia. Whilst an initial standpoint of Indigenous disadvantage is something that cannot be overlooked when reporting on Indigenous issues, the need for more strengths-based discourse

around Indigenous women is important to the general representation of Indigenous people in Australian society.

There are many Indigenous women working in roles that contribute overall to Australian life, including parliamentary representatives, lobby group members and women working within media agencies. In the recent Federal Election, it was apparent that these women were not being reported on, despite the growing number of these women putting themselves up for candidature. Reportage of such women has been once again limited, with more focus on policy issues of family violence, remote community visits and constitutional recognition, thereby further promoting the Aboriginal problem rather than the burgeoning strength and enduring resilience of Indigenous Australians as a whole.

In the absence of positive media reportage, there is a growing insurgence of Indigenous people within the social media sphere, actively discussing issues of relevance for Indigenous Australia and highlighting the need for greater representation of and discourse by Indigenous people within contemporary society. These individuals are essentially creating space where there was none, and whilst the debate over social media legitimacy continues, the degree of strengths based discourse is further cultivated in this arena. Perhaps it is time for the mainstream media to take notice?

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Cybernetics of digital-engagement: Optimizing the self for social networking

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The 'Fifth Estate' is a direct result of the digital networked environment and practitioners in the 'Fifth Estate' are now compelled to operate within a duality of environments (digital and physical) whether they understand the duality or not. This paper examines digital-engagement, the complex relationship between humans and digital networked technology, a relationship that can be explained as a second order cybernetic system. I propose that the source of issues rising from digital-engagement is humans' understanding of their relationship to technology and its effect on their internal physiology, which alters behaviours and thus society.

This research found that digital-engagement involves communication-feedback-loops, which is in essence a cybernetic system and that self-awareness is a significant part of digital-engagement making second-order cybernetics more appropriate for developing an understanding of the engagement process because it accommodates both observation and participation of the individual in the human-technology communication system.

Following the background, the discussion proceeds to original research where participants' behaviours (personality and decision-making style) were correlated to their digital engagement. Significant findings were positive correlations to the personality traits Agreeableness and Openness and a negative correlation to Extraversion. The research also found that an intuitive decision-making style correlated to greater digital-engagement. Whether these results are predictive or causative of digital-engagement is as yet undetermined and further research in this area has been proposed.

This paper also discusses how altered perceptions of first principle concepts within the digital environment such as time, memory and space, are affecting human behaviours and considers the proposition of digital networked technology as simply being either a tool or an environment and concludes it is both. The internal environment of the individual is also discussed using Antonio Damasio's theories and emerging research in biochemistry and physiology.

Understanding the Fifth Estate as being part of a second order cybernetic system enables individuals, institutions and organisations to manage technology for better outcomes rather than being managed by it. This paper is relevant to all who engage with technology but it is particularly relevant to participants and facilitators of communication because they are in the front-line of changes due to digital-engagement.

Introduction

This research examines why digital-engagement affects some people in a constructive way resulting in positive outcomes while others struggle to manage it. In this section, I provide a brief background of the components necessary to understand my research into digital-engagement. Although cybernetics and second-order cybernetics is the primary theory used to understand the process of digital-engagement (the why and how), other theories were also influential such as actor-network theory, which helped explain digital-relationships, and tool-ecology, which facilitated the understanding of digital networked technology as a dynamic and evolving environment.

Defining cybernetics is no simple task because many theorists have used the term cybernetics in a variety of disciplines, each with their own variation on the definition (Hayles, 1999). Cybernetics relates to the study of systems, where an action by the system creates a change within the environment of that system. This change is revealed within the system by the initiation of a system change; the cycle is generally referred to as a feedback-loop that can be either a positive or a negative feedback loop. *Second order cybernetics* extends this and is best explained by Heinz von Foerster's brain example.

> A brain is required to write a theory of a brain. From this follows that a theory of the brain, that has any aspirations for completeness, has to account for the writing of this theory. And even more

fascinating, the writer of this theory has to account for her or himself. Translated into the domain of cybernetics; the cybernetician, by entering his own domain, has to account for his or her own activity. Cybernetics then becomes cybernetics of cybernetics, or second-order cybernetics (von Foerster, 2003, p. 298).

This approach to understanding digital-engagement places the autobiographical self (Damasio, 2000, p. 17) in the position of observer and participant within the digital-engagement process: a process that is comprised of both an internal environment (in-the-skin) and an external environment (out-of-the-skin). The external environment is considered in two ways. Firstly as the *physical environment*, the one in which humans have evolved over millennia as part of the evolutionary process and is the environment in which humans have developed an intuitive understanding of first principle concepts such as time, space and memory. These concepts have in general aided human survival and prosperity. The second external environment, which is pertinent to this research, is the *digital networked environment*. This is a recently created environment in which humans increasingly have to function due to the ubiquitous embedding of digital technology in society. There has been extensive research into the seamless enmeshing of both physical and digital environments ranging from user interface to improving human functionality (Bavelier et al, 2010; Gallagher et al, 2013) or social behaviours (Modecki et al, 2014; Sormanen and Dutton, 2015; Turkle, 1995) and education (Bavelier et al, 2010). Generally speaking, research has focused on the seamless integration and adoption of the digital environment into the existing framework of the physical environment. However, using a few examples of first principle concepts the following discussion illustrates why the two environments should be viewed as being somewhat different. This is not a definitive argument; it is simply a brief discussion to illustrate how first principle concepts are indeed experienced differently in the digital networked environment. During the interviews that formed part of the empirical research in this paper, participants expressed experiencing the differences in the first principle concept as discussed below.

Altered Perceptions in the Fifth Estate—the External Environment

Time in the physical environment is generally perceived as being a linear concept—although there are some specific cultural concepts of time—across most cultures. Time in the digital environment is described by Manuel Castells as being *timeless time*. He explained that the "elimination of sequencing creates undifferentiated time which is tantamount to eternity" (Castells, 2010, p. 494). In the digital environment users' experience of time is instantaneous, as in global financial markets where geographically dispersed humans interact in "local-time'". However, time is also experienced as being eternal. The concept of *eternal time* is the result of the operational behaviours of the digital network environment where information is identically copied, shared, stored and archived by humans, hardware and software in multiple places without the initiator's knowledge, making information potentially exist for eternity. Geoffrey West proposes *accelerating time* which he says is a result of "the collective that we have constructed by coming together and interacting" through and with networked technologies. "The clock that we [now] actually work by… is getting faster and faster" (West, 2015, no page). West suggests that our unbounded growth requires accelerating cycles of innovation to avoid collapse. Time is no longer bound to biological or celestial entities but rather to the *evolutionary innovation of technology*. From this discussion the concept of time does indeed appear to be different within the digital environment.

The concept of traditional **memory** is also being affected by increased digitisation that negates the natural fading of memory by retaining exact and vivid memories (Mayer-Schönberger, 2009, p. 113). Digital memory also has an unprecedented potential to affect social memory. Guy Pessach argues digitisation of information "tends to result in partial and gradual privatisation of society's memory institutions" (2008, p. 73). This offers the utopian view of decentralised and democratised memory institutions and social remembering practices, where more information is available to more people in more formats. On the other hand, it offers privatisation of institutions that may compromise a democratic vision of social remembering due to memory institution biases, which are driven by the motives of commercial enterprise, be they human, structural framework, or algorithmic biases. In addition to this,

the combination of digitised information, ease of authoring, and cognitive surplus (Shirky, 2010) means that the general population can now easily fragment, decontextualise or trivialise social memory. An example is the subtitled parodies of Adolf Hitler's last days in the Berlin bunker, as taken from the 2004 film *Downfall* (Boutin, 2010; Rohrer, 2010). Although these memes are, in general, humorous and harmless they exacerbate the fragmentation and decontextualising of information within the digital environment thus altering social memory. Regardless of whether one takes a positive or negative view of the impact of digitisation on memory there does appear to be a case for digital-memory being different to traditional memory. This is critical because memory plays a key role in the evaluation and validation of all incoming information and will have a significant impact on personal decision-making, which in turn affects individuals' behaviour.

Space in the physical environment can be passively occupied and there is some form of physical resistance in transitioning from one space to another. On the other hand, space in the digital environment is ephemeral, described by Manuel Castells as being a "space of flows", a space that he says provides the "possibility of organizing the simultaneity of social practices without geographical contiguity" (2000, p. 14). Felix Stalder expands on this saying it "is that stage of human action whose dimensions are created by dynamic movement, rather than by static location" (2002, p. 1). This *space of flows* is a series of non-hierarchical connected nodes that can be described as a rhizomic system. Gilles Deleuze explains: "The rhizome connects any point to any other point… It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 21). Over the last twenty years this concept has become intuitive for digital-technology users in social media, but it is not necessarily understood as being a different concept of space.

The digital environment, which is aptly explained using the actor-network theory, is a system of nodes or actors that prosper and grow proportional to their contribution to a network that has no central power. Growth and power are proportional to actor performance and inactivity results in redundancy. Connections and relationships are essential because if a node or actor is not connected then from the network perspective it does not exist. These connections and relationships are not limited to humans. As Michel Callon and John Law have said "there is no difference between the person and the network of entities on which it acts. Or between the person and the network of entities which acts through the person. Network and person: they are co-extensive" (1997, p. 169). Unlike space in the physical environment, which can be statically occupied, space in the digital environment is created and retained *only by connection, action and relationships,* be they human or non-human. This concept of space is certainly different.

Based on these few examples of first principle concepts, time, space and memory, there is indeed an argument for the digital environment being in some way different to the physical environment because of the different way in which humans are now experiencing first principle concepts. In a study of how we engage with technology we need to face those elements that challenge our conventions.

Before proceeding, it would be prudent to address the often-raised argument that digital networked technology is simply a "new tool". An ecological approach was used to examine digital tool-use because it considers the fluid relations and interactions between organisms, the environment in which they are found, the organisms' relationship to other organisms, the synthesis of elements and their resulting relationship within the context of time (Fuller, 2005; Gibson, 1979; Michaels, 1981). Based on definitions from cognitive neuroscience (Frey, 2007, p. 368), computer science (St. Amant and Horton, 2008, p. 1203), ergonomics (Baber, 2003, p. 8), and primatology (van Lawick-Goodall, 1970, p. 195) the common properties of tool-use appear to be *the use of manipulable objects to alter the environment in order to achieve a goal*. When considering digital networks as a tool, these properties certainly do hold. Digital networks are manipulable via software code, or in the case of hardware through processors and routers. Digital networked technology has profoundly altered the environment in which humans function; from education to the way humans socialise and work and how they source, consume and share information and resources. A.W. Smitsman (1997) notes that tool use is a means of conveying insights between generations and humans of different skill levels. Digital networked technology is doing this in an unprecedented way. From this discussion it appears that digital networked technology can indeed be

classified as a tool but it also appears to be more than a tool because digital networks *engage* with the human at a practical, emotional and cognitive level and they also behave as an environment in which humans operate. Digital networked technology can therefore be considered as being both a tool and an environment.

The Human that Engages—The Internal Environment

The internal environment of the human body (in-the-skin) has until recently been a mystery that has been partially revealed in incremental steps over millennia. Revelations of in-the-skin systems have been through behavioural observation or examination of the non-living. In the last few decades advancements in medical technology and neurosciences have enabled examination of the "living patients brain at the same time behavioural or cognitive observations are being carried out" (Damasio, 2000, p. 14) as well as the observation of behavioural consequences by disabling specific genes in animal subjects. Medical and technology advances of how and why humans function the way they do now extends to understanding the affects of human biochemistry and the complex role it plays in behavioural outcomes. To give just one example, oxytocin acts as both a hormone and as a neuromodulator that aids the development of social attachments by selectively lowering the natural resistance animals have to the proximity of others. This facilitates trust or "approach behaviour".

From a cybernetic perspective the internal environmental system is as complex as the external environments. Humans are only now beginning to understand the role of the physical structure, mechanics and function of the body components, the biochemistry and more recently neuroplasticity (Doidge, 2007; Merzenich, Kaas, Wall, Nelson, et al, 1983; Merzenich, Kaas, Wall, Sur, et al, 1983; Tan et al, 2007). These insights aid human understanding of observed behaviours, even complex relationships like self-awareness, which is important to this research. This research found that the individuals' awareness of their relationship to their own internal environment as well as their relationship to the external environments plays a key role in digital-engagement. Advances in many disciples such as robotics (Arsenio and Fitzpatrick, 2003), philosophy (Clark, 2011), and decision sciences (Kramer, 2010; Stanovich, 2010) have all contributed in some way to developing an understanding of the complex digital-engagement relationships used in this research but the work of Antonio Damasio has been significantly influential and to do it justice requires far more space than this paper allows.

Damasio (2000) draws on case studies and his own research in neurophysiology to develop a theory of how the internal environment of the human body gives rise to consciousness. He suggests, "the organism is defined by the maintenance of internal states [homeostasis] within the boundary… [Leading to the suggestion that the] constancy of the internal milieu is essential to maintain life… it might be a blueprint and anchor for what will eventually become a self in the mind" (Damasio, 2000, pp. 135-136). In terms of second-order cybernetics, an action from the external environmental system creates a change within the internal environment of the individual. The change is reflected within the internal system by triggering a system change that results in a behavioural change. For example in most cultures bonding occurs when a familiar smiling person approaches a child (the external environment action). Oxytocin is released in the child facilitating "approach behaviour" (this reflects internal environment change). "Approach behaviour" is rewarded by a hug and other pleasant familiar sensory rewards such as smell and touch (these are additional external environment actions). The child responds with further positive bio-chemical reinforcements all of which result in the commonly understood personality behaviour of "trust". The specifics of such an interaction may differ between cultures and families but the cascade of chemical signaling is common to most people.

The above example was dealt with at length because it illustrates a series of feedback-loops within and between the environments where the individual is both the observer and the participant. My research has led to the conclusion that digital-engagement operates as a similar type of second-order cybernetic system where the autobiographical self is the observer and participant of both their in-the-skin systems and the interaction with the digital networked environment. The autobiographical self acts as the controller of the iterative feedback loops that operates between these two systems. The next section discusses my empirical research.

Empirical Research Discussion

Mixed methods were used in this research: 1) Self-reported surveys for personality and decision-making style data; and 2) Three in-depth interviews with each participant. All participants were Information and Communication Technology (ICT) professionals with education ranging from year 10 to postgraduate. The gender spread was slightly weighted to males and the age spread was 21 to 62. The surveys included the Big-Five Factor personality test, the NOE-PR-I personality tests as well as the Rational Experiential Inventory (REI) test (Goldberg et al, 2006; Pacini and Epstein, 1999).

A grounded theory approach was used to develop successive interview questions in order to gain an understanding of digital-engagement (Bryman, 2008, pp. 538-689). This involved three video-recorded interviews of the 16 participants who were ICT professionals. Following Kathy Charmaz's (2006) guidelines the interviews were coded into themes. The initial coding resulted in 128 areas of interest that were grouped into 10 themes being Behaviour, Core Concepts, Decision Making, Digital Networked Technology, Engagement, Feedback, Personality and Demographics, Physical Environment and Tool Use. It became apparent these themes were not useful in developing an understanding of digital engagement. All the nodes were re-analysed into 108 nodes that were grouped onto 12 themes; Intensity, Embededness, Consciousness, Openness, Adaptability, Willingness, Rational Applications, Experiential Application, Implementation, Existential-Motivation, Fulfillment-Motivation, and Gratification-Motivation. In addition to this there were 12 nodes that required further investigation; seven of these appeared more significant but the reasons were not understood. Of the original 128 nodes the balance were considered not related to the process of digital-engagement (for example they related to demographic data) and they were therefore disregarded. Further investigation resulted in the regrouping of nodes into five major themes or Sectors. Sectors are the term that I used for the identified themes and each Sector has three sub-sectors (sub-themes). From this I developed my Digital Engagement Model (DEM) that when considered as a system can be used to understand digital-engagement. I also used the DEM to develop statements against which I evaluated each participant interview in order to obtain a measure of their digital-engagement that I then correlated to their personality score, which had been obtained from the surveys (correlations are discussed below).

The Digital Engagement Model

The model consists of five sectors. *Tool Use* examines the relationship between the individual and technology. This involved examining how intensely the individual used technology and how they embedded it in their life as well as how aware they were of the process. *Feedback* explores the individual's relationship to, and use of, incoming information. This involves the individual's openness to explore information and willingness to process it against their autobiographical self and their capacity to adapt to their learned experience. *Action* investigates the individual's potential to act on the information they have processed by examining both internal and external influencers as well as how the individual uses processed information for behaviour modification. *Motivation* looks at what drives the individual to engage with the technology. This considers three types of motivation. Firstly, where the motivation provides temporary benefits or pleasures and its consequences are transient. Secondly, where there is a tangible or acquisitive element to the individual's motivation that exists beyond the immediate engagement and relates to more practical issues of survival and prospering. The third type of motivation is where the individual is driven by abstract meaning, purpose and attitudes that shape how they see the world and it may have significant physical environment consequences for themselves and others close to them.

The final sector, which was the most elusive, was *Value Exchange*. All of the fully engaged participants seemed to exhibit deeper understanding and more nuanced attitudes in their dealings with other parties. This was exhibited in obscure ways such as how they took notice of other people's motivations, how they ensured there was some equity in their exchanges and if they were quick to reciprocate in dealings with others. After much consideration, I decided all of these factors could be summarised as one sector called Value Exchange since they were the visible expression of an internal processing. Value Exchange seems to be particularly significant but how it works in the digital environment is not fully understood. Value

Exchange describes the mechanism that the individual has developed to translate what they have to offer into what they want in order to develop relationships, be it with other humans or with the technology.

In this sector of my model, I examine the individual's internal understanding and self-awareness of values that they have and how they feel about the risks and rewards in potential interactions. These are the in-skin systems that are modified by the autobiographical self and internal milieu. The second aspect is the individual's expectations of external exchanges within the digital networked environment that tends to be modified by their external environmental-experiences and conditions such as technology constraints (e.g. profiles, option choices) or human behaviour like troll-aggression. The final aspect of Value Exchange in my Digital Engagement Model is the individual's overarching philosophy and expectation of how social interactions or behaviours will be experienced.

Correlating Digital-Engagement to Personality

The overall results of personality (Big-Five Factor and NOE-PR-I) correlations to my digital-engagement model scores resulted in some interesting insights. There was a *positive* correlation to the personality trait Agreeableness: highly engaged individuals also had high Agreeableness scores. There was also a moderate positive correlation to Extraversion in the least engaged people but strong negative correlation amongst the most engaged people: Extraversion appears to play a positive part in some early engagement but at some point as the individual becomes more engaged Extraversion becomes counterproductive. High Openness scores supported digital-engagement particularly where the intellect subscale was one of the participant's highest subscale scores. In these cases digital-engagement behaviours appeared to be amplified. Some digital-engagement sectors such as 'motivation' and personality subscales like 'dutifulness' could moderate, mask or possibly change personality traits. High Conscientiousness scores tended to enhance *skill-levels* rather than digital-engagement. Neuroticism was not particularly significant in relation to digital-engagement and appeared equally influential in both the digital and physical environment.

Investigation of personality traits at the subscale level revealed that a limited selection of subscales had strong positive or negative correlations to the more fully engaged individuals. These subscales were found in all of the Big-Five Factor traits. This suggests that the Big-Five Factor, as an indicator of digital-engagement, is too broad to provide sufficient relevant information.

The REI survey examined the individuals' decision-making style. Correlations revealed that: 1) Rational decision-making did not seem to support digital-engagement whereas Intuitive decision-making was significant; 2) Decision-making appeared to be less important to Motivation and Value Exchange than to the other sectors (Tool use, Feedback and Action); 3) In the fully digitally engaged individuals, the sectors of Action, Feedback and Tool Use appeared to operate as a system that could possibly enhance or at the very least would support digital-engagement; and 4) Surprisingly, the Action correlation results appeared to be the most indicative of digital engagement level, showing a progression of scores from weak Rational Iterations at -0.44 and Rational Ability at 0.60 to strong correlations of Intuitive scores being Intuitive Iterations at 0.79 and Intuitive Ability at the very high 0.88.

It must be stressed that these results are based on a small sample group of ICT professionals. The small sample size was necessary for the development of an understanding of the digital-engagement phenomenon. My results are however being incidentally substantiated by new third party research that involved large sample groups exploring other areas of technology use (De Bolle et al, 2015; Mitzner et al, 2014).

Discussion

The objective of this research was to develop an understanding of what digital-engagement is and why some individuals were engaging more beneficially than others. My understanding of digital-engagement came from the rich interview data and led to the development of my Digital Engagement Model. The model provided a framework for analysing and understanding the process of digital-engagement and for deriving a less subjective measure of each individual's engagement.

As briefly discussed above, I had come to the understanding that while digital networked technology may at times behave or be used as a tool, digital technology was not simply a tool. I therefore had to

investigate not only the frequency and way in which individuals used technology as a tool but also how they incorporated it into their lives and most importantly their awareness of the relationship that they had with the technology. Further investigation led me to conclude that the individuals' unique perception and understanding of some subtle differences when operating within the digital network as an environment were rooted in first principle concepts as discussed above. A further significant difference relating to digital-engagement was *Value Exchange* because of its role in the development, maintenance and enhancement of relationships. This is particularly evident in the Fifth Estate where communities that could not previously have existed are now forging strong and enduring relationships.

The data also showed that the fully engaged who demonstrated beneficial outcomes were not only open and willing to take feedback but they were also highly adaptable. *Feedback* was consistently important to digital-engagement. Feedback requires a capacity for identifying something against which incoming information can be evaluated and the potential for adaptability as indicated by a capacity for decision-making and action. Because of this I incorporated *Motivation* and *Action* into my Digital Engagement Model. A number of other possible sectors were considered but rejected from the model as being either not strongly indicated in the interviews or impossible to measure such as an inclination to experience solitude.

When taken together *Tool Use*, *Feedback*, *Motivation* and *Action* can be considered as a cybernetic system. This however did not take into account the high level of self-awareness that I had encountered in fully engaged participants, particularly in relation to *Value Exchange*. When considering all these components the process is indeed a second order cybernetic system because the individual has to be considered not only as a participant within the system but also as an observer and governor of their own digital-engagement as a system. I therefore had to consider the individual and digital networked technology as both separate systems (made up of subsystems) and as one single digital-engagement system. I was looking at nested cybernetic systems that functioned in a second order cybernetic way.

Consideration of insights resulting from this research leads to the underlying issue of causality. Did my fully engaged participant become fully engaged because of their personality or did the process of being fully engaged modify their personality? If it is the former, and is predicative, then this research can be used to identify those likely to succeed in the digital age and targeted methods can be developed to aid or assist those likely to struggle. If it is the latter, and is causative, then the global uptake of technology may be leading to fundamental changes in society and those who are key communicators using technology should be aware of this in order to plan appropriately for themselves and those that they influence.

Conclusion

This paper began with a background discussion, which covered diverse areas of research that resulted in bringing together the elements necessary to view digital-engagement as a cybernetic system. The paper then discussed the development of the Digital Engagement Model and how it behaves as a second order cybernetic system. Correlation results revealed that certain personality traits and decision-making styles were closely related to successful digital-engagement. Whether these results are predictive or causative is as yet unproven. These results are however significant considering the global growth of the digital network phenomenon and the widespread uptake.

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