Teen Girls’ Online Participation: An Australian Study

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Abstract

This research investigated the online participation of Australian girls 13 years of age. The study was framed in the broad context of networked culture and the changing social environment associated with the Web 2.0 phenomenon. The participatory character of this space was considered critical to investigating teen girls’ online participation. In this landscape, new technologies and social media applications were understood to offer greater means for teen girls to engage with peers and close friends. It was presupposed that teen friendship was shifting towards more complicated and overlapping communication arrangements. The study was concerned with identifying the ways in which teen girls managed and navigated their everyday experience with peers and close friends in this context.

The literature review highlighted the changing sociocultural context of everyday interaction. In particular, attention was drawn to the influence of new technologies on young people’s online safety. Online risk dominated the research scholarship and gendered practices emerged as critical avenues for exploring teen girls’ online experience. The regulatory influence of dominant discourses on teen girl’s everyday interactions and online practice came into question. Online interaction, rather than an isolated set of online actions came to be understood as a complex organisation of micro-interactions and macro-structural forces. The theoretical framework was built on the understanding that teen girls were active participants of their own experience but that this practice was situated in socially-defined parameters of structural discourses and technological opportunities and constraints.

The study was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved an online survey disseminated to Year 8 girls at four high schools in southeast Queensland, Australia. The online survey was designed to collect information about the girls’ cybersafety practice and retrospective accounts of their online experience. In the second stage of the study, 16 girls from one high school participated in a virtual classroom session that involved live group discussions, independent messaging, interactive whiteboard activities, and an independent journal. These activities explored the girls’ everyday experiences and perceptions of online interaction using illustrations, vignettes, and video clips. This epistemological approach addressed the complexity of working with teen girls in a research setting while maintaining a safe and ethical environment that was appropriate for encouraging them to share their experiences with confidence.

An original data analytic framework was developed to inform the investigation of teen girls’ everyday experiences and online participation. The framework synthesised concepts from Goffman’s (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986) sociology of everyday interaction with work on boundary negotiation and regulation (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Singh, Märtins, & Glasswell, 2013).
This framework constituted a unique adaptation of Goffman’s concept of everyday interaction and the sociological ideas concerned with boundary negotiation and regulation. A three-tiered analytic network was designed from this framework to code the data at different levels to help think about, explore, and report on the girls’ research accounts. This network offered a way of systematically thinking about the girls’ online participation from a sociocultural perspective while, simultaneously, exploring their more immediate participatory experiences and online actions.

Four significant themes emerged from the study analyses. First, the study established that teen girls regularly engaged with cybersafety recommendations but that these practices were often modified to improve the flow communication between peers and close friends. For example, almost all of the girls used privacy settings but most of them restructured these settings to improve information and image sharing with close friends. Second, the study confirmed that teen girls’ online participation and day-to-day experience with peers and close friends were interrelated. This outcome suggested that efforts to understand teen girls’ online participation required a methodological approach that investigated, in tandem, teen girls’ online and face-to-face practices, actions, and interactions. Third, the girls’ online experiences and their social identities were constantly being negotiated and regulated in response to their beliefs about and attitudes towards what it means to be a girl. A multitude of contradictory and conflicting gendered discourses and feminine subject positions were linked to their interactions with other girls. These perspectives appeared to account for some of the challenges and difficulties they experienced online. Fourth, the daily challenges of managing and negotiating the routines, rituals, and rules of everyday interaction appeared to be more concerning for these girls than issues related to at-risk discourses concerned with cyberbullying and sexting.

This study’s significance lies in its detailed development and testing of a new theoretical framework for investigating the everyday experience and online participation of teen girls. The theoretical resources considered relevant for this exploration contributed an analytic device that has potential utility for future research in the field and for the educational work of teachers and parents. In addition, the innovative methodological approach designed for the project offered a number of useful techniques and tools for generating rich and detailed accounts from teen girls in a research setting. These strategies have possible application for other research projects involving young people.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

______________________________
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Glossary of Terms

Teen girls: girls 13 years of age

Peers: other young people of a similar age associated with a particular context such as school.

Close friends: young people associated with the same context as peers but the relationship is more intimate and supportive, the time spent together is greater.

Teens/ Young people: individuals 11 to 18 years of age.

Social identity: the character or attributes and personal actions that the girls project to others and how they want others to read or interpret this character.

Everyday experience: the daily social interactions between girls and their peers and close friends.

Online: communication that takes place with information communication technologies (ICTs).

Networked culture/times: the time-space-place configuration of contemporary online participation especially as it pertains to teen girls’ daily life.

Web 2.0 applications: internet services and websites that are characterised by user control, content generation, and social interaction (e.g., Facebook).

New technologies: a device such as a smartphone or multi-activity portal that offers a set of productive techniques significantly improved over earlier technologies.
Acronyms

ABS: Australian Bureau of Statistics

ACARA: Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority

ACBPS: Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study

ACMA: Australian Communications and Media Authority

AIMIA: Australian Interactive Media Industry Association

AITSL: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

DETA: Department of Education, Training and the Arts

ICTs: information communications technologies

MUDs: multi-user domains

NCYLC: National Children’s and Youth Law Centre

QSAAV: Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence

SNSs: social networking sites

UGC: user-generated content
‘Oh yes. I know you, babes!’ Princess Lovebud shouted into Cresta Fiesta’s hair. ‘Because I’ve Goog’ed you up, girlfriend! Oh yes, I’ve Tubed you big time and let me tell you now, girl, I liked what I found [author’s emphasis]!’

‘Oh my god!’ the new girl shrieked… ‘You ain’t Goog’ed me up, babes? You ain’t! I’ll die [author’s emphasis]!’

‘Yes, I did! I Goog’ed you up big time, babes! And what’s more I only went and downloaded some of what I found, didn’t I? So, listen up, Cresta Fiesta, babes, because this is your life!’ (Elton, 2007, p. 59)

Youth cultures are often viewed in the popular press as aberrant, unpredictable and dangerous in terms of the investments they produce, social relations they affirm, and the anti-politics they sometimes legitimate (Giroux, 1996, p. 11).
Chapter One
Statement of the Research Problem

This thesis investigated the online participation of teen girls in Australia. The research was concerned with the everyday practice and online interactions of teen girls in relation to their day-to-day dealings with peers and close friends. In the thesis, the term **teen girl** has been used to refer to girls 13 years of age. The thesis focused on this particular group of teens because much has already been written about older teens and technology, but little has been written about this younger age group. In the Australian schooling system, these girls have entered secondary school and, therefore, are likely to be exploring relationships and their social identity in online contexts. These activities are an important part of their everyday experience. In the thesis, **everyday experience** implies the social conversations and daily interactions that the girls have with their peers and close friends. This term does not include the more prescribed interactions that relate directly to formal schooling and age-specific events such as school functions, public concerts, or organised community events such as sporting events. In the thesis, the term **online** has been used to refer to communication that takes place with information communications technologies (ICTs). Examples of these communication technologies include computers, hand-held devices, tablets, and smartphones. In this context, online participation consists of, but is not limited to, texting, emailing, Facebooking, blogging, posting, skyping, and so forth. While these actions are ubiquitous to teen girls’ everyday lives, it has been safety and wellbeing concerns that have brought their online practice to public attention. Issues such as cyberbullying or online bullying and sexting (i.e., online sharing of sexually explicit images) have highlighted the need to cultivate better understandings about teen girls’ everyday experience with online participation.

At a specific level, this study investigated the ways in which teen girls managed and navigated their online experience with peers and close friends. In the thesis, the term **peer** refers to other young people of a similar age who are associated through a particular context such as school. **Close friends** are young people associated with the same context as peers but the relationship is more intimate and supportive (e.g., sharing personal stories; providing emotional support) and the time spent together is greater. Both peers and close friends have potential to impact on the social identity and daily experiences of teen girls. The term **social identity** refers to the character or attributes and personal actions that the girls project to others and how they want others to read or interpret this character. Relationships with peers and close friends may be positive experiences that provide emotional support, burdened with challenges such as negotiating parent guidelines for online contact with friends, or troubled by difficulties which
include gossip and bullying. How teen girls manage and navigate their social identity and daily experiences with peers and close friends in online contexts is important.

**Research Questions**

Three questions are critical to understanding the phenomenon described above. These questions are set out below.

- What practices and strategies do teen girls use in online contexts to navigate their everyday experience with peers and close friends?
- How are teen girls’ online experiences integrated into their everyday interactions with peers and close friends, and how do these interactions constitute their social identity?
- What challenges and difficulties do the girls experience, and how do they manage and negotiate these situations?

This chapter introduces the research problem in five sections. The first section provides an overview of the global and contemporary context of online participation, described in the thesis as networked culture. The almost unlimited communication possibilities of networked culture are linked to the effects of Web 2.0 phenomenon and modern forms of social surveillance. Section two of the chapter provides a statistical picture of Australian teens’ digital context and locates young Australians’ participation within the broader context of networked culture. The third section provides an overview of the Australian policy context related to cybersafety. This section is important because it contextualises national and local Australian efforts to improve young people’s cybersafety in networked times. The fourth section explains the significance of this study and the importance of investigating teen girls’ online participation. The final section outlines the structure of the remaining seven chapters in the thesis.

**Contemporary Online Participation**

Three significant aspects of contemporary online participation have helped to shape the broader sociocultural context of teen girls’ online participation and their everyday experience. They are: the nature of networked culture, the effects of the Web 2.0 phenomenon, and the character of social surveillance in the context of Web 2.0 times. The contribution of each of these aspects to transform everyday online interaction into a visible, dynamic and symmetrical process of communication is discussed in the next section.

**Networked Culture**

The term *network society* emerged from the work of Castells (1996). In his publication, *The information age: Economy, society, and culture: Volume 1, The rise of the network society*, Castells referred to the social and economic realities of our time as the network society. The
network society was distinguished from previous times by the globalisation of economics and information that resulted from the rapid expansion of ICTs. Castells suggested that this expansion had transformed the way that time was experienced in daily interaction. He argued that new time regimes were fundamental to the network society and proposed the concept of *timeless time* to describe this transformation. Castells explained timeless time as the de-sequencing of social action through the compression of time and space. In other words, time regimes had been altered in ways that influenced and shifted social practice and human interaction. He also suggested that there were several social processes and groupings influenced by timeless time such as “life working time” (p. 491) but his notion of virtual time has been considered the most relevant to the thesis study. Castells explained time shifts related to virtual time as “the culture of real virtuality” (p. 491) or the time shifts associated with the use and simultaneity of electronically integrated multimedia systems. The similarity between the multimedia systems described by Castells and the newer technologies available through contemporary online communication includes the instantaneous availability of information and “the unprecedented temporal immediacy to social events and cultural expression” (p. 491). The participatory communication technologies found in Web 2.0 applications, discussed in the next section, fit this description.

Although Castells’ (1996) notion of virtual time was more comprehensive than discussed here, one of the key aspects of his conceptualisation was that the pervasive use of ICTs had changed social practice and afforded individual interactivity. In other words, individuals who used communication technology were “increasingly freed from the strictures of time and place in their dealings with others” (Spears & Lea, 1994, p. 427). In this way, the relationship between time-space-place and social interaction was important to understanding contemporary online participation. As Castells (1996) explained, the new foundations of time compressed, randomised, and/or de-sequenced the occurrence of certain phenomenon. The shift to a 24/7 clock of everyday interaction is an example of the compression of time. Castells suggested that this effect produced some discontinuity in subjective understandings of time, space, and place. Sociohistorical understandings of time and space were defined by specific boundaries or environments within which social life was enacted. Most commonly time was sequential and historically traceable and space was defined by a definitive context or geography (Loyal, 2003). For example, social reality was made up of temporal and spatial configurations such as the five-day work week or work–personal activity divides. What happened when online demands shifted the five-day work week to a 24 hour, 7 day regime? Castells’ work emphasised this shift from machine or clock time to virtual time. Anthony Giddens (1984) offered the notion of *time-space compression* to explain how contemporary conditions regulated activity regimes. The concept referred to the ways in which the geographical space of human interaction was altered or compressed by ICTs. In other words, Giddens argued that the immediate experience of everyday
life was reshaped by the intersecting ways technology compressed geographical space so that people far removed from each other could communicate as if they were physically close. Loyal (2003) suggested that time-space compression had affected three aspects of human interaction: i) the immediate experience of everyday life; ii) the temporality of the life cycle; and iii) understandings of institutional time. In the thesis, the aspect of time-space compression of most interest is the immediate experience of everyday life.

The time-space trajectory related to online participation can be best explained by considering the general character of young people’s online participation. In the past ten years, internet access has moved from stationary family-shared computers to portable internet-enabled communication devices such as smartphones and other hand-held devices such as iPads and tablets. The portable flexibility of such devices means that young people are no longer tied to a single fixed communicative space such as a desktop computer. They can engage in multiple social activities, all-at-once. For example, a teenage girl might simultaneously have a meal with her family, watch television, check out the latest YouTube clips on her tablet device, and message a friend on her smartphone. This simultaneous interactivity has provided young people with access to more people and more social information than before and all from one geographical location or place. In other words, through multiscreen, concurrent interactivity, young people have the ability to engage in a world of social activity without leaving home. Time and space have been compressed. Moreover, young people have the option of shifting or mobilising their geographical place so that everyday plans and other restrictions such as institutional time become less encumbering on social time-space relationships. In this way, the everyday experience of time-space and the geographical demands of place have been blurred.

The time-space-place configuration of contemporary online participation was described in this section. In the thesis, this configuration has been referred to as networked culture. This term has been used to define the social context particular to teen girls’ daily lives. The next two sections outline, more explicitly, the nature of this type of social participation, first from the position of the individual as participant in networked culture and second from the parallel position of social surveillance.

The Web 2.0 Phenomenon

The term Web 2.0 has been applied to internet services and websites that are characterised by user control, content generation, and social interaction. This term was popularised by O’Reilly and Dougherty (O’Reilly, 2009) during a brainstorming session for an industry conference title. Popular examples of Web 2.0 applications have included social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, video logs such as YouTube, microblogging such as Twitter, and photo-sharing
sites such as Flickr. The UGC acronym for user-generated content has been characteristically linked to Web 2.0 and refers to any content created by users in internet services or applications (Moens, Li, & Chua, 2014). There has been little consensus on when Web 1.0 ended and Web 2.0 started. However, in a descriptive comparison between the two, Madden and Fox (2006) characterised Web 1.0 as an information source with static content, whereas Web 2.0 appeared to be a platform that enabled interactivity and invited user-generated content. Marsden (2006) suggested that the new generation of software employed in Web 2.0 is better understood as a “group of techniques” (p. 9) rather than as an actual technology or group of technologies.

The shift from Web 1.0 multi-user domains (MUDs) to Web 2.0 social networking sites (SNSs) changed the different participatory frameworks of communication technology. In early MUDs versions, participants took on the persona of another entity, actor, or avatar and then engaged with strangers in imagined spaces and contexts. The online communities that evolved through MUDs fostered social interaction with strangers in a virtual public space. On the other hand, in SNSs such as Facebook, participants created a personal profile, shared their real identity, and interacted with known people such as family, friends, or pre-existing contacts.

Although both MUDs and SNSs might be described as spaces where people shared thoughts and created content, participants were doing so in different ways (Madden & Fox, 2006). In MUDs, participants networked with strangers and interacted with imagined public property (e.g., imagined cities, imagined neighbourhoods, imagined possessions, and so forth.). In SNSs, participants networked with family and friends using personal property (e.g., personal images, personal stories, and so forth.). Engaging with private artefacts and sharing personal stories in online contexts was distinctly different than interacting with unknown people and imaginary objects.

Visualising Web 2.0 participation as a network of shared ideas, Song (2010) suggested that online participation resonated with and integrated the cultural ideals of society. She pointed out that technical definitions by-passed the significant sociocultural function of Web 2.0 applications. She argued that these new applications were dialectically engaged in the social construction of reality and, rather than generating a reality that was complete, separate, and removed from offline life, Web 2.0 applications created an integrated culture that was not easily explained through offline and online distinctions. Similarly, Rainie and Wellman (2012) described Web 2.0 integrated culture as a new social operating system of “networked individualism” (p. 275). They suggested that Web 2.0 applications together with other technological advancements shifted the social arrangement of personal relationships. The individual became an autonomous centre of exchange who could engage with multiple users, engage with several things at once (i.e., multitask) and be more free to deal with the various
segments of life. The researchers noted a shift between the life segments of the family and the local community. Individuals were no longer tightly bound to the family. Instead, they were acting in synchrony with other small groups outside the family circle. In the new world of networked individualism, the individual operated in a looser, more fragmented arrangement, where they were more liberated to act alone in broader, less personal networks.

Researchers have agreed that the Web 2.0 phenomenon has changed online participation (Rainie & Wellman, 2012; Song, 2010). Both Rainie and Wellman and Song argued that web-use has become a co-developer of sociocultural intentions and beliefs. Although the ability of Web 2.0 applications to rupture and change individual interaction and social practice has been publicly contested (see, for example, Keen, 2006), more recent analyses have recognised a fundamental shift in the social interaction of the individuals. This shift has been in regard to how individuals engage with or become members of and contribute to the formation of social groups (Rainie & Wellman, 2012; Song, 2010).

The centrality of online participation and the role of digital devices such as mobile phones in the lives of young people have been explored by Carrington (2012). In a small-scale qualitative study, Carrington examined the role that 3G-enabled mobile phones played in the lives of young people ages 12 to 17 years. Using the frame of object ethnography, she analysed the interaction between particular types of mobile phones (i.e., iPhones) and young people’s creation and experience of their everyday lives. In a case example, she described the importance of an iPhone to a 16-year-old girl named Roxie. Roxie used this particular device for its usability (e.g., texting, listening to music, snapping photos, etc.), the affordances it offered to stay in touch with social networks, and to feel safe navigating around a large urban area. However, more than this, through her interaction and personalisation of the phone, Roxie enabled particular demonstrations of her identity and sense of belonging. In other words, together with her iPhone, Roxie co-constructed and bought “into the larger, culturally powerful mythology around being a creative, independent-spirited citizen working on the project of her own identity” (p. 35). In tandem with the emerging participatory culture afforded by Web 2.0 applications, these findings suggest that mobile digital devices have the social, political, and cultural power to shift the landscape of young people’s everyday lives and their social identity.

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1 Object ethnography is interested in considering the role objects play in the lives of individuals. The analysis builds a rich picture of the interaction between an object or artefact and the user’s creation or experience of everyday life (Carrington, 2012).
Nesting the time-space-place configuration of contemporary online participation within the participatory sociocultural space of UGC described by Rainie and Wellman (2012) and Song (2010) and the influence of mobile devices on identity construction, the thesis draws attention to the ways in which the attitudes, beliefs, and values of young teen users influence the ways in which they negotiate and navigate online participation. From a more technological perspective, young people’s online practice has been associated with the reciprocal and sharing nature of Web 2.0 applications. Possibilities for constant watching and immediate responding have potential to create a dynamic interface of interaction that can shift or disrupt power relations. The potential for Web 2.0 surveillance to challenge relations between young people of relatively equal standing (e.g., close friends) is discussed in the next section.

**Web 2.0 Social Surveillance**

Imagine a world where everyone knows everything about everyone… [imagine] a post-apocalyptic society… where nakedness is modesty, ignorance is wisdom and privacy is a dangerous perversion. (Elton, 2007, back cover, para. 2 & 3)

*Web 2.0 social surveillance* is a form of interpersonal surveillance that has been reported as a critical aspect of online participation and daily life. Although early studies\(^2\) concerned with computer-mediated communication (CMC) often characterised text-based electronic communication as liberating and equalising for individuals, Spears and Lea (1994) argued that CMC had the potential to both disrupt and reinforce power relations. The researchers proposed that the ubiquity of CMC to watch over others improved democracy and equality in organisational and institutional contexts but they believed that the panoptic-effects of CMC such as the pervasiveness of observation and the consciousness of visibility also had a dark side. The researchers argued that the ability to watch over others could have a totalitarian rather than democratising effect. Spears and Lea believed that particular types of relationships such as those influenced by status, hierarchy, and competition were more prone to the panoptic-surveillance effects of CMC.

In earlier scholarship, Andrejevic (2006) used the term “lateral surveillance” (p. 397) to describe the ways in which individuals could observe others through social media tools. Lampe, Ellison, and Steinfield (2006) differentiated between “social searching” (p. 167) where social media was used to learn more about known people and “social browsing” (p. 167) where social media was used to meet new people. Albrechtslund (2008) was more inclined to describe Web

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\(^2\) See, for example, *the equalization approach* discussed by Dubovsky, Kielser, and Sethna, 1991.
2.0 social surveillance as a positive and shared practice for “building subjectivity” and “making sense in the lifeworld” (para. 52). In his discussion, subjectivity referred to the mutual and empowering social effort to render everyday life meaningful. Albrechtslund offered the term “participatory surveillance” to explicate the positive effects of “being under mutual surveillance” (para. 50) and suggested that this mutuality was empowering rather than destructive. In other words, the concept of participatory surveillance represented power relations that did not reduce the person “under the control of the gaze” (para. 49) to a powerless and passive subject. Instead, the role of the user was active and the context offered opportunities for the user to take action, seek information, and communicate. In this way, Albrechtslund illustrated that his idea of participatory surveillance was “a mutual, empowering, and subjectivity building practice” that was “fundamentally social” (para. 54). He went on to write, “when we study the actual practice [of surveillance], we should not be ‘lured’ into only seeing the dangers in things. Rather, online social networking is an opportunity to rethink the concept of surveillance” (para. 60).

Web 2.0 social surveillance has been distinguished from practices of formal surveillance. Lyon (2007) and Ogura (2006) explained that formal surveillance reinforced power differentials between individuals and social institutions such as government taxation offices (e.g., state over individual) and marketing firms (e.g., corporation over consumer). Nevertheless, the scholars believed that formal surveillance was not limited to offline environments. For example, they suggested that formal surveillance could be found in Web 2.0 applications such as Facebook where participant data was aggregated to monitor and alter web-face infrastructure.

The informal and interpersonal nature of Web 2.0 social surveillance has been examined by Tokunaga (2011). He called it “interpersonal electronic surveillance” [IES] (p. 705) and described it as the use of “surreptitious strategies … [through] communication technologies to gain awareness of another user’s offline and/or online behaviours” (p. 706). Tokunaga (2011) identified four differences between IES and formal surveillance (see Table 1.1). He characterised formal surveillance as a *vertical* flow of interaction from a strong top-down hierarchy such as government over individuals. This type of surveillance had formal and specific objectives for collecting data which included demographic information that shaped legislation and policy. Formal surveillance included asymmetrical relations such as manager over employee and had potential for regulatory oversight through structural data effects (e.g., potential to negatively influence minorities more so than majorities). In contrast, IES had *horizontal* flows of interaction between individuals with relatively symmetrical relationships (e.g., friends), informal observation (e.g., scrolling through images or social postings), personal and/or social reasons for collecting information (e.g., organising social calendar), and relatively situated data effects such as gossip and interpersonal conflict.
Table 1.1
A summary of the differences between formal and interpersonal electronic surveillance (Tokunaga, 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Surveillance</th>
<th>Interpersonal Electronic Surveillance (IES)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vertical hierarchy</td>
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<td>specific objectives for observation</td>
<td>non-specific objectives for observation</td>
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<td>(e.g., formal data collection)</td>
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<td>asymmetrical relationships</td>
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<td>structural data effects</td>
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Online surveillance in everyday life was studied by Marwick (2012). Her work focused on the ways in which participants of relatively equal power (i.e., family, friends, and acquaintances) used Web 2.0 applications to watch others. Marwick called this practice social surveillance and defined it as:

> the ongoing eavesdropping, investigation, gossip and inquiry that constitutes information gathering by people about their peers, made salient by the social digitization normalized by social media. It encompasses using social media to broadcast information, survey content created by others, and regulating one’s own content based on perceptions of the audience. (p. 382)

The distinguishing characteristic of social surveillance over formal surveillance was the ways in which online reciprocity interrupted power and hierarchy. Marwick (2012) suggested that the individual could use reciprocal actions to shift the power relationship in daily life when unanticipated hierarchical moments occur. Even when the individual was not considered equal in the social hierarchy (e.g., parent over child), the informal nature of social surveillance allowed the individual to watch and to reciprocate at a time that was appropriate for shifting interpersonal power.

The underlying pervasive and conscious watching through Web 2.0 applications (e.g., to watch and be watched) underpinned Marwick’s (2012) theorisation of online social surveillance. She suggested that this consciousness of being watched had a dominant effect on the ways in which interactions flowed in online contexts. The constant push and pull of Web 2.0 social surveillance, that is, being watched, increased an individual’s inclination towards reciprocal interactions in online contexts. Using Foucault’s (1977, 1982) notion of capillaries of power, Marwick (2012) proposed that through Web 2.0 social surveillance, power was “decentralised … ever-present, fluid, and at work in the mundane day-to-day activities” (p. 382) of everyday life. She went on to describe how the social hierarchies of everyday life such as those found among teen girls (discussed in Chapter Two) shaped online social practice with a “push and pull quality” (p. 383). In other words, power relations between individuals of relatively similar standing were in constant flux as they acted or were acted upon in Web 2.0 applications.
Albrechtslund (2008), Tokunaga (2011), and Marwick (2012) positioned Web 2.0 social surveillance as a mutual and participatory process. Significant to these understandings were three critical aspects of Web 2.0 participation: i) high visibility such as watching and being watched; ii) dynamic interface which is the reciprocal/participatory feedback and consciousness of being watched; and iii) symmetry which includes consensual participation and mutual watching. This perspective suggested that contemporary online interaction was a social process that was visible, dynamic and symmetrical.

**Networked Visibility**

In a different set of literature, boyd (2008) discussed at length the networked character of Web 2.0 applications. She argued that social media allowed people to interact using network technologies such as Web 2.0 tools, services, and applications and mobile broadband to interconnect with communities, groups, and individuals. She used the term “networked publics” (p. 92) to describe the collective space that resulted when one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many individuals gathered or connected across time and space through social media technologies such as Facebook. boyd (2008) proposed that networked publics introduced new social forces that altered human interaction. In other words, participants had to experiment with structural norms and everyday practices to contend with the interactional differences required in this space and she believed that process changed social practice.

In more recent work, boyd and Marwick (2011) expanded on the notion of networked publics through their concept of collapsed social spaces. The researchers explained that collapsed social spaces were created when previously compartmentalised groups such as family, friends, school, and work merged into single social groupings in Web 2.0 applications like Facebook. They believed that these spaces were characterised by four qualities: i) “persistence” which included recorded and archived expressions; ii) “replicability” described as easy to duplicate content; iii) “scalability” which included potential for high visibility; and iv) “searchability” described as easy access to content through search engines (p. 9). Consequently, these qualities have reshaped public space into a definable but flexible network of people with high access to personal information. The individual imagined the people and the social boundaries within these spaces but these facets of the space were not controlled solely by the individual. Instead, networked publics were simultaneously constructed and imagined through the intersection of many people, various technologies, and countless social practices including face-to-face interaction. boyd and Marwick suggested that these qualities had changed understandings about personal privacy and that new norms for privacy were emerging. They went on to explain how practices of revealment and concealment were transforming everyday interaction. The scholars noted that, out of necessity, individuals had to engage with various interpretive strategies and
traditions to inscribe or “create symbolic distinctions between objects, people, practices, and architectures” (p. 16) in order to regulate personal privacy in these highly visible contexts. In her thesis dissertation, boyd (2008) noted that technology had “inflected these dynamics in critical ways, often magnifying and formalising interactions, conflicts, and social divisions” (p. 173). It was neither anonymous nor invisible instead it had different dimensions that shifted personal privacy and called for new ways of being seen.

The participatory nature and high visibility of Web 2.0 applications described above support the notion that networked culture calls for new and different ways of interacting. These push and pull tensions suggest a flux of interactivity that is both controlled and not controlled by the individual. In other words, individuals are both doing and being done to (Goffman, 1959) in Web 2.0 spaces. The reciprocal quality of online participation and the watching nature of social media highlight the importance of managing impressions and controlling self-identity in online contexts.

In the next section of this chapter, the digital context of Australian teens is discussed. This section locates the enthusiastic participation of young Australians within the broader content of networked culture. The terms teens and young people have been used interchangeably throughout this section and the remainder of the thesis. These terms refer to individuals 11 to 18 years of age. This age range is indicative of students attending junior and senior secondary school (i.e., high school) in Australia. If the age of individuals reported in the research differs from this distinction, the research age group has been specified.

**Australian Teens’ Digital Context**

From 2006 to 2012, the Australian digital market expanded rapidly. By 2012, population use of the internet was near-universal across groups of people aged 14 to 65 (Australian Interactive Media Industry Association [AIMIA], 2012). Ninety-two percent of Australians had some form of internet access, 75% owned a desktop computer, 75% owned a laptop, and 18% owned a tablet computer such as an iPad. An estimated 59% of Australians aged 16 plus owned a mobile phone that functioned as both a multi-activity portal including a phone, media player, and compact digital camera and a mobile broadband unit (e.g., wireless mobile internet access anywhere, anytime). Over half of Australian mobile phone users (58%) accessed the internet every day from a smartphone and 74% did not leave home without it. At the time, Australians had the second highest smartphone usage by population density in the world, second only to Singapore, a highly technological country (Google, 2012). These smartphone devices, which provide a multi-activity portal, have been described as **new technologies** because they offer a set of productive techniques that have been significantly improved over established technologies.
The cultural significance of new technologies, in particular, iPhones for young people was described by Carrington (2012). As a sleek and highly functional artefact, the iPhone puts a compact personal computer into the hands of individual teens. In this way, the iPhone enables young people to: (i) build and create interconnected social and textual networks using a blend of functions and textual affordances (e.g. email, texting, messaging, images, and social networking); (ii) customise and personalise social identity (e.g., apps, ringtones, wallpapers, profiles, images, and so forth); (iii) travel just about anywhere and feel safe; and (iv) portray an ownership identity that appears to hold value within the Apple cultural phenomenon.

The proportion of young Australians accessing the internet increased steadily between 2006 and 2009. The Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] (2009a) reported that young people’s access to the internet increased from 65% in 2006 to 79% in 2009. In 2009, 75% of Australians aged 12 to 14 had a mobile phone. By 2012, 98% of same-aged teens had internet access and 83% aged 15 to 17 years owned a mobile phone (43% of these phones were smartphones). Forty-eight percent of Australians aged 14 to 19 years used a desktop computer to access the internet but laptop computers were quickly superseding fixed structures. Seventy-seven percent of young Australians reported having access to a laptop (ABS, 2012). Young Australians were also accessing online services using smartphones (61%), iPod Touch devices (26%), and tablet computers (18%). Almost half of Australians aged 14 to 19 years (46%) used social media every day, and 19% of these people logged in to a social media service more than five times a day. Most young Australians socialised on SNSs after school (76%) but some logged in at lunch time (23%) and during school breaks (18%). Finally, 48% of young Australians went online as their last activity before bed (AIMIA, 2012).

AIMIA (2012) reported that young Australians aged 14 to 19 years used a range of social media services but, in 2012, Facebook was the most popular social media service for these young people. That is, 97% claimed they used this service in 2012. On average, young Australians had 464 social media contacts and were more likely than any other age group to meet face-to-face with their social media friends. Over a 12 month period, on average, young Australians reported that they had seen 70% of their contact list face-to-face. Given that the average face-to-face contact figure for an Australian social media-user was 47%, it was reasonable to assume that most Australian teens used social media to keep in touch with family, close friends, and classmates rather than unknown people. Indeed, AIMIA reported that the top three reasons young Australians gave for using social media was to catch up with friends (97%), to coordinate parties (65%), and to share photographs and videos with family and friends (60%).

The statistics reported above support the view that young Australians were quickly shifting their social participation to online contexts. Although earlier technologies such as desktop computers
and some mobile phones had provided the possibility for 24 hour, seven day connectivity, before 2006 most young people did not have this kind of access (ABS, 2009b). Prior to 2006, technology was expensive, cumbersome, non-transportable, and Wi-Fi access was more limited. However, over subsequent years, new technologies have become less expensive and more widely owned by young people. This ownership has made it simpler for teens to participate online. With increasing frequency, teens were connecting with more people (especially peers and friends), day and night, at home, at school, or at play. A continuous flow of information was becoming available - personal updates and pictures, video files and live streaming, stories and gossip, plus much more (AIMIA, 2012).

The visibility of personal information in Web 2.0 applications was discussed earlier in this chapter. While no clear consensus about the benefits of networked visibility have emerged, boyd (2008) suggested that

...key teen social practices [had] not changed as a result of technology, but the site of gathering [had]. In learning how to use social media sites and facing decisions about which site to join, how to Friend, and how to behave appropriately, teens [were] learning to negotiate peer relations, social status, and structural divisions. By and large, they mirror[ed] and magnif[ied] longstanding dynamics, but they [did] so in ways that [were] much more visible than in traditionally unmediated settings. (p. 240)

For boyd and Marwick (2011), the underlying social dynamics of teen friendship and peer relations had not changed. Instead, the dynamics of friendship played-out in more precarious ways. The researchers reported that young people regularly faced socially collapsed contexts online and that the high visibility and distorted notions of privacy in this space led to a mixed set of interactional practices.

By using different strategies to achieve privacy in networked publics, teens [were] simultaneously revealing the importance of privacy and public life. They want[ed] to participate in networked publics, but they also want[ed] to have control over the social situations that [took] place there. They want[ed] to be visible, but only to certain people. They want[ed] to be recognised and validated, but only by certain people. This [was] not a contradictory stance; it parallels how people have always engaged in public spaces. (boyd & Marwick, 2011, p. 25)

Because participation in networked publics was a core social activity of teen culture, boyd and Marwick (2011) argued that the interpretive strategies and practices that they used online were normative to the space rather than disruptive to the times. For them, teen interaction was a networked affair that bridged online and offline worlds into a complicated social reality. Benefits, opportunities and safety concerns have been associated with these online activities.
Online Opportunity

In 2011, Collin, Rahilly, Richardson, and Third summarised the broad range of benefits for young people associated with SNSs use. These benefits included improved media literacy, extended formal and informal educational outcomes, expanded creativity and self-expression, stronger social relationships, an improved sense of belonging and collective identity, stronger peer communities, increased civic and political participation, and improved self-efficacy and wellbeing. The authors concluded that young people, as moderate to heavy users of SNSs, were well placed to take-up these online opportunities. Pujazon-Zazik and Park (2010) compiled a similar list of possible benefits for young people arising from online participation and SNSs use. They suggested that “online interaction provided a venue to learn and refine self-control, to relate with tolerance and respect to others’ viewpoints, to express sentiments in a healthy and normative manner, and to engage in critical thinking and decision making” (p. 80).

From a healthcare perspective, O’Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011) reported that young people’s increased access to internet health services was beneficial. The paediatricians suggested that with the increasing number of excellent online healthcare resources, teens accessed information more easily and anonymously about topics of key concern such as sex and sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, drugs and alcohol, anxiety and stress, and depression. Other scholars supported this view. For example, Livingstone and Brake (2010) reported that teens found the asynchronous and noncommittal interactions of internet services a better space for discussing taboo topics such as teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases because embarrassing face-to-face questioning of health care representatives was avoided. Mission Australia’s 2013 Youth Survey reported similar findings. They found that 73% of young people aged 15 to 19 years used internet services rather than parent consultation as their primary source of information, advice, and support for youth-related matters.

The benefits of online participation have been noted by young people worldwide. For example, Livingstone, Haddon, Gorzig, & Olafsson (2011) found that European teens aged 12 to 17 years generally reported positive personal outcomes from their social media interactions.

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of social media-using teens said that they personally have had an experience on a social network site that made them feel good about themselves and 58 percent said that they felt closer to another person because of an experience on a social network site. (p. 32)

Madden et al. (2013) reported comparable outcomes for American teens. At the time, Australian teens’ personal views about the benefits of online participation had not been formally investigated but their internet-use statistics reported in the previous section support the notion that Australian teens find new technologies and social media valuable.
The value of online networks to enhance bonding social capital was described by Notley (2008). Notley described this type of social capital as benefits gained from “closer, more intensive connections between people in similar situations, such as family members and close friends” (p. 23). She pointed out that social media services enhanced social capital because young people were increasingly using the internet to create, mediate, and maintain relationships. In an earlier study, Valkenburg, Peter, and Schouten (2006) found that frequent interaction with friends on SNSs had positive benefits for young people’s self-esteem and their satisfaction with life. In more recent scholarship, Common Sense Media (2012) reported that American teens believed SNSs facilitated relationships with friends by helping them to keep in touch with people they didn’t see often, get to know other students at their school better, and connect with people who shared a common interest. Stefanone, Lackaff, and Rosen (2011) reported equivalent findings for female university students. They found that photo sharing and other presentational aspects of social media provided female students with many opportunities to convey positive affect to close friends. These opportunities reportedly helped them to strengthen friendship ties and mitigate uncertainty about their perceived appearance. Given teen girls’ tendency towards online self-presentation, the positive affective outcomes reported by Stefanone et al. would most likely be comparable for them.

Online Safety

Online participation has been reported as having potential for empowerment and opportunity. On the other hand, the benefits of online participation are often outweighed by adult worries and concerns for young people’s online safety. Cyberbullying and sexting dominated these discussions.

Cyberbullying

The term cyberbullying first appeared in the Australian press in 2003 (Cross et al., 2012). Since then, cyberbullying has become a significant social issue for Australian teens. Definitions for cyberbullying vary worldwide. In Australia, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA, 2015a) defined cyberbullying as “the deliberate and repeated engagement of hostile behaviour to harm someone through the internet, email, or mobile phone” (see www.cybersmart.gov.au for the expanded version). Although the repetitious nature of cyberbullying is key to most definitions, Rigby (2010) suggested that one-off instances of cyber-abuse could also be considered cyberbullying. He argued that one instance of cyberbullying could be as harmful and devastating to a young person as multiple episodes of traditional forms of bullying because cyber-attacks were: i) pervasive and highly visible; ii) permanent and difficult to remove; and iii) often viral and downloaded by many. American researchers Hinduja and Patchin (2012) characterised cyberbullying with five key components:
(i) 24 x 7 access to targets; (ii) online invincibility (e.g., protected by online anonymity); (iii) reduced pressure to conform to social conventions; (iv) viral (e.g., spreads quickly across social domains); and (v) limited recognition of real-world harm (e.g., harm inflicted is reduced by physical absence). Debates over the definition for cyberbullying continue but, for the most part, scholars’ agree that the behaviour is unique enough to be classified separately from other forms of aggression (Cross et al. 2009; Shariff, 2008; Willard, 2005).

Despite a reasonable amount of research into the problem, no one explanation for the behaviour has emerged. In early work, the anonymous and invisible quality of online contexts was associated with cyberbullying. Cho (2007), Joinson (1998, 2001), McKenna and Seidman (2006), and Suler (2004) suggested that the internet created a space that was anonymous and invisible. They proposed that these qualities shifted social interaction in a number of significant ways. For example, Joinson (2001) reported that the absence of social cues such as visual and aural clues in online contexts flattened communication and created a space that led to more uninhibited behaviour, verbal aggression, blunt disclosure, and non-conforming behaviour. Cho (2007) suggested that the absence of social cues found on the internet increased candid self-disclosure. He suggested that self-disclosure was an important way for people to gain closeness in relationships when other sources of information were not available (e.g., the absence of social cues). Joinson (1998) reported a similar effect and referred to this practice as psychological disinhibition. The researcher explained psychological disinhibition as a decreased interest in the judgement of others and an apparent reduction in the concern for self-presentation.

In the early 2000s, the disinhibition effect became one of the leading explanations for the cyberbullying behaviour of young people. Ybarra and Mitchell (2004), Willard (2005), and Hinduja and Patchin (2009) indicated that the normal face-to-face constraints of social interaction were lost or disregarded in virtual or online spaces. These researchers argued that the invisibility of the internet context had freed young people from the normal constraints of everyday face-to-face interaction and that this quality resulted in negative patterns of behaviour. For example, Willard (2005) reported that young people had become ruder, harsher in their criticism, and were using the internet to instil anger and hatred in others and to threaten people. She believed that the anonymous nature of the internet combined with the psychological effect of disinhibition had led to young people’s inability to empathise with others and to be remorseful for their actions. Willard linked the disinhibition effect to the social phenomenon of cyberbullying.

In a cross-study review, Mason (2008) found that several international scholars believed that the reduced social cues of virtual spaces contributed to anti-normative and de-regulated behaviour in young people. In summary, she concluded that not having to deal with someone’s immediate
reaction to a harmful or irresponsible act had freed teens to engage in inappropriate behaviours such as cyberbullying. Mason went on to suggest that concerns like detection, social disapproval and punishment were diluted by the interactivity of the internet, a world away from adult supervision. Bhat (2008) also believed that cyberbullying was the result of the anonymous and faceless ambiguity of digital spaces. She suggested that anonymity and invisibility led to intense levels of online retaliation and impulsivity in young people.

One of the more interesting parallels concerned with young people’s inappropriate online behaviour and the anonymous and facelessness nature of the internet has been the comparison of cyberspace to Golding’s (1954) *Lord of the Flies*. Shariff and Hoff (2007) compared the chaos and deterioration of the unsupervised boys in Golding’s (1954) novel to the deterioration of adolescent relationships in virtual space. As Golding’s story unfolds, the boys come to realise that attacking others was easier when a different identity was assumed (i.e., they painted their faces to hide their identity). Shariff and Hoff (2007) suggested that the anonymity of online contexts provides young people with similar powers. In contrast, studies concerned with networked culture reported earlier in this chapter suggest that it is more likely the highly visible character of online contexts that causes problems such as cyberbullying.

Despite disparity around the definitions and causes of cyberbullying, there is much closer agreement about the consequences of the behaviour. Main consequences reported involve health and wellbeing problems such as low self-esteem, psychosomatic symptoms such as depression and anxiety, and relationship problems with peers (Cross, Li, Smith & Monks, 2012). Hinduja and Patchin (2007) also reported that cyberbullying was linked to increased incidences of school conduct and behaviour problems such as substance abuse, stealing, and assault. In more recent research, moral disengagement and disenchantment with school have been identified as side-effects of being cyberbullied (Hinduja & Patchin, 2012).

Hinduja and Patchin (2010) reported that parents’ and teachers’ greatest concern was the burgeoning association between cyberbully victimisation and suicide ideation. Media reports that linked teen suicide to cyberbullying incidences appeared to underpin these anxieties. More recently, Hinduja and Patchin (2012) suggested “it [was] unlikely that experience with cyberbullying by itself [authors’ emphasis] [leads] to youth suicide” (p. 40). Instead, they suggested that cyberbullying tended to exacerbate the struggles and stresses a young person was already experiencing. Therefore, suicide was more likely the result of a number of life circumstances rather than just cyberbullying. In contrast to media claims that cyberbullying was the new suicide contagion, these researchers found that most cases of cyberbullying had not ended in suicide. Nonetheless, news reports linking teen suicide and cyberbullying continue to exacerbate parent worries over young peoples’ use of the internet and social media services.
While the popular press has tended to suggest that cyberbullying is out of control, actual prevalence figures suggest otherwise. Indeed, across international studies, prevalence figures for cyberbullying vary widely. In 2009, Cross et al. reported that cyberbullying affected 7 to 10% of Australian young people aged eight to 14 years while the Australian Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011) reported that rates of cyberbullying for young people aged five to 18 years were closer to 22%. From the United Kingdom (UK), Livingstone et al. (2011) reported that close to 10% of young people aged nine to 16 years were affected by cyberbullying while Lenhart et al. (2011) found that 8% of Americans aged 12 to 17 years were affected. In a different report, McAfee (2010) reported that 14% of Americans aged 10 to 17 years claimed cyberbullying involvement. In contrast, the Australian Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011) reported that American and UK figures were between 30 and 40%. The Joint Select Committee suggested that given the technological similarities of Australia to the United States (US) and the UK, Australian figures would likely rise to comparable levels with those countries. Despite these claims, McAfee (2010) reported that cyberbullying statistics were flat, neither increasing nor decreasing.

Discrepancies across prevalence figures have made it difficult to ascertain the degree to which young people have been genuinely affected by cyberbullying. Measurement problems have been attributed to definitional inconsistencies, context variables, differences in personal characteristics of participants across studies such as age variations, and anomalies in research methodology (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Livingstone and Haddon (2009) and Sourander et al. (2010) agreed that more accurate data was needed if cybersafety initiatives were to be designed in a realistic and focused manner.

Sexting

In the mid-2000s, reports concerned with teens sharing nude selfies (i.e., private self-portraits) and other sexually-explicit artefacts (e.g., video clips) in online contexts were emerging. These practices were described as sexting. In Australia, the term sexting first gained public currency in 2008 (Albury, Crawford, Byron, & Mathews, 2013). Sexting is described in many different ways but in the Australian educational context the term is defined as creating, sharing, sending or posting sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photographs through the internet by individuals, in particular, young people (Parliament of Victoria, 2013).
In a recent review on sexting, the Parliament of Victoria (2013) reported that debates about the differences between consensual and non-consensual sexting had emerged. Consensual sexting was described as mutually agreed sharing of images and artefacts while non-consensual sexting was taking and sharing images without permission (i.e., covertly) or sharing images without permission after a relationship had finished. There has been limited research into the effects of these types of sexting on young people. However, the National Children’s and Youth Law Centre (2012) indicated that preliminary reports showed that young people believed consensual sexting was different from non-consensual sexting, and that, on the whole, peer-to-peer sexting was a normative age-related development. In contrast, Renold and Ringrose (2011) and Albury et al. (2013) argued that sexting, especially non-consensual sexting, was problematic for young people. The researchers suggested that the use of photos for non-consensual sexting was intensely disrespectful and inappropriate. They believed that there was an underlying power tension behind the practice that increased the potential for exploitation, bullying, and violence. The researchers went on to explain that when images were shared outside the original relationship without consent, it was often underpinned by intention to cause embarrassment or harm. Renold and Ringrose (2011) and Albury et al. (2013) were particularly concerned with the potential stress and anxiety that this practice created for teen girls.

At a more specific level, Albury et al. (2013) suggested that teen girls’ sexting practice constituted a new form of sexual liberation and pleasure. Through self-representation in sexy images, girls discovered and explored their own sexuality. The authors suggested that sexting provided teen girls with opportunities for innocent digital flirtation and a space where they could practice and test the temperature of their own desirability. In this way, teen girls’ online participation had the potential to be empowering. On the other hand, the researchers also noted that gender-specific expectations tended to hyper-sexualise and complicate this practice. Instead of a new space to explore and learn, Albury et al. found that sexting often added another layer of complexity and regulation to contemporary girls’ lives. Renold and Ringrose (2011) supported the view that girls’ online participation had potential to encourage new forms of expression and social learning but they too believed that sexting had complicated teen girls’ online participation. They suggested that “static binary positions that locate[d] girls as either savvy sexual agents or objectified sexualised victims” (p. 404) failed to highlight the complex and difficult terrain that teen girls needed to navigate in online spaces in networked times. Renold and Ringrose pointed out that, regardless of the various women’s movements such as second and third wave feminism, in contemporary culture, girls continued to be confronted by conflicting social conditions and gendered expectations. Moreover, Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, and Livingstone (2013) suggested that teen girls, especially younger ones, did not always hear and understand the cacophony of gendered standards that were familiar to more mature females. For
this reason, they believed that younger groups of girls were important starting-points for research.

Like cyberbullying, prevalence figures for sexting are inconsistent. From the UK, Cross, Richardson, Douglas, and von Kaenel-Flatt (2009) reported that one in three teenagers had received sexually suggestive messages while from the US, Lenhart (2009) reported that 15% of teens aged 12 to 17 years had received sexually suggestive, nude, or near-nude messages on their mobile phone. At the time, there had been little robust research into sexting in Australia. However, a 2010 poll conducted by the Australian magazine, *Girlfriend* ³ found that four in 10 girls claimed that they had been asked to send a nude photograph of themselves online and that half of these girls complied with the request (Jenkinson, 2011). In more recent research, Ringrose et al. (2013) found consistent evidence to suggest that sexting was becoming a problem for young people in the UK. However, as for cyberbullying, research into young people’s sexting practices has been confounded by definitions of practice and measurement protocols. Moreover, Ringrose and Harvey (2015) argued that research to date “largely neglected the gendered and sexual content of sexting images” (p. 205) which they believed seriously limited how sexting practice was understood.

**Cybersafety**

Research into the potential dangers of online participation has prompted new moral panics about young people’s online participation. In other words, the rapidly changing social milieu found in online contexts appears to have “produce[d] feelings and perceptions of uncertainty, anxiety and ambient fear” (Singh & McWilliam, 2005, p. 120). These anxieties have cultivated an at-risk disposition and the need to work with young people to encourage safe online practices has become an immediate priority for governing and regulatory bodies of formal education settings. The Australian federal government and state education departments are actively framing cybersafety policy and generating relevant curriculum resources. On the whole, cybersafety education has become another educational responsibility for teachers; one similar to former social concerns such as drug education and sex education.

³ *Girlfriend* Magazine is an Australian teen girls’ magazine with stories, fashion, beauty tips, celebrity news, and advice columns about the things that the publisher believes matter to them at this age (http://www.girlfriend.com.au/).
In May 2008, the Australian Government committed almost $126 million towards developing and improving national cybersafety. Part of this funding was directed to the ACMA, the Australian regulator for broadcasting, the internet, radiocommunications, and telecommunications. The resulting Cybersmart initiative (see, ACMA, 2015b, www.cybersmart.gov.au) has provided important cybersafety guidelines to the national community through an informational website and a Cybersmart Outreach Program (e.g., in-school presentations). Table 1.2 presents the national set of cybersafety guidelines arising from the ACMA Cybersmart website. These guidelines outline two kinds of online information management which include how to control information and how to respond to information on the internet.

Table 1.2. Australian cybersafety guidelines. Summarised from (www.cybersmart.gov.au).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Information</th>
<th>Responding to Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>keep profiles private</td>
<td>block it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g., only share with family &amp; friends)</td>
<td>(e.g., change privacy setting; delete or untag inappropriate photo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protect personal details &amp; passwords</td>
<td>report it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g., don’t share passwords with friends)</td>
<td>(e.g., harmful or distressful actions should be reported to adults and the service; keep mobile messages, print emails)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protect personal reputation - ‘think’ before you post</td>
<td>talk about it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g., re-read post before sending, would you say that to someone’s face?)</td>
<td>(e.g., share feelings with others who can help)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ACMA has provided in-school educational presentations such as Internet Safety Awareness Presentations (ISAPs) for students, teachers, and parents as part of the Cybersmart program. These presentations have been met with reasonable enthusiasm from young people, teachers, and parents (see, for example, The ACMA Cybersmart Outreach Program Evaluation, Beavis, Muspratt, Pendergast, & Thompson, 2012). For many teachers the most significant aspect of the ISAPs was the support it provided in helping them to deal with student behaviour in digital contexts. In the main, students found the ISAP information useful but many also acknowledged a diversity of participation that suggested online interaction was celebrated in many different ways.

Another report titled Like, post, share: Young Australians’ experience of social media (ACMA, 2011) described the internet usage patterns of young people according to age. Children aged 8 to 9 years tended to be very limited in their internet use and, as a rule, were closely monitored by
adults. In contrast, individuals 13 to 14 years of age socialised on the internet a great deal and primarily participated online without any family involvement. Young people aged 15 to 17 years were completely and independently engaged with the internet. The ACMA researchers suggested that these age differences were indicative rather than definitive statements about young Australians’ online behaviour but showed that, to a certain extent, engagement and awareness of online risk appeared to be age related and, in some cases, gendered.

In the Like, post, share report, five categories of behaviour relating to engagement with online risk emerged. The five risk-based categories described in the report comprised: “claimed conformists”, “relaxed maintainers”, “vulnerably influenced”, “responsible risk takers”, and “knowing naughties” (ACMA, 2011, p. 30). Table 1.3 summarises these five categories. Each category is defined by the ways in which young people engaged with online risk. For example, claimed conformists have been described as younger individuals more likely to abide by rules set out for online safety. In contrast to any other categories, knowing naughties take a much higher proportion of risk such as meeting strangers alone offline. These young people enjoyed defying cybersafety rules - it was considered “part of the fun” (ACMA, 2011, p. 34) and a source of entertainment. The risk taken by knowing naughties often resulted in more serious consequences.

Given these findings, the Like, post, share report (ACMA, 2011) recommended that engaging young people across the five categories of behaviour was critical for cybersafety education. Many young people seemed to think that they have heard it all before and, as a result, seem disinterested and disinclined to engage with cybersafety education. Therefore, a further recommendation was that new information about online safety using perspectives and personally relevant examples for young people was needed. The report concluded that countering young people’s lack of interest in cybersafety was a critical factor in protecting young Australians from online harm. On the whole, the report acknowledged difficulties in engaging young people in cybersafety education.

Table 1.3.
Risk-based classification of young people’s internet use. Summarised from “Like, post, share: Young Australians’ experience of social media” (ACMA, 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claimed Conformists</td>
<td>• younger girls and boys or girls if older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• abided by rules set out for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• motivated by desire to interact with friends but had an active awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>that behaviour involved risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• distanced themselves from the risky actions of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• actively managed privacy settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• some consulted with parents for advice on troubles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Relaxed Maintainers
- largest category made up equally of girls and boys
- tended to be those engaged in social networking with friends
- accepted that some risk existed but most risk was extreme and was unlikely to affect them (e.g., there were ‘dirty old men’ out there but they weren’t going to make friends with them)
- did not consider themselves to be at risk on a day-to-day basis
- tended to take a ‘set and forget’ approach to safety (e.g., set privacy settings at the start but seldom reset them)

### Vulnerably Influenced
- found across all age groups and made up equally of girls and boys
- often socially excluded within their community
- took risks for attention
- viewed online space as an opportunity to build an identity and, therefore, became critical for social outlet
- the most risky behaviours for all ages occurred when young people had greater autonomy or parents had relaxed online rules
- males tended to focus on content risks and girls focused on contact risks (discussed further in Chapter Two)
- broadly aware that there were risks involved but focused on gaining social recognition or acceptance (e.g., stand out as ‘cool’ or ‘interesting’)
- online confidence led to some outlandish behaviour (e.g., sharing explicit sexual content or images)

### Responsible Risk Takers
- both male and female who tended to be older, usually over 14 years of age
- pushed the boundaries while remaining in control
- behaviour reflected a desire to prove they were becoming an adult and could ‘handle’ whatever came their way
- tended to judge risk ‘in the moment’ and often lacked foresight about potential consequences

### Knowing Naughties
- either girls or boys but generally older
- took a much higher proportion of risks than other segments
- risks have more serious consequences
- liked to break the rules
- enjoyed taking risks and treated defying the rules as a source of entertainment
- believed they were capable of mitigating risks and felt that they were untouchable

### State Government

Australian state governments also actively work towards improving young people’s online safety. In the state of Queensland, the Department of Education, Training and the Arts (DETA) undertook strategic planning central to the safe and transformative learning potential of digital worlds for young people (DETA, 2007, 2012). An important part of this planning was to ensure that cybersafety policy supported reasonable procedures and practices at the school level. In 2010, the Queensland Premier announced the formation of the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (QSAAV). The group became responsible for providing advice to the Minister of Education and Training with best practice measures aimed to minimise troubling behaviour such as bullying and violence in Queensland schools.

In collaboration with community stakeholders, the QSAAV (2010) provided a report outlining eight key recommendations intended to facilitate effective school-based action against bullying and violence. All Queensland schools were urged to adopt a cybersafety strategy that
incorporated: “consultation with students, parents and school staff, acceptable use agreements for students and school staff, clear direction about the use of mobile phones and other electronic equipment by students during school hours, regular review of strategy, and inclusion of cybersafety within the school’s teaching and learning program” (p. 7). In response to this report and in keeping with strategic plans central to the Smart State vision of Education Queensland, the DETA (2012) promoted school cybersafety through a number of policy documents and resource materials for teachers, students, and parents. Some of these items included: *Cyberbullying and reputation management: Incident management guidelines for principals, Working together: A toolkit for effective school-based action against bullying, Cybersafety and cyberbullying: A guide for parents and caregivers, and Social media and the school community* (see, DETA, 2015, http://behaviour.education.qld.gov.au/cybersafety/Pages/default.aspx).

At the time, policy and process were entering into new territory, and these policy documents appeared to be offering solid practical guidelines to meet the challenge of cybersafety in school contexts. Cybersafety was rapidly becoming a priority and government bodies were making substantial effort to establish a set of policies and practices that managed and improved young people’s online safety. Although the output of cybersafety policy and practice guidelines suggested reasonable confidence in the QSAAV (2010) recommendations, some educators questioned the universal nature of policies that had a one-size-fits-all character and the parallel uptake of school monitoring software such as internet-filtering systems.

Ongoing dialogues concerned with cybersafety education highlighted other worries. For example, Livingstone, Bober, and Helsper (2005) reported that controlling computer access and other digital services had limited skill development and knowledge building in some European children. For these children, the school represented the only place where they could use the internet to work on and develop digital literacy skills. Notley (2008) suggested that filtering devices and other access controlling mechanisms hampered young people’s opportunity to use the internet effectively for educational purposes. Whereas Campbell (2009) argued that online problems such as cyberbullying and sexting were complicated concerns not easily resolved by providing young people with a set of skills or “easy tips” (p. 2). She said young people understood that blocking a contact provided only temporary respite. For example, if someone really wanted to get you, there were other ways. The broader more positive concept of digital citizenship was offered by Lee and Finger (2010) as a process for building online environments that informed and empower students. They argued that educators needed to go beyond fruitless banning and filtering charades to address student safety effectively. The tenor of discussions concerned with cybersafety education demonstrated that policy-to-practice process was not a simple task.
Teacher Practice

Beyond addressing the broader issue of developing effective cybersafety protocols, implementation of online safety strategies was being met with a degree of teacher uncertainty and, in some cases, resistance. Daly (2010) commented that cybersafety responsibility was dividing staff in many Australian schools and that the teachers and schools needed a better understanding of the practical and ethical issues involved. He argued that schools needed to be responsible for a range of social issues (e.g., drug education and sex education) which included cybersafety education because it was unlikely to be taught elsewhere. Daly claimed that most teachers understand their moral obligation to protect the young people in their care but how it was managed time-wise was the difficulty. Convincing teachers that cybersafety education was another curriculum responsibility is a complicating tension in teacher practice.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL] (2014) recognised a role for cybersafety education in their teaching standards. This government funded body, which is responsible for promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership, was tasked to monitor the effective implementation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. These standards were developed recently as performance measures that ensure Australian teachers meet standards of practice appropriate for their career stage. Of the seven standards in the AISTL framework, Standard Four, “Create and Maintain Supportive and Safe Learning Environments” was most relevant to cybersafety education. For example, it was stated that the teacher practitioner at the first stage of a teaching career (i.e., graduate level) must “demonstrate an understanding of the relevant issues and the strategies available to support the safe, responsible and ethical use of ICT in learning and teaching” (AITSL, 2014, n. p.). In this way, the AISTL Standard Four showed some awareness of the importance of cybersafety education for teacher practice.

Teacher education programs have recognized the importance of cybersafety knowledge for teacher practice. For example, one Queensland teacher education program has included the QSAAV 2010 report as mandatory reading material and the ACMA (2013) has launched a National Cybersafety Program for Pre-service Teachers designed to equip pre-service teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to educate future students about cybersafety. In support of teacher cybersafety education, the ACMA Chairman, Chris Chapman (2013), was quoted as saying,

There is a real need for a structured program for pre-service teachers to give them skills in addressing a range of cybersafety issues in their new schools and to better prepare them to face the challenges of education in a technology-rich world. (para. 4)
The need for cybersafety resources and teacher education has continued to grow and the demand for programs such as the ACMA’s *National Cybersafety Program for Pre-service Teachers* has exceeded availability. The ACMA and other agencies have been pressed to develop online options to improve teacher access to relevant cybersafety information.

The effectiveness of cybersafety resources and programs to improve teacher cybersafety efficacy has not been measured empirically. Nonetheless, personal experience with instruction in a teacher education course has highlighted that pre-service teachers experience uncertainty over cybersafety protocols despite the increasing number of cybersafety resources available. For example, during one of my tutorial sessions, a pre-service teacher shared her experience with sexting in a Grade 7 classroom. The sexting episode, in this case sharing a girl’s topless photo around the schoolyard, escalated overnight into a classroom confrontation between two boys. One of the boys brought in a knife from home and was threatening the other boy with physical retaliation. The pre-service teacher was shaken by this episode. She was keen to share her experience and discuss her lack of confidence in managing the situation. Rapt discussion in the tutorial workshop suggested that organisational support for cybersafety education, policy reform, and resource development had not translated into confidence about the effectiveness of cybersafety initiatives to support teacher practice and improve student safety. On the whole, several of the beginning teachers expressed doubt about their ability to deal with cybersafety issues.

Outside my experience as a teacher educator and educational researcher in schools, I was parenting a 13-year-old daughter in her first year of high school. Although I wasn’t privy to all of my daughter’s online interactions, glimpses suggested to me that social media platforms and other mediated communication channels provided teen girls with plenty of opportunity for interpersonal jostling, acting-out, showing-off, and, most concerning for me, a 24 hour 7 day watch. The social visibility of networked times has raised important questions about young people’s privacy (see, for example, boyd & Marwick, 2011). For the most part, assumptions that their privacy is under threat have not been examined. However, I sensed that young people’s privacy was shifting in ways that made their personal life, family life, and school life more inextricably linked. I remember thinking that such an interconnected space would be tricky terrain for teen girls to be negotiating. Early adolescence is a time of rapid biological and physical development, increased participation in diverse social worlds, significant gender and identity construction, and exploration and expansion of mixed-gender relationships. The potential for social media content and personal stories to move beyond the confines of the intended audience was a worry that pushed my thinking towards the importance of understanding the impact of online participation in teen girls’ daily lives.
Locating the Research

This study emerged from a persistent and niggling sense that teens were experiencing online difficulties and challenges that did not fit with adult-constructed ideas of cybersafety or populist notions about the aggressive character of teens’ online interactions. Given the issues I faced on a daily basis as a parent, teacher-educator, and educational researcher, I became particularly interested in the complex ways in which teen girls’ friendships were challenged by online participation. As an educator, I have worked extensively and almost exclusively with teenage girls, young adult females, and mature-aged women. I am the mother of a teenage daughter. These experiences hinted that better understandings of the social dynamics of teen girls’ interactions with friends were important. While teen girls may be moody, act self-absorbed, and possibly act in insensitive ways, my experience with girlhood suggested that, for most, their everyday experience was not as horrific and sensational as often depicted in the popular press. On the other hand, this generation of teens had access to a wide array of information 24/7, were constantly visible and noticeable in public networked spaces, and communicated constantly to peers/friends through multi-media platforms. This interactional style suggested a phenomenon worthy of investigation.

The present study aimed to investigate teen girls’ online participation to improve empirical understandings of their everyday experience. The ways in which teen girls managed and negotiated their everyday online practice with peers and close friends became the specific focus of this research, an open problem to be documented and analysed. However, the study was framed within the broader social context of networked culture and for this reason, the effects of contemporary Web 2.0 applications on individuals’ online participation became an important frame of reference. The panoptic effect of Web 2.0 social surveillance emerged as a significant factor in considering online participation. This effect highlighted the visible, dynamic, and symmetrical character of contemporary online participation. This conceptualisation shaped participants as co-producers of space where they were doing and being done to (Goffman, 1959, 1986), a sociocultural time-space-place where attitudes, beliefs, and values of individual agents such as teen girls complicated the contemporary configuration of online participation. In this way, the space that emerged highlighted the complicated interplay between the technical (e.g., new technologies and Web 2.0 applications), the structural (e.g., government policy and teacher practice) and the personal (e.g., the practices of individual actors). The ways in which teen girls managed and negotiated their online participation in this contemporary space is the focus of this study.
Overview of the Thesis

This chapter has described the social milieu at the starting-point for the thesis research. In networked culture, young people’s enthusiasm for social media was rapidly shifting their social interactions and daily experience. Cyberbullying and sexting were emerging concerns. Government agencies, teachers, and parents were sharing their worries about the influence of new technologies and Web 2.0 applications on young people’s safety. Teen girls’ appeared to be having a number of problems but there was a great deal of uncertainty about how to approach these concerns. More important, the review highlighted that some aspects and issues related to teen girls’ online participation were being silenced or undermined by the more considerable interest in cyberbullying and sexting. On the other hand, the review hinted that teen girls’ online practices with peers and close friends were important and that these experiences had the potential to influence their daily lives in both positive and challenging ways. Largely, the chapter highlighted the need to cultivate better understandings of the ways in which teen girls’ constituted their social identity in online contexts beyond the various complexities reported.

Chapter Two reviews scholarship concerned with gender and online participation. The differences between girls’ and boys’ online practice are offered as one justification for the difficulties and challenges that teen girls face online. Consequently, gender and gendered discourses becomes critical avenues for exploring teen girls’ online experience. The logic of this position is argued from perspectives concerned with gender performance (Butler, 1988) and gendered discourses (e.g., identity construction through subjective positioning). This literature questions the regulatory influence of dominant discourses on teen girls’ everyday interaction and online practice.

Chapter Three brings together several concepts and scholarly resources to develop a theoretical framework that specifically focuses on teen girls’ everyday interactions with peers and close friends. Goffman’s (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986) work is offered as a primary framework for exploring the online practice and experiences of teen girls. His focus on situated interaction provides a starting-point for considering the relationship between socially-defined practice (e.g., cybersafety, gendered discourses, etc.), the everyday experiences of teen girls, and their social identity. Resources from Akkerman and Bakker (2011) and Singh, Mårtins, and Glasswell (2013) are introduced to the Goffman framework as a way of extending his notion of situated practice to take up negotiation and regulation of social boundaries in online contexts. This theorisation offers as alternative approach to the ideas presented in Chapters One and Two. In this chapter, teen girls are theorised as active participants and pivotal makers of experience and identity development.
Chapter Four presents the research methods of the thesis. The research design and data generation instruments are described, and the analytic network is explained. The limits and the values of this methodology are explored and acknowledged within the larger epistemological orientation of social science study.

Chapter Five, Six, and Seven are analytic chapters that systematically report on the different types of data analyses. Chapter Five provides a descriptive analysis of the girls' online participation in relation to their use of internet services and cybersafety practice. Chapter Six takes up the micro-analytical tools of impression management to examine how the girls integrated their everyday performance with peers and close friends in online contexts to constitute their social identity. Chapter Seven presents an analysis of how the girls negotiated the challenges and difficulties that they faced in online contexts. The analysis foregrounds the sociocultural aspects of regulation and norm producing practice that underpin and shape the girls’ online practice. Chapter Eight reflects on the contribution of the study to understandings of teen girls’ online participation in networked culture. In this chapter the research questions are reconsidered, the design and conduct of this study reviewed, the limitations discussed, and considerations for future research are suggested.

This thesis attempts to offer a detailed and rigorous empirical investigation into the online participation of teen girls. The data for this research was collected in 2011 and the end point is 2015. In that time, many social and technological events and changes have taken place. Undoubtedly, some of the analyses presented here have been reported elsewhere. Regardless, this study was conceptualised and undertaken at a significant social moment and a time of uncertainty and, therefore, offers significant contribution to understandings of social progress in changing times. The theoretical treatment has taken up the difficult task of rethinking old concepts for new conditions. The methodology has pushed at the boundaries of ethical process and participant resistance. Taken for granted assumptions have been called into question and new ideas are promoted. In this way, the thesis offers a unique exploration into the online participation of 130 Australian teen girls.
Chapter Two
Gender and Online Participation

This chapter reviews literature dealing specifically with the gender constructions of teen girls’ online interactions. The focus on gender helps to draw attention to and clarify the issues and concerns that relate specifically to girls. The first section provides an overview of the empirical work concerned with teen girls’ online participation. The literature indicates that at a very general level, there appear to be noticeable differences between the ways in which girls and boys engage in online practices. Cyberbullying and sexting emerge as gender-specific risks for girls. Chapter One articulated the significance of this study in terms of cybersafety. This chapter adds to the significance of the study by drawing attention to how gendered discourses such as the construction of gendered identities and subject positions regulates and sanctions teen girls’ everyday experience in online contexts.

Teen Girls’ Online Participation

Earlier studies concerned with young people’s online participation (see, for example, Boneva, Quinn, Kraut, Kiesler, & Shklovski, 2006) did not focused specifically on gender differences. However, more recent research has highlighted how girls and boys participate differently in online contexts. These differences are discussed next. The findings draw attention to gender relations, and the interpersonal challenges and gender-specific risks that girls face in online contexts. The latter sections of the chapter, highlights the ways in which girls’ online practice has been constructed and ascribed through dominant discourses.

Differences between Girls’ and Boys’ Online Participation

Increasingly, empirical research on young teens’ online engagement suggests that girls’ and boys’ participate online in different ways. Worldwide, these differences have been reported with reasonable consistency. In Australia, an early study undertaken by the ACMA (2008) found that girls and boys aged 8 to 17 years used the internet in equal amounts but in time-use diaries, girls reported that they allocated their online time to different activities than boys. The girls indicated that they were more likely to stay online for longer continuous periods of time to participate in social activities such as instant messaging and online chatting (34% girls, 24% boys), emailing (26% girls, 16% boys), and visiting social websites (25% girls, 19% boys). In the same study, the girls were more likely to author online content (47% girls, 38% boys), create their own profile on a social network site [SNSs] (41% girls, 27% boys), and post photos and artwork
online (22% girls, 12% boys). Instead, boys reported spending more time each day playing video and computer games against others (28% boys, 18% girls). Largely, the ACMA report indicated that Australian girls were more likely to use online services for social activities compared to same-age boys. See Figure 2.1 for a summary of Australian girls’ and boys’ preferred online activities as reported by the ACMA in 2008. Similar findings were reported by Cross et al. (2009) in the Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS).

![Figure 2.1](image_url)  

*Figure 2.1. Australian girls’ and boys’ preferred online activities. Summarised from “Media use by girls and boys, Report No. 2,” by the ACMA, 2008.*

Research has shown that girls aged 10 to 17 years were more likely to share personal information online (McAfee, 2010). The McAfee group (an American antivirus company), also found that girls were more likely to give a description of what they looked like to strangers, share photos of themselves with others, and provide their password to friends. Similar findings were reported by Lenhart et al. (2011) in their three-part multi-modal study. These researchers found that teen girls were more likely to share their password with friends (47% girls, 27% boys) and were much keener texters than same-age boys. In addition, Lenhart et al. noted that teen girls aged 12 to 13 years were more likely to have a mobile phone than same-age boys (67% girls, 47% boys). On the whole, this set of findings suggested that teen girls were more socially interactive in online spaces and that younger teen girls had different practices to same-age boys.

Differences between girls’ and boys’ online social practices were confirmed in other studies. For example, an American study reported that while girls and boys both used online mediums to keep in touch, girls appeared to be more public in their online quest for peer attention (Marwick & boyd, 2011a). Marwick and boyd found that girls were more likely to post messages seeking feedback and support on their personal experiences, relationships, and conflict issues with peers. They suggested that this practice made girls’ interpersonal actions more visible to their peers.
and that this tendency possibly explained why girls’ online problems were more conspicuous than boys. Common Sense Media (2012) reported similar findings. They noted that girls aged 13 to 17 years posted more photos online (75% girls, 42% boys), changed their profile pictures more frequently (28% girls, 9% boys), were more stressed about how they looked in photos (35% girls, 19% boys), and tended to worry about others posting “ugly photos” (p. 23) of them on social media sites (45% girls, 24% boys). Based on these findings, Common Sense Media suggested that girls’ online participation was not only more conspicuous and impression-orientated (see Figure 2.2) but it was also likely to be more stressful.

![Figure 2.2. American girls’ and boys’ concerns related to online participation. Summarised from “Social media, social life: How teens view their digital lives,” by Common Sense Media, 2012.](image)

A European report found comparable differences between girls’ and boys’ online social practices as the American studies (Livingstone, Haddon, Gorzig, & Olafsson, 2011). Based on their findings, Livingstone et al. (2011) suggested that girls’ and boys’ online social practices placed them at risk for certain types of online problems (discussed in the next section). Recent reports have continued to find distinct differences between girls’ and boys’ online social practices (see, for example, Madden et al., 2013). These differences have been linked to gender-specific online practices.

The different social practices of girls and boys have been reported in scholarship outside internet studies research. Indeed, the importance of relationships during the early teens, in particular same-gender friendships, has been widely reported (see, for example, Brendgen, Vitaro, Doyle, Markiewicz, and Bukowski, 2002; Buhrmester and Furman, 1986; and Sullivan, 1953). Several years ago, Caldwell and Peplau (1982) found that intimate sharing such as disclosing personal experiences and sharing secrets played a central role in girls’ friendships. The researchers reported that females viewed talk, especially emotional sharing with same gender friends, as the critical and defining feature of female friendship. Findings concerned with
girls’ and boys’ online social practice suggest that talk and emotional sharing are underlying constituents of girls’ online practice. In the main, teen girls appeared to be more interested in the social aspects of online participation than boys.

**Gendered Participation**

The differences between girls’ and boys’ online practice, especially their social participation, suggested that *gender* was a critical avenue for exploring young people’s online practice. Scholarship concerned with online risk (discussed in the next section) also resonated with the need for a gender-specific exploration. Not all of the literature defined gender in a specific way except to differentiate girls and boys in the physiological sense (i.e., primary sexual characteristics). On the other hand, a large portion of the literature located online practice against a set of socially-accepted and appropriate behaviours and practices for girls and boys. Implicit to this literature was the notion that online practice could be talked about through normative measures concerned with gender (e.g., girls and boys). In these discussions, the terms *feminine* and *masculine* as well as *femininity* and *masculinity* emerged.

The terms feminine and masculine most often define socially constructed categories or sets of attributes, behaviours and social roles associated with the mannerisms, appearances, and expectations for girls and women (feminine) and boys and men (masculine) (Wharton, 2005). In the broadest sense, the concepts of femininity and masculinity have been used to refer to the ways in which biological sex (i.e., the physical traits of female and male) are socially practiced or performed (i.e., the normative ways in which female and males are expected to act and talk) in everyday life. In gender scholarship, the terms femininity and masculinity have been deployed to refer to gender performance (Butler, 1988) or the identification and expression of gendered identities and relationships (Killerman, 2013a). Femininity involves the take up and enactment of attributes such as gentleness, empathy, and sensitivity which have been socially constructed and associated with feminine identity/subjectivity. Masculinity involves the take up and enactment of attributes such as courage, independence, and assertiveness which have been socially constructed and associated with masculine identity/subjectivity. While the boundaries between masculinity and femininity are increasingly blurred in countries such as Australia, and young teens engage in boundary crossing behaviours and experimenting with gender creativity (Killerman, 2013b), there was still considerable policing of gendered identities and relations, particularly by teens themselves.

The performative accomplishments of female/male gendered identities and positioning has been written about extensively by Judith Butler. Butler (1988) suggested that gender was “an act” (p. 528) broadly constructed from the complex expectations constituted in social discourse and that
The ascription of gender attributes to self was “a publicly regulated and sanctioned form of essence fabrication” (p. 528).

[O]ne is compelled to live in a world in which genders constitute univocal signifiers, in which gender is stabilized, polarized, rendered discrete and intractable. In effect, gender is made to comply with a model of truth and falsity which not only contradicts its own performative fluidity, but serves a social policy of gender regulation and control. Performing one’s gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides reassurances that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all. (Butler, 1988, p. 528)

Butler (1988) suggested “that culture readily punishe[d] or marginalise[d] those who fail[ed] to perform the illusion of gender essentialism” (p. 528). Heterosexuality was a socially compelled and historically constituted necessity that supported a whole set of social positions that were alternatively unthinkable (Butler, Segal, & Osbourne, 1994).

The concept of discourse has been deployed to refer to the ways in which institutionally constructed systems of meaning regulate how individuals’ think, communicate, and behave (Cole, 2011). While the term has been used in many different ways, in this thesis, the term discourse is used to signal systems of meaning that are inherently ideological and involve values and viewpoints about people, objects, places, and ideas. Moreover, dominant discourses regulate the subject positions that people take up, the identities that they project, and the ways that they engage in social practices, such as online interactions. Gee (1990) suggested that discourses were “ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions and clothes” (p. 142). According to Gee:

a Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network’, or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful ‘role’. (p. 143)

The term dominant discourse has been used in the thesis to convey Gee’s (1990) meaning of big D discourses (p. 142). Gee used a capital D to differentiate dominant discourses from the active interpretation or specificity of a particular discourse in everyday interaction (e.g. little d discourse). Dominant discourses are produced and distributed through various social institutions, such as education, legal/policing, religious, and various media organisations. These discourses have potential to structure the possibilities and establish the limitations of social practice and, thereby, shape and categorise social performance (Singh, 1995a). For example, female children learn how to be and act like a girl from a very early age. They are given feminine names (e.g., girl verses boy names), dressed in feminine clothes (e.g., pink dresses), and encouraged to play with feminine toys (e.g., dolls, kitchen sets, and make-up sets). These
gendered patterns of behaviour are socially constructed and are passed on through the words, actions, values and beliefs of members of the child’s social network. In this way, the transmission of discourse has potential to shape socially acceptable practice but it also has potential to marginalise or stigmatise others who do not adopt dominant ways of being. In simple terms, it is the force or power of discourse to regulate ways of being that Butler (1988) refers to in her discussions concerned with gender performativity. According to Butler, performing gender to coincide with dominant notions of femininity and masculinity regulates, polices, and reproduces normative practices of heterosexuality. Butler suggested that this performance reinforced structures of inequality such as subordination and oppression. In other words, while femininity and masculinity are fluid and fluctuating attributes, the sociocultural parameters of acceptable feminine and masculine identities are still strongly regulated and constrain social practices. In other words, the ways in which girls and boys behave, speak and engage in online contexts is regulated by gendered discourses which constitute feminine and masculine subject positions.

This review has drawn attention to the regulating nature of gendered discourse. More important, it highlighted how discourses concerned with femininity and masculinity have potential to shape socially-defined expectations for girls’ and boys’ online performance. In the next section of the chapter, two sets of literature are reviewed. The review highlights how teen girls’ everyday actions and practices have been constructed through subject positions, social sanctions, and taboos associated with femininity (e.g., good girls, bad girls, mean girls, slutty girls, etc.). In the first set of literature, attention is drawn to the ways in which teen girls’ actions and practices are positioned in various media, including popular culture. The second set of literature highlights how dominant discourses influence and constrain teen girls’ everyday online experiences. Both sets of literature draw attention to gendered forms of subject positioning, or gendered identity constructions.

The term subjective positioning signals the identities constituted and ascribed through dominant discourses (Albrechtslund, 2008). Subjective positioning is not a straightforward act of reproduction. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest that it involves an intense capacity “to affect and be affected” (p. xvi) while Semetsky (2003) describes it as a powerful encounter that is “both physical and mental”. Semetsky went on to explain that “the affect is not just a feeling or emotion but a force that influences the body’s mode of existence” – it is a condition of “becoming other than the present self” (p. 213). For example, as girls engage in online interactions they are positioned and position themselves within gendered discourses and thus perform and become feminine. Discourses are both constraining and enabling, and girls’ online interactions can simultaneously reproduce, contest, challenge, and change gendered identities and relations, therefore modifying dominant discourses. In other words, teen girls resist or
challenge institutionalised positions and thereby provoke a specificity of discourse that aligns to local rituals and routines of everyday interaction (Goffman, 1967; Singh, 1995a). Recent panic concerned with girls’ “boner garage hashtag tattoos” and “Instagram selfies” (Dobson & Coffey, 2015, para. 1) demonstrates how teen girls can provoke feminine representation that challenges dominant notions of respectability.

Panics over teen girls’ everyday practice and acts of self-representation are not new. Mary Pipher’s controversial claims in her 1994 book *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls* brought teen girls’ contemporary culture to public awareness. Through case study analysis, Pipher described the increased level of sexism and violence in American society that she believed was leaving teenage girls neglected and vulnerable. Pipher insisted that girls were “coming of age in a more dangerous, sexualised and media-saturated culture. They faced incredible pressures to be beautiful and sophisticated, which in junior high [meant] using chemicals and being sexual” (p. 12). Pipher’s claims drew keen interest from the press and academia. Mass media was drawn to the perils and sufferance of contemporary girlhood. From the academy, Merten (1997) became one of the first scholars to study the sociocultural construction of meanness in junior high school girls. He found that competition to gain or preserve popularity was an ever-present undercurrent in girls’ relationships and that this competition was a situated and important condition for meanness. Other academic studies reported on the negative and harmful effects of popular media on girls’ identity and development (see, for example, Durham, 1998 and Mazzarella, 1999). Media reports about the moral behaviour of teenage girls were prolific. In an analytic review of the newspaper coverage of contemporary girls’ lives, Mazzarella and Pecora (2002) reported that “while not scapegoating girls for broader social problems, it [was] clear that the press construct[ed] girls themselves (authors’ emphasis) as a social problem” (p. 16).

In the early 2000s, several highly celebrated books were published that exemplified girls’ covert and nasty social practices. Some of the better known publications include, *The secret lives of girls: What good girls really do – sex play, aggression, and their guilt* by Sharon Lamb (2001), *Odd girl out: The hidden culture of aggression in girls* by Rachel Simmons (2002), *Girlfighting: Betrayal and rejection among girls* by Lyn Mikel Brown (2003), and *Social aggression among girls* by Marion Underwood (2003). In these publications, the ‘nice girl, mean girl’ duality was used to represent teen girls’ social interaction with same-gender friends. Girls were portrayed as socially competitive individuals that were capable of inflicting lasting harm on peers in the name of peer acceptance. In these accounts, mean girls used covert practices like gestures, facial expressions, verbal threats, denigration, name-calling, ignoring, and exclusion to maintain their group standing while minimising personal vulnerability. The
authors’ use of the nice girl, mean girl dichotomy pitted girls’ everyday social practice against the boundaries of acceptable middle-class niceness and unacceptable pathological meanness.

The best-selling book Queenbees and wannabees (Wiseman, 2002) and the follow-up movie Mean girls (Paramount Pictures & Waters, 2004) appears to have had the most significant impact on teen girls’ contemporary representation. In the book, Rosalind Wiseman (2002) shaped the dynamics of teen girls’ friendships through a “social pecking order” (p. 23) and a hierarchical set of powerful positions such as the “queen bee, side kick, and wannabe” (p. 25). Through this hierarchy, Wiseman fashioned teen girls’ friendships as a saga of locally-produced and contextually-situated meanness. Some scholars countered these views with open criticism. For example, Gonick (2004), a cultural feminist, argued that Rosalind had imagined teen girls into “ethnographic curiosities” (p. 396) with nice-mean rituals and a cult-like organisation. Gonick insisted that by representing teen girls in simplistic binary categories, Rosalind’s views did not depict the complexity of everyday social interaction.

In the main, mean girl discourses have been associated with American culture. However, similar identity positions have made their way into popular and academic literature from other countries including Australia. The better known Australian publications include: Girls: Feminine adolescence in popular culture & cultural theory by Catherine Driscoll (2002), Future girl: Younger women in the 21st century by Anita Harris (2004a), Princess bitchface syndrome by Michael Carr-Gregg, (2006), What’s happening to our girls? by Maggie Hamilton (2008), Princesses and pornstars: Sex, power, identity by Emily Maguire (2008), and most recent, Raising girls by Steve Biddulph (2013). These publications are often aimed at parents of girls as a form of parent education. However, many of these books seem to reproduce the dominant constructions of femininity and masculinity, and unproblematically ascribe attributes and traits of meanness to categories of teen girls and younger women. In particular, delineations between good girls and bad girls, nice girls and naughty girls are made.

Scholarly concerns related to the good girl-bad girl dichotomy/binary can be traced over several decades. For example, in 1991, Haraway suggested that acknowledging a type of proper and improper femininity (i.e., good and bad; nice and naughty) created “border wars” (p. 150) between right and wrong kinds of girl. Pomerantz (2007) reported that these types of boundaries had moved into the 21st century while Merskin (2005) summarised the social landscape as follows:

In the good girl, bad girl dichotomy, the good girl next door isn’t free, she’s enmeshed in male conventions of perfection and the obligation to fulfil them. The bad girl isn’t free either, she’s labelled, used, and trashed. (p. 54)
Many other authors have written about the nature of girlhood (see Appendix A). These publications have come from many quarters and have demonstrated the strong interest in girls and their everyday experiences. This brief examination has highlighted the dualistic, complex, and feminised ways in which girls and younger women have been represented in dominant discourses.

In the next section, the scholarship draws attention to the hidden tensions and mixed subjectivities that teen girls continue to face in networked times. The review goes on to illustrate how the various constructions of girlhood such as the dominant representations of the 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s discussed in the section above appear to regulate how teen girls’ practice their online participation.

**Challenging Good Girl Discourses**

In 2000, McRobbie suggested that contemporary subjectivities of girlhood such as the *good girl* discourse (i.e., where the notion of a good girl is associated with attributes of virginity, the immaculate conception, and lack of sexual desire) have subjected younger women to a moralised ideal that is hard to live up to. Somewhat later, Mazzarella (2005) located the crisis discourse pertaining to girlhood (e.g., the crash and burn hazards of girlhood) inside the stereotypical and narrow range of femininity offered by magazines, romance novels, and other media forms like television and film. More recently, the differentiated identities of girls found in music and fashion have been of interest to a new wave of cultural feminists. For example, Jackson and Vares (2011) pointed out that pop music and celebrity culture were significant sites for shaping dominant sexual representations and subjectivities of girls. They found that in these spaces “being sexy, cute, hot, and sassy” (p. 136) was graphically expressed through hyper-sexualised femininity and celebrity antics.

The recent Miley Cyrus-Hannah Montana paradox has drawn attention to the difficulties of hyper-sexualised femininity for teen girls. In this paradoxical space, Cyrus’s pop music bad girl behaviour was contrasted with her TV good girl character, Hannah Montana. Cyrus faced public criticism of her performance at the MTV Video Music Awards in August, 2013 and her performance in the music video *Wrecking Ball* where she was filmed essentially nude and

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4 Hyper-sexual femininity refers to the agentic, unabashed expression of sexuality that is generally a key marker of masculinity in men and often a signifier of undesirable sexual behaviour (e.g., sluttishness) in women (Griffin, Szmigin, Bengry-Howell, Hackley, & Mistral, 2013).
occasionally licking construction equipment (Bernstein, 2013). The social derision over Cyrus’s unconcealed hyper-sexuality (i.e., her ‘slutty’ behaviour) has highlighted the ongoing public condemnation and the internal conflict that some female celebrities have foreshadowed for teen girls through their raunch culture (i.e., over-sexualised discourse that objectifies women and/or encourages women to objectify themselves for empowerment [Levy, 2005]). Jackson and Vares (2011) suggested that because mass media trends had tacitly fostered a more regulatory public eye, “slut subjectivity” (p. 137) had been reclaimed by adults and by girls themselves. The researchers concluded that “the potential to experiment with sexualised practices” and inhabit a “sassy girl subjectivity” carried the risk of “signifying sluttiness rather than sassiness” (p. 137). They suggested that femininity was a profoundly contradictory and dilemmatic space for girls and young women, a space that was almost impossible for them to inhabit without some sort of tension.

In their 2011 study, Jackson and Vares focused on the contradictions and the dialogues found in popular culture that had potential to constrain teen girls’ social practice. “Contrary to the notion that girls passively and uncritically absorb and emulate media representations” (p. 135), they found that teen girls used various discursive practices and conversational strategies to negotiate sexuality in networked culture. In their study, girls aged 10 to 13 years used “bad girls’ talk” (p. 144) to negotiate public condemnation and internal conflict that was brought to the foreground by the hyper-sexuality of younger female celebrities like Cyrus. These girls readily mobilised moral condemnation and distancing strategies like disgust and slut-casting to maintain the normative boundaries of age-appropriate femininity. By using bad girl talk, Jackson and Vares found that these girls were able to manage hyper-sexualised femininity while maintaining their own good girl image. The researchers reported that girls’ critical engagement with contemporary media and rejection of hyper-sexuality was encouraging and positive. On the other hand, they drew attention to the girls’ reliance on the use of differentiated femininities such as good girl, bad girl identities to negotiate, regulate, and contest hypersexualised femininity. They believed that the challenge for teen girls was to critique sexualised feminine discourse in ways that did not rely on gendered representations. The researchers suggested that reliance on dominant gendered discourses such as good girl-bad girl, nice girl-naughty girl had the effect of repressing creative response and limited potential for positive outcomes.

The effect of discursive positioning on girls’ identity production in online contexts has been discussed by Connie Morrison (2010). In a descriptive case study, Morrison asked ten girls aged
13 to 17 years to create an auto-biographical WeeMee™ avatar. In this constructive process, the girls demonstrated the ability to author themselves into being and confirmed that creating an online self-representation was a serious business. However, despite the fact that the girls had multiple ways to represent their identity in the WeeMee context, Morrison found that the girls felt pressured to edit their avatars to fit-in with what was socially expected of them. Even though the pressure came mostly from their peers, Morrison reported that the girls believed “in the big picture …it [was] the media” (p. 167) through print, film, and television that sent and controlled social and cultural messages about conformity and personal ideals. The girls could author themselves into being but they struggled to contradict “the appearance expectations” (p. 168) found in popular culture. As noted by Morrison … “in spite of their own strong desire to be regarded as unique individuals with their own style, they still [felt] the pressure to conform one way or another” (p. 168).

Contemporary literacy practices concerned with blogs and SNSs have been investigated by Carrington (2009). She examined the ways in which a female academic and a young teen girl produced digital texts such as personal messages, blog entries, images, music uploads, and customised backgrounds in a blog and a SNS profile. Her investigation addressed the everyday issues around identity, trust, and the construction of self-narratives through online text production. Carrington found that the text producers’ online contributions and their practices, actions, and interactions were dependent on the collaboration and participation of others. In other words, while individual agency and self-biography clearly came into play in the development of their online texts, these communal contributions were noticeably performances created and distributed for others’ consumption. The online “representation of self [was] not accidental” (p. 12), instead it was guided by the characteristics and cultural values and practices of the intended audience. Carrington concluded that blogs and SNSs provided a participatory frame for developing, rehearsing, and distributing a series of “evolving self-narratives” (p. 12). As a collaborative project, the text producers’ online contributions were fuelled by both the affordances of technology and a historical self-archive that responded to the broader social context of macro-level narratives. The power of digital texts to articulate a reflexive self-narrative may, in part, explain how SNSs and other Web 2.0 applications foreground and distribute the likes and dislikes of teen girls as well as the contradictory expectations of dominant discourses discussed by Jackson and Vares (2011) and Morrison (2010).

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5 ‘WeeMees’ are personalised digital identities designed by their owner. For more information see (http://www.weeworld.com).
In a different set of literature, Ringrose (2010) and Ringrose, Gill, Livingstone, and Harvey (2012) explored how online sexual identity was constructed by teenagers. In each study, the researchers reported that girls and boys claimed that they were under new pressures in social networking profiles to pose in “sexy” and “body-revealing ways” (Ringrose et al., 2012, p. 13). For example, some girls admitted to posting photos in bikinis and underwear while some boys claimed that they posted photos of their “six-pack” (p. 13). Although not all the girls and boys posted these types of photos, Ringrose et al. concluded that everyone was affected because each person had “to make complex decisions about what to post and what it meant for their wider social relations at school and beyond” (p. 13).

The effects of the sexualisation or pornification of mass media entertainment and fitness activities on teen girls’ online practice has been studied by Ringrose et al. (2012). These researchers suggested that a “porno chic aesthetic” (p. 16) had permeated music videos and advertising and that “practices once associated with the sex industry … had become newly respectabilised” (p. 16) in everyday life. In their study, the researchers sought to understand how young people aged 12 to 13 years and 14 to 15 years negotiated these challenges in digital mediums. Amongst other findings, the researchers found that sexual communication was embedded in both offline and online communication between boys and girls at the two school sites under investigation. They reported that regardless of contemporary notions of equality in gender sexuality, the girls were ridiculed and judged for sending sexual self-images and “were quickly positioned as a ‘sket’ or slut almost unanimously by both boys and girls in the study” (p. 54). The researchers noted that the “virgin-whore binary” (p. 54) was strongly evidenced in young people’s online communication but that there was a dominant tendency towards girls’ resignation and acceptance of this sexual double standard. “Within this context, girls’ own sexual desires or pleasures were generally silenced, unthinkable, and largely unspoken. …[There was] a culture of silence around dealing with it, where girls, particularly the most vulnerable in Year 8, felt unable to actually approach teachers or parents for fear of being called a ‘snake’ or ‘snitch’ or arousing retaliation from boys” (p. 54).

Sexualised gendered binaries such as virgin-whore have emerged in other studies concerned with teen girls’ online participation. Garcia-Gomez (2011) studied the discursive strategies used by teen girls aged 14 to 17 years on Facebook during episodes of conflict. He found that the girls’ played-out interpersonal conflict in ways that ratified the dominant social positions of men (i.e., hegemonic discourse) and upheld masculine social hierarchies (i.e., males holding superior
positions over females). For example, Garcia-Gomez reported that some girls appeared to be adopting “laddish behaviour” (i.e., hypersexual speech and pornified discourse\(^6\)) that was consistent with a “masculine ‘negative’ mean girl” (p. 243). Other girls plainly identified with a “sexy female body” (p. 243) and made it clear that they were not ashamed of using their sexuality to gain male attention and to undermine other girls. He went on to suggest that the hypersexualised and pornified discourse produced during these in-group practices coincided with the power hierarchies found in heterosexual relationships. Garcia-Gomez concluded that “the linguistic strategies employed by these girls could be understood as a failing attempt to resist heteronormative feminine sexuality” (p. 261). Garcia-Gomez suggested that despite discourses that positioned femininity “as a site of limitless possibilities for transformation and reinvention” (p. 245), girls’ online strategies remained “carefully regulated through a heteronormative matrix that differentiated between socially acceptable normative girls and socially deviant girls” (p. 246).

In this section of the chapter, several parallel but differing continuums for describing contemporary teen girls’ and their social practice were discussed. A good girl-bad girl theme underpinned much of the discourse but other hypersexualised representations were common such as sassy girl-slutty girl and virgin-whore binaries. In each case, discursive depictions fell back to kind-of-girl themes. That is, themes that perpetuated notions of right and wrong, proper and improper, regulated and unregulated, and constrained and unconstrained. The popular literature seemed to suggest that an ideal girl existed but that she was elusive, hard to pin down, and not easily brought into being while the scholarly work highlighted contemporary trends towards hypersexual demand and regulation. Both sets of literature pointed to the effect of dominant discourses on the social practice and online actions of teen girls. These positions are important for understanding how teen girls manage and navigate their social identity and daily experiences with peers and close friends in online contexts.

**Gender-Specific Risk**

A corpus of research studies, as reported in Chapter One, has shown that young people use the internet for many positive outcomes. However, there is a large and growing body of scholarship that has shown internet use has potential to place young people at-risk. Livingstone and Helsper (2007) described three key areas of online risk that had potential to interrupt young people’s

\(^6\) “She is a dirty dirty whore and deserves to be raped by a gang of men wearing pineapple condoms” (p. 260).
wellbeing and safety – risky content, privacy risk, and contact risk. The researchers described risky content as incidental or deliberate access to pornographic material and violent content. Privacy risk was identified as identity theft and personal sabotage or outing such as exposing secrets while contact risk referred to online sexual solicitation, oversharing personal details such as a home address, and arranging offline meetings with people met online. Common Sense Media (2012) reported similar risk factors but added hate speech to the list of risky content areas. They referred to “hate speech” (p. 24) as sexist, homophobic, or racist content. In a different set of literature, content and contact problems were linked to the specific character of social media environments. boyd and Marwick (2009), Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), Marwick (2012), and Pujazon-Zazik and Park (2010) have all agreed that the collaborative, participatory, and highly visible nature of social media platforms has led to an increase in problematic behaviours among young people.

A different set of online risks was identified by Livingstone et al. (2011). They reported that girls’ and boys’ different participation styles created gender-specific risks. Their study found that European boys were more likely to encounter or create conduct problems while European girls were more likely to be exposed to content and contact problems. Boys’ conduct problems included hacking, gambling, bullying, harassing, and creating and uploading inappropriate material. Girls’ content problems included exposure to violent or hateful content, harmful sexual content, and biased information or advice. Contact problems for girls involved being tracked through personal online information, being bullied, harassed, or stalked, and being exposed to unwelcome persuasion such as sexual grooming and self-harm information (e.g., Pro Ana chat groups).

Gender-specific risks were also found in other studies. For example, McAfee (2013) found that girls’ openness to communicate online placed them at greater risk for contact problems with peers while Cross et al. (2009) reported that Australian Year 8 girls were more likely to be involved in instances of cyberbullying and covert aggression than same-age boys. Marwick (2012) reported that American teen girls were more likely than boys to be involved in online drama or interpersonal conflict and indirect aggression such as malicious rumour-spreading. She went on to suggest that girls’ propensity for oversharing in face-to-face situations became problematic for them online because of the high visibility and constant surveillance of peers in social media spaces. Marwick suggested that this omnipresent surveillance placed teen girls at-

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7 Pro Ana Websites promote the eating disorder anorexia nervosa.
risk, in particular, because of their need to continually perform and act out their lives, relationships, and concerns in front of their peers.

Puajzon-Zazik and Park (2010) reported that teens had a propensity towards public displays of risk-taking behaviours such as swearing, smoking cigarettes, using sexualised language, and sharing inappropriate photographs. They suggested that social media was dangerous for teens because it offered them a perfect platform for engaging in these forms of public display. The researchers believed that teen girls were particularly vulnerable to public display problems because of their predisposition towards sharing information and stories with friends. Additional research by Puajzon-Zazik, Manasse, and Orrell-Valente (2012) suggested that the intensity of online concerns escalated for girls in their early teens (i.e., 12 to 14 years old). They suggested that this time period was typically characterised by a desire for intensive interpersonal connections but was often undermined by younger teen girls’ immature cognitive clarity, cloudy reasoning ability, and underdeveloped thinking patterns. Other scholars also reported on the increased likelihood of younger teen girls being exposed to or involved in online problems (see, for example, Cross et al., 2009 and Lenhart et al., 2011).

The at-risk literature has pointed specifically to the social landscape of girls’ friendship practice and their penchant for intimacy and sharing as a conduit for online problems. The high personal visibility found in social media applications has been considered one of the main conditions for teen girls’ online problems. As pointed out by Marwick and boyd (2011b), in social media applications girls’ everyday struggles with gossip, name-calling and meanness, involvement in risky behaviour, and relationship breakdowns become very public, very quickly. In other words, the most basic pressures of daily life and friendship become open to public discussion and review. Empirical studies have shown that the challenges of social watching inherent to social media applications have affected teen girls and boys. However, these practices appeared to have become more predominantly associated with teen girls’ online participation.

**Girls’ Cyberbullying Risk**

In Chapter One, the review of empirical studies on cyberbullying highlighted a number of inconsistencies with the prevalence figures. Despite these discrepancies, teen girls, especially younger girls aged 12 to 14 years, have reported cyberbullying as a significant problem. While early studies showed no substantial gender difference in cyberbullying experiences (see, for example, Ybarra and Mitchell, 2004 and Li, 2005), more recent research has shown that girls’ and boys’ involvement in cyberbullying differs. For example, *The Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study* (ACBPS) showed consistent patterns of difference between girls’ and boys’ experience with cyberbullying. In this study, Cross et al. (2009) found that girls were more
likely than boys to be involved in bullying through technology. The researchers also found that younger teen girls were more likely than same-age boys or older teen girls (i.e., 16 to 18 years of age) to experience cyberbullying. Cross et al. reported that Year 7 girls (i.e., 11 to 12 year olds) claimed higher levels of cyberbullying than any other group and, in Queensland, Year 8 girls (i.e., 12 to 13 year olds) were almost twice as likely as same-age boys to be bullied through technology. A few years later, the Australian Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011) reported similar findings. They found that 12-year-old girls claimed significantly higher rates of cyberbullying (18%) than 12-year-old boys (11%).

Cyberbullying as a gender-specific risk has been reported elsewhere. Lenhart et al. (2011) reported that 33% of American teen girls aged 12 to 13 years who used social media indicated that girls in their own age group were mostly unkind to one another in social media sites. In comparison, only 9% of the boys in the same-age group made this claim. Menesini, Nocentini, and Calussi (2011) and Pujazon-Zazik and Park (2010) have made comparable claims. On the whole, the scholarship showed that younger teen girls were the most inclined to report problems with cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying risk has been linked to differences in girls’ and boys’ online tactics. Several American research teams reported that girls used different online tactics to boys (see, for example, Hinduja and Patchin, 2012; Menesini et al., 2011; and Pujazon-Zazik and Park, 2010). Reports suggested that these differences clarified girls’ risk of cyberbullying. For example, in the cited studies, girls were more likely than boys to spread rumours online or post a mean and hurtful comment. These practices initiated relationship tensions resulting in retaliatory interactions. Patchin and Hinduja (2012) found that girls were less inclined to admit to cyberbullying whereas boys were more likely to claim authorship. Boys responded to hurtful posts by direct retribution, most often face-to-face, but girls used subversive tactics that held double meaning or covert disclaimers (e.g., ‘you must have misunderstood me’). The researchers suggested that the clandestine nature of girls’ practices made their actions “difficult to read” (p. 35) giving them plenty of opportunity to deny actions or disrupt others’ intentions. Patchin and Hinduja found that girls’ practice was doubly challenging because it upset the trust and intimacy expected in girls’ friendships but was covert enough to be left unchallenged. Girls’ online troubles lingered on whereas boys’ problems were more immediate and quickly resolved. Cross et al. (2009) reported that Australian girls also used practices different to boys. The girls in the ACBPS were more inclined to use covert and hidden practices such as telling lies about a person and spreading rumours to make peers not like others. These practices were reported as frequent precursors to online troubles such as cyberbullying.
Findings concerned with the gendered nature of cyberbullying have not been consistent. In part, this inconsistency has been linked to the ways in which girls’ and boys’ cyberbullying practice has been constructed from representations of male (e.g., direct) and female (e.g., indirect) face-to-face bullying (see, for example, Hinduja and Patchin, 2009 and Shariff, 2008). However, in more recent work, Cross et al. (2012) indicated that girls and boys do not have identical online challenges and, therefore, the tactics used may or may not be similar to gendered patterns of face-to-face bullying. The research team advised that the various types of online aggression required more thorough investigation before specific gendered patterns could be identified. On the other hand, there was reasonable evidence to suggest that girls and boys differed in their online practice. These differences appeared to be linked to cyberbullying risk. Moreover, the empirical evidence suggesting that younger teen girls experienced cyberbullying problems more than same-age boys was reasonably consistent.

**Girls’ Sexting Risk**

Teen girls have been consistently reported as being at greater risk for sexting requests than boys. For example, Ringrose et al. (2012, 2013) reported that girls were more likely to experience demands for nude or semi-nude photographs than boys. They found that the key difference between sexting requests was related to the nature of girls’ and boys’ online participation. The researchers reported that girls and boys had different expectations for online distribution of personal artefacts and self-images. The girls *shared* images with boys while the boys *collected* images of girls. The researchers noted that sexualised images of female peers operated as “currency” (Ringrose et al., 2013, p. 313) for boys. Boys accumulated and exchanged female images to improve their “rating” (p. 312) amongst male peers. On the other hand, the prospect of boyfriend status and the promise of male attention lured girls into taking photographs of their body and sharing them with boys. Ringrose et al. (2012, 2013) found that boys enjoyed improved personal status from collecting sexy digital images while girls risked damage to their personal reputation.

Ringrose et al. (2013) suggested that it was in this way that sexting set-up gender-specific expectations and risks, both of which complicated teen girls’ sexuality and their online participation. The researchers went on to explain that girls’ online behaviour was strictly monitored by her peers and that any sexual expression, especially overt online sharing of sexy photographs with boys, had strong potential to encourage homogenous labelling (e.g., ‘what a slut’) and group exclusion such as ignoring. In other words, longing to be attractive and desirable was underpinned by other girls’ hostility and jealousy. Ringrose et al. concluded that new technologies enabled a context “where girls [stood] to lose something (namely their sexual reputation)” and where their “bodies [could] be used to devalue and shame” their gender (p. 13).
“Sexting risk thus reproduce[d] moral norms (as cited in Salter and Lee, 2013) about sexual subjects, constructing girls’ sexuality as a particular problem to be surveilled and regulated” (p. 3) through technology. At the same time, they found that boys’ sexting behaviour was not subject to discriminatory attitudes, rather quite the opposite. Across two different studies, Ringrose et al. (2012, 2013) found that boys were less likely to be sanctioned for asking girls to share sexy images while girls were more likely to be reprimanded and surveilled by parents. The researchers also found considerable evidence to suggest that boys were encouraged by their peer group to brag about their sexual activity and their sexting practices.

Other scholars have acknowledged that gendered standards underpinned sexting practices and that girls were more likely than boys to experience problems. Hinduja and Patchin (2012) reported that girls’ digital flirtation had potential to shift face-to-face interactions with boys to more coercive and aggressive demands. Albury et al. (2013) pointed out that typical double standards painted girls as intentionally provocative rather than naturally consensual. Therefore, self-portraits or selfies were almost always viewed in a negative light. On the other hand, boys’ self-portraits were more often understood as “a joke” (Ringrose et al., 2012, p. 21) making their sexting practice more tolerable. Ringrose et al. (2012, 2013) and Albury et al. (2013) both reported that when problems arose, there was an expectation for girls to stay quiet or be judged. The researchers found that many girls claimed they were caught between the need to be wanted and desirable and the problem of being labelled as desperate and slutty.

Although there has been limited empirical work in the field, there has been some evidence to suggest that younger teen girls experienced more difficulty understanding the full implication of sharing sexualised content online. Ringrose et al. (2012) reported that in their study, slightly older teen girls (i.e., aged 14 to 15 years) understood the nuances of sexual pressures better than the younger girls aged 12 to 13 years. The researchers concluded that the younger girls had not been prepared or supported by parents and teachers sufficiently to deal with issues of sexting. The researchers proposed that teen girls experience with sexting highlighted how no one, including the young people themselves, appeared to be prepared for the pressures of sexting. The researchers have called for more intensive investigations around the risks and consequences of sexting for teen girls, especially younger ones.

The literature concerned with sexting was emergent and exploratory at the time. However, three issues appeared to dominate the scholarship. First, sexting practice appeared to be underpinned by perpetuating tensions inherent to gendered expectations for girls’ behaviour. Second, girls appeared to be more at-risk than boys for flow-on problems stemming from sexting practice and third, younger teen girls seemed to be more at-risk for sexting problems than same-age boys and older girls. Research addressing specific sexting trends and long term consequences of sexting
practice has not been undertaken but the recurrent at-risk theme for teen girls was consistent with reports concerned with cyberbullying.

**Concluding Comments**

This chapter has reported on the critical issue of gender and online participation. By centring the discussion on the differences between girls and boys, the general discussion from Chapter One has been extended to take up critical perspectives and significant outcomes for teen girls. The review highlighted how girls and boys online participation differed in a number of ways. These differences drew attention to the influence of discourse on teen girls’ practices and gender-specific risks emerged.

The review pointed to possible areas of tension for teen girls related to parallel but conflicting expectations for social practice and online actions. Notably, understandings of girls’ and boys’ online practice appeared to coincide with dominant notions of femininity and masculinity. A type of gendered participation emerged that suggested girls’ and boys’ online practice was regulated, policed, and reproduced through the subjective parameters of femaleness and maleness. Central to these discussions were the gender-specific risks of cyberbullying and sexting. Young teen girls were marked as most at risk for these particular problems. However, this review also called attention to the ways in which gender-specific expectations added another layer of complexity and regulation to girls’ everyday lives in networked culture. While there was potential for teen girls to be empowered, the risk discourse appeared to revitalise and make explicit dominant views concerned with normative heterosexual behaviour. On the whole, the literature suggested that gendered discourses played a significant role in the everyday experience and online participation of teen girls. Research that has investigated this aspect of teen girls’ online participation was not well-represented in the literature.

The review undertaken in Chapter Two suggested that a study examining teen girls’ online participation with their peers and close friends was timely. As Hadley (2003) wrote, “[g]irls are seldom given credit for their social mastery and rarely find themselves in a context where they can reflect on and use their awareness of their social world in constructive ways” (p. 379). The underlying intent inherent to Hadley’s observation and the literature reviewed here underscored the significance of investigating teen girls’ online participation in networked times. The next chapter discusses the development of the theoretical framework established for examining the online participation and everyday experience of teen girls in networked culture.
Chapter Three
Theoretical Framework

Earlier chapters of the thesis reviewed literature concerned with teen girls’ online participation. Chapter One highlighted cybersafety concerns and demonstrated that a supportive approach to young Australians’ online safety was being undertaken at national and local levels. The review drew attention to young people’s online difficulties and the emergence of at-risk discourses. Empirical studies suggested that younger teen girls aged 12 to 14 years were particularly at-risk of experiencing online difficulties such as cyberbullying and sexting. However, few research studies had focused specifically on young teen girls’ everyday experience in online contexts, especially those experiences with peers and close friends. Chapter Two highlighted the differences between girls’ and boys’ online practices. The review suggested that these differences could, at least in part, be attributed to the subject positions constituted in gendered discourses. The review also implied that teen girls enacted feminine identities or feminine subject positions through and within online interactions with peers and close friends. The complexities of networked culture were identified as central to understanding these particular experiences, yet teen girls’ everyday interactions with peers and close friends were not explicitly accounted for in the literature. Moreover, despite younger teen girls being identified as more likely to experience online difficulties, they were not well represented in this scholarship.

On the whole, the literature reported in Chapters One and Two indicated the need for additional research into teen girls’ everyday online interactions, especially those interactions involving peers and close friends. However, the scholarship did not provide theoretical resources for investigating these interactions. In particular, tools for investigating how girls negotiated and constituted social relationships and identity construction through their online participation with peers and close friends were missing from the literature. This absence was considered significant and, therefore worthy of further investigation.

As outlined in Chapter One, the specific aim of the thesis research was to investigate the ways that teen girls managed and navigated their online experience with peers and close friends. Finding theoretical resources suitable for this type of investigation was considered principal to the thesis study. To achieve this aim, Chapter Three introduces the work of scholars who have examined how day-to-day, face-to-face experiences influence and shape social interaction. The chapter develops a theoretical framework that addresses, in a more specific manner, the research questions outlined in Chapter One. This framework supports suggestions outlined in Chapter
One and Two that teen girls’ online participation is constituted in gendered discourses and that some teen girls experience difficulties engaging in these types of interactions. At the same time, the theoretical ideas introduced help to explore how girls interact socially, and in and through these interactions constitute gendered identities, or different feminine subject positions such as good girls, bad girls, and so forth. The theoretical framework has a micro-sociological focus and draws on ideas from several scholars who have explored various aspects of everyday interaction.

**Everyday Experience**

In Chapter One and Chapter Two, attention was drawn to the ways in which online and offline worlds influence teen girls’ subjective experience of daily life and thereby, their online participation. The effect of dominant discourses on teen girls’ online experiences was highlighted and Butler’s (1988) notion of gender performance was introduced as one explanation for teen girls’ everyday practice. Butler theorised how the constituting “act” (p. 530) of subjective gender experience revealed the ways in which gendered discourses were reproduced through individual practices. She suggested that the self was a publicly regulated and sanctioned fabrication of a set of meanings that already existed, shaped, and influenced social interaction. In other words, the interior self was “irretrievably” (p. 528) conflicted by outside forces. In other words,

> [a]ctors are always already on the stage, within the terms of the performance. Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives. (Butler, 1988, p. 526)

This theorisation of gender performance offers one way of considering teen girls’ online experience. While Butler’s (1988) view is not contested in the thesis, the research problem outlined in Chapter One and Two suggested that teen girls’ online participation was more than a reproduction of socially-defined cybersafety practices and gendered discourses. Moreover, the literature hinted that teen girls were performers with agency, albeit performers whose agency was also constrained by dominant discourses, the limitations of online platforms, and the institutional constraints of home and school. This take on everyday performance implied that a more nuanced theorisation of everyday interaction had the potential to extend understandings of teen girls’ online participation. Goffman’s (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986) theoretical concepts have been offered for this purpose.

The work of Goffman has not gone without criticism. A primary concern has been his almost “painful attention to microscopic meanings, small routine actions”, and “strict ethnographic
rigor in exactly describing such behaviour” (Berger, 1986, p. xii). Gouldner (1970) found some positive features in Goffman’s attention to everyday interactions but was concerned by Goffman’s apparent disinterest in power and hierarchy. Similarly, Psathas (1980) and Schegloff (1988) proposed that Goffman’s attention to the micro dynamics of everyday interaction ignored macro social structures and political implications. The idea that his scholarship ignored social structure was rejected by Goffman (1983). Instead, he argued that social structures or “extrasituational concerns” (p. 11) commanded the ultimate authority in framing the rules of interaction that guided individual doings. He suggested that a nonexclusive linkage, “a loose-coupling” (p. 12), existed “between interactional practices and social structures” (p. 11). For instance, Goffman (1959, 1967, 1986) pointed out that if rules of politeness (recorded in etiquette manuals, school rules, travel guides, and so forth) and rules of conduct (manuals for using technology, procedures for safe use of the internet, and so forth) did not govern interactional moments, a great many more face-to-face encounters would “deteriorate into overt conflict” and human interaction would border on “chaos” (Berger, 1986, p. xv).

The notion that local interactional practices were shaped by larger social rules/structures was not contested by Goffman (1983). However, he argued that, in the situated moment, the critical telling was how the rules of conduct were used by individuals to impress their audience and maintain personal dignity. Moreover, Goffman proposed that the relation between social structures and local interaction patterns was a loose-coupling, so that the former did not determine or rigidly regulate the conduct of day-to-day interactions. By formulating the relationship between social structure and everyday interaction as a loose binary, he highlighted the power of micro-social process to affect change in social practice (e.g., consider Web 2.0 social surveillance), to direct political intervention (e.g., consider device regulation in schools), and to leverage the power of individuals and social groups to disrupt systemic control (e.g. consider teen propaganda-style Facebook pages). Although Goffman’s theorisations emerged in a different time, the relationship between socially-defined practice such as cybersafety protocols, gendered discourses, and teen social interaction in online contexts suggests that his concepts continue to provide useful ideas for thinking about teen girls’ everyday experience in networked times.

Performance as the Manufacture of Experience

The term performance was used by Goffman (1959) to describe everyday interaction. He explained that this type of performance was “all of the activities of an individual that [take] place during a period marked by [her/his] continuous presence before others and which [has] some influence on the observers” (p. 32). According to Goffman (1967), the performer’s goal was to maintain face. He referred to face as “the positive social value a person effectively
claims for [himself/herself]” or “an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes” (p. 5). With the aim to maintain face, the individual “takes on the responsibility of standing guard over the flow of events as they pass before [him/her]” (p. 9). Through a wilful agency to intentionally interfere with or continually guide the outcome of an interaction, individuals employ strategies, assume approved social attributes, and block or deflect unexpected actions.

Critical to Goffman’s (1986) view on performance was the belief that the person “employed manoeuvres, ruses, stratagems, and other ‘moves’ in order to define or manipulate situations to their own advantage” (Berger, 1986, p. xv). He proposed that “intelligent agents have the capacity to gear into the ongoing natural world and exploit its determinacy” (Goffman, 1986, p. 23). His argument links the notion of personal agency to the “ability to do otherwise” (Loyal, 2003, p. 57), that is, freedom of choice. For Goffman (1959, 1986), everyday interaction was not simply the act of reproducing interactions and performances shaped by dominant discourses. Instead, his take on everyday interaction involved actors with agency. In other words, from a Goffmanian perspective, teen girls have a crucial role to play in mediating their own experience.

In Frame Analysis, Goffman (1986) highlighted the relevance or importance of “the workings of the world” (p. 28) on an individual’s performance. In this text, he explained how dominant discourses became part of the lives of ordinary people, and how the belief system or “cosmology” (p. 27) of a social domain provided the wider context for events and the “standards” (p. 22) for social appraisal of individual action. “Whatever an agent seeks to do [he/she] will be continuously conditioned by natural constraints, and that effective doing will require exploitation, not neglect, of this condition” (p. 23). In other words, teen girls are expected to follow rules of conduct that are loosely defined by dominant discourses and cultural norms but, in the moment, their performance intentionally transforms the encounter to manage their “social face” (Goffman, 1967, p. 10). Goffman (1967) described social face as an individual’s “most personal possession”… “the centre of [his/her] security and pleasure” (p. 10), something to be protected at all times. Subsequently, from a Goffman perspective, teen girls can be expected to perform in ways to induce other girls into particular beliefs about what it is that is going on to save face. Goffman (1986) referred to this practice as fabrication.

For Goffman (1986), fabrication was the effort of one or more individuals to regulate, control, or manage an encounter and/or “the ongoing stream of wider social activity” (p. 116) to maintain face. He explained that the performance was not necessarily faked for nefarious reasons but more often to maintain an acceptable self and avoid embarrassment. Goffman (1967) suggested that the “face-work” (p. 12) required for fabrication (i.e., “the actions taken by
a person to make whatever [he/she] is doing consistent with face” [p. 12]) was often underpinned by the expectation that any member of the encounter would go to certain lengths to save the feelings and face of others present. This suggests, for example, that a teen girl would expect her close friends to leave particular facts unstated if the facts either implicitly or explicitly contradicted her positive image to other peers. Put another way, Goffman interpreted social interaction and everyday experience as a performance manufactured by the demands of face. He explained that demands of face were situated in the interactional moment and, therefore, efforts to save face were more likely intentional and individually fabricated at the time rather than explicitly regulated and controlled through dominant discourses.

The concept of fabrication highlights the importance of situated practice in social interaction. Goffman (1986) described the fundamental frame of situated practice as a primary framework. He suggested that the primary framework rendered entities, postulates, and rules of participation into an organised system of understanding. The primary framework provides the setting for the social event. It “allows the user to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences” (p. 21) to guide performance and fabrication. The belief system or the rules of conduct and ritualised practices for interaction are embedded in this framework. The primary framework provides context for social interaction and materialises as the “interaction order” (p. 2). Goffman (1983) offered this concept as a way of describing the orderly but unique or situated unit of interaction that take place during an interactional encounter within a particular framework. He maintained that the primary framework and the interaction order provided useful analytical units of measure for locating the perceptions, routine and ritualised practices, and everyday actions of participants. Goffman described these units as reasonably consistent organisational elements of experience and, therefore, offered them as important investigative measures for getting up-close to and unpacking social interaction (what he described as the manufacture of experience). Goffman’s (1986) concepts of fabrication, primary framework, and the interaction order have been applied to this study as a way of delineating teen girls’ online “doings” (p. 22) into analytic units of situated practice.

The Presentation of Experience

In deploying the metaphorical devices of performance and fabrication, Goffman (1986) drew attention to the individual’s capacity to manufacture social experience in ways that managed and shaped others’ impressions of them. Goffman (1959) suggested that this type of performance required skilful organisation of the primary frame and a personal capacity to effectively acquire, reveal, and conceal information so that the self was presented in the best possible light. He believed that all actors manufactured or fabricated impressions to maintain face. For this reason, everyday interaction was constantly constructed and reconstructed. Even
though some of these interactions followed routines and rituals, there was always the possibility of disruption to these routines and rituals, and through these disruptions, potential for self-embarrassment. The latter being a regrettable deviation from the norm, a situation most likely to dismantle an individual’s social composure. Goffman (1967) suggested that embarrassment (i.e., to appear uncomfortable, uneasy, or flustered in a situation) was “considered evidence of weakness, inferiority, low status, moral guilt, defeat, or other unenviable attributes” (p. 101-102). He argued that being cast into this undesirable position had associated social sanctions (e.g., exclusion) forcing individuals to take up “an actor-recipient character” (p. 49). That is, a character obliged to particular rules of conduct which included obligations, expectations, and constraints concerning personal actions.

The term demeanour was introduced by Goffman (1967) to define how individuals adhered to the rules of conduct to create proper images of themselves for others’ interpretation of their character. He explained that the rules of conduct were organised into codes and rituals “which guarantee[d] that everyone acted appropriately and received [his/her] due” (p. 55). Through adherence to rules of conduct, routines and rituals of frame, and display of popular attributes associated with good character, the individual manufactured an image of a person who acted with “good demeanour” (p. 77).

“[G]ood demeanor is what is required of an actor if [he/she] is to be transformed into someone who can be relied upon to maintain [himself/herself] as an interactant, poised for communication, and to act so that others do not endanger themselves by presenting themselves as interactants to [him/her]. (Goffman, 1967, p. 77)

Good demeanour was associated with attributes such as discretion, sincerity, modesty, sportsmanship, good command of speech and body, control over emotions and appetites, and poise under pressure. A well-demeaned individual closed off avenues of perception that could contaminate or disrupt others’ impressions of their conduct and character. Goffman (1967) explained that an individual who failed to maintain what others saw as appropriate or who refused to cooperate with those who aimed to maintain face for them (e.g., the task of making someone presentable to others against their will) was likely to forfeit a great deal of dignity. In moments of non-compliance, non-compliant individuals created complex feelings in those who were forced to make them “pay the price” (p. 81). Through the presentation of approved attributes, individuals conducted themselves in worthy ways. At the same time, in relation to face, these same attributes acted as fundamental social constraints making “of every [person their] own jailer” (p. 10).

The complex presentation of everyday experience was described by Goffman (1967) as the appropriation and/or manipulation of character, conduct, and demeanour. These concepts
highlighted the importance of rules of conduct, rituals of practice, and claims to socially desirable attributes. Goffman deemed these actions as crucial to the presentation of experience. Attachment to the rules led to constancy and patterning of behaviour that was recognisable. Moreover, involvement in any social exchange had interlocking obligations. In other words, there were normative expectations as to how “deeply and fully” (Goffman, 1986, p. 345) the individual became involved in the exchange. In all cases, there were understood limits and definitions as to what was insufficient involvement and what was too much. In most exchanges, some deviation from the rules was tolerated. However, more often, failure to maintain the rules led to disruption and tension, and at least one person (i.e., ritual maintainer) inevitably took up actions to manage the disruptive effect of the rule breaker (i.e., ritual transgressor) (Goffman, 1967, 1986). The ways in which teen girls take up these practices and constitute their social identity or character through the appropriation and/or manipulation of the rules of conduct and the expression of demeanour has potential to offer valuable insight into their everyday interactions with peers and close friends in networked times. Goffman offered the notion of impression management to explicate these actions into identifiable practices and strategies.

**Impression Management**

The term *impression management* was used by Goffman (1959) to describe the practices, strategies, and actions that individuals deployed, either intentionally or unintentionally, to maintain or disrupt everyday interaction. Although he viewed social interaction as a constant, fluid, and ongoing process of life, one that was fabricated in the very course of interaction (Hancock & Garner, 2011), he also suggested that many actions were common to and recognisable across everyday practice. Goffman (1959) described these possibilities as impression management. He referred to impression management *practice* as the “well designed” (p. 203) gestures and actions appropriate for the encounter. Impression management practices were underpinned by “expressive responsibility” (p. 203). Impression management *strategies* involved defensive actions and gestures that “seriously threatened the polite appearance of consensus” (p. 205). Strategic actions often forced members to suddenly shuffle to save face and, therefore, disruption and difficulty were more likely to emerge.

Table 3.1 summarises an adapted version of Goffman’s (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986) impression management practices and strategies. The *naïve move* has no intended affect although others might perceive it to be something more calculated. For example, a person might yawn inadvertently from fatigue but other individuals at the encounter might take it as a sign of boredom. Because the naïve move has potential to be misunderstood, control practices are often forced to the surface. Control practices are intentional efforts to manage or improve one’s self-image or personal situation. For example, sharing a personal success story (e.g., ‘I got an A+’).
serves as a practice for controlling others’ impressions of one’s self-image. Covering strategies are deliberate efforts to conceal or misrepresent personal situations. Diverting attention away from a particularly embarrassing subject (e.g., by using distracting antics or comical antidotes) strategically creates “covering noise” (1970, p. 16). Uncovering practices involve intentional efforts to uncover the truth when members fabricate or conceal their personal situation or motives (e.g., I don’t remember the story like that. You said something different last time.). Counter uncovering strategies aim to reclaim personal impressions when a cover has “been blown” or “penetrated” (1970, p. 19- 20). For example, “I didn’t say that. You must be thinking of someone else”.

The set of impression management practices and strategies proposed by Goffman (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986) provides a series of conceptual tools for considering how the back and forth social interactions of teen girls shape their everyday experience with peers and close friends in online contexts. More important, the hierarchical categorisation of practices and strategies provides a map for considering critical moments of change, challenge, and difficulty during the girls’ online interactions. As stressed by Goffman (1970), social interaction is a calculated game of expression strategically managed, negotiated, and controlled by the participants. Remembering that impression management takes place within a primary framework of situated practice, the routines and rituals of impression management should assist with highlighting the obligations, expectations, and rules of conduct for the participants’ social interaction. For this reason, these practices and strategies have been presented as conceptual resources for articulating how teen girls perform and constitute their social identity in online contexts.

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice or Strategy</th>
<th>Exemplars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naïve Move</td>
<td>• a neutral move with no intended affect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Practices</td>
<td>• show of discretion, loyalty, integrity, prudence, tact (e.g., “takes the view of observer” [Goffman, 1970, p. 12])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• show of self-control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• strategic output of information, artefacts, &amp; images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covering Strategies</td>
<td>• deliberate acts of deterrence or dissonance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• open criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• accentuated revealment or fabrication (e.g., story-telling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• practice of authentication (e.g., match faked impressions to other parts of story)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• teasing, gossip, secrecy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• obfuscation or “creating-a-scene” (Goffman, 1959, p. 205)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncovering Practices</td>
<td>• interviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• interrogating (e.g., “doping out” [Goffman, 1970, p. 19])</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
polite interaction is given up

- short-term tracking & monitoring
- long-term surveillance (e.g., spying)

| Counter Uncovering Strategies | • protest & maintain innocence
• fabricate more information (e.g., a “spotty alibi” [Goffman, 1970, p. 20])
• bring out the “reserve story” (Goffman, 1970, p. 20)
• tell the truth

| intention efforts to reclaim cover when cover has been blown or penetrated |

Regions and Region Behaviour

The term *region* was used by Goffman (1959) to describe the interactional space that was shaped by social ritual, routine, and rules of conduct (i.e., social boundaries). He explained that regions varied in the degree to which they were bounded but that most had some type of barrier to perception and certain standards for participation. For example, areas in a communal lunchroom might be delineated into several regions if staff members self-segregate into groupings defined by role or position. While the groupings are not segregated by physical barriers, each group is bounded by particular interactional practices and social understandings.

The *front region* was described by Goffman (1959) as the main stage where individuals performed, acted, and expressed the self for others, that is, the audience. This performance defined the situation for others. In other words, individuals intentionally or unintentionally expressed themselves in ways that enabled others to know in advance what to expect and how to behave. On the front stage, impression management practices and strategies were used to maximise appearances and maintain standards. Goffman described this activity as *front stage behaviour*. While all manner of actions and gestures were enacted on the front stage, the primary aim was for the individual to fabricate an approved identity that paralleled the norms or status quo of the group.

Front stage performance was explained by Goffman (1959) as intricately bound to back region behaviour. He described the *back region* as “the place where the performer [could] reliably expect that no member of the audience would intrude” (p. 116). The back region was a place cut-off from observing others, a space where accentuated front stage behaviour was suppressed and the true self emerged, the “act of being legit” (p. 126) no longer needed. Here, front stage behaviour could knowingly be contradicted, “the performer [could] relax, … drop [his/her] front, forgo speaking [his/her] lines, and step out-of-character” (p. 115). The back region was the place for storing and hiding personal props, staging repertoires of possible action, and planning and practicing strategies. Consequently, control of the back region was significant and played an important role in maintaining and managing one’s social identity. Goffman argued that failure to segregate the audience from the back region was “a constant sore spot” (p. 120) in the organisation of impression management. Goffman argued that the self-work needed to
maintain appropriate demeanour in the front region while negotiating the discretionary limits of the back region was a priority if embarrassment was to be avoided.

Front stage and backstage regions highlight important aspects of everyday interaction and situated practice (Goffman, 1959). They are important constructs for analysing how teen girls negotiate front stage audiences and informal backstage regions in online contexts. In networked culture, the art of managing front stage and backstage regions has become more complex. Teen girls need to negotiate multi-layered communication platforms such as Facebook. Each networked service has ongoing and simultaneous front stage and backstage regions. Barriers between social groups have become more porous in these contexts. Front stage regions require greater control and segregation of front stage audiences such as unknown people, family members, peers and close friends. Incapacity to manage the front stage region between groups has potential to leave “the performer in a position of not knowing what character…to project from one moment to the next” (p. 137). In other words, the simultaneous and overlapping nature of Web 2.0 services creates multiple front stage regions which have potential to make impression management difficult. Management problems are more likely because the same audience members may be present across various front stage and backstage regions at the same time. As pointed out by Goffman, “when audience segregation fails and an outsider happens upon the performance that was not meant for [them], difficulties in impression management arise” (p. 139). Performers find themselves torn between multiple social contexts without a guide on what line to follow. Goffman suggested that under these conditions, embarrassment was certain to follow and that such circumstances led to accommodative or defensive behaviour.

While Goffman (1959, 1986) made a number of suggestions on how impressions might be restored by the performer (i.e., how the social identity of the individual and the boundary of the region might be restored), he did not explicitly articulate how the struggles of audience control were managed and negotiated across multiple boundaries and simultaneous fronts such as those found in networked culture. This absence was considered significant. In online contexts, teen girls concurrently perform across many stages and negotiate many boundaries. As pointed out in Chapters One and Two, these conditions can lead to online challenges and difficulties. Exploring how teen girls manage and negotiate social boundaries in online contexts and considering the challenges and difficulties that they face online offer important ways for coming to understand their everyday experience with peers and close friends.

**Social Boundaries**

The boundary scholarship literature defines social boundaries in explicit terms. For example, Akkerman and Bakker (2011) described social boundaries as challenges or sociocultural
differences that led to discontinuity in practice, action, and interaction. For them, a boundary simultaneously suggested sameness and continuity as well as difference and discontinuity. They proposed that social boundaries constituted what counted or didn’t count as central participation in a larger collective system of activity such as a school or a particular domain or social context such as a friendship group. Akkerman and Bakker did not describe social boundaries as firm or recognisable entities but rather as a set of ideas and/or discursive structures that acknowledged certain ways of being while simultaneously marginalising others. In other words, they contended that social boundaries both connected and separated mutually related groups of people or fields of action. Singh et al. (2013) further explained that boundaries conceptualised the different types of knowledge, ways of knowing, different interaction rituals, and the emotional investments and energies attached to each domain or group. They suggested that the boundary which separates also connects and intertwines the people, the knowledges, the rituals, and the emotional investitures of the related fields. In this way, social boundaries become “markers of difference” (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011, p. 135) and markers of similarity that create, maintain, or contest the many different levels of institutionalisation and categorisation that underpin the self-work needed to constitute a social identity.

In Chapter Two, the review highlighted how dominant discourses had generated or constructed social boundaries around feminine and masculine behaviour. These discussions emerged as sociocultural parameters or boundaries that had potential to influence teen girls’ online participation. Moreover, research findings reported in Chapter Two paralleled the notion that subjective positioning and kind-of-girl identities operated in ways that regulated teen girls’ engagement with networked culture. This same literature highlighted how the freedoms and constraints of online platforms and the dominant discourses taught through cybersafety policies and educational practices produced additional parameters around teen girls’ online interaction. How the girls negotiate these boundaries with peers and close friends is important for understanding more about their online participation. Akkerman and Bakker (2011) have described four mechanisms that are useful for considering the girls’ negotiation processes in online contexts. These mechanisms and their corresponding processes are discussed next.

**Boundary Negotiation**

A focused approach to the study of boundary negotiation has been taken up by Akkerman and Bakker (2011). These scholars have concentrated on the boundary crossing practices, actions and interactions of boundary negotiation. They have suggested that social boundaries are not necessarily problematic but instead function as vital points for social learning, personal adaptation, and cultural change. “Boundary crossing should not be seen as a process of moving from initial diversity and multiplicity to homogeneity and unity but rather a process of
establishing continuity in a situation of sociocultural difference” (p. 152). In other words, boundaries are not “only about difference and separation, they are equally about similarity and connection (Singh et al., 2013, p. 109).

According to Akkerman and Bakker (2011), successful boundary negotiation requires four mechanisms, each underpinned by a number of corresponding processes, actions, and practices. Identification is the first mechanism described by Akkerman and Bakker and refers to the exercise of coming to know about the diverse practices of intersecting domains in relation to one another. The mechanism is concerned with “questioning the core identity” (p. 142) of each domain or field of interaction. Questioning the core identity involves recognition of the sociocultural differences (i.e., othering) and similarities (i.e., legitimating coexistence) between domains. Typically identification involves encountering, constructing, and/or reconstructing boundaries around distinct characteristics, qualities, and resources such as roles, responsibilities, attributes, expectations, and so forth. Teen girls’ identification with particular device ownership such as smartphones over non-internet enabled mobile phones represents boundary constructions concerned with resource differences.

Coordination constitutes the second boundary crossing mechanism. Akkerman and Bakker (2011) described coordination as the means and procedures that allow diverse practices and understandings to “cooperate” (p. 143) effectively across boundaries even in the absence of sociocultural similarity. Effective coordination entails efforts to connect and translate communications between different worlds so that boundary crossing is enhanced. One important process of coordination involves the standardisation or routinisation of practices, actions, and interactions. For example, young people’s use of emoticons and abbreviated language demonstrates how standardised practice improves boundary transitions between dissimilar groups of peers.

In addition to identification and coordination, Akkerman and Bakker (2011) suggested that boundary crossing is enhanced through reflection. That is, efforts to realise and explicate differences between practices, actions, and interactions of others that result in new understandings about their own or others’ domains. Reflection takes into account the distinctive perspectives of one’s own domain (i.e., perspective-making) but also interprets the self by thinking or looking through the eyes of another domain (i.e., perspective-taking). Reflection is not merely the reproduction of practices, actions, and identities (i.e., identification) instead; something new or enriching comes from it. Akkerman and Bakker (2011) explained that reflection provides the opportunity to expand personal perspectives and/or to construction of a new identity to inform future practice. For example, when online interactions have dichotomous meanings, boundary transitions are improved when meanings are questioned and other
possibilities are considered (e.g., misunderstandings can happen online so asking questions and finding out more improves transitions).

Transformation is the fourth boundary crossing mechanism described by Akkerman and Bakker (2011). The scholars explained that when tensions, conflicts, and contradictions surface or when discontinuities between domains become difficult to surpass, involved individuals come to question the nature of the intersecting domains. Without profound change, the shared space becomes problematic. Confrontation disrupts the flow of interaction between domains forcing individuals to seriously reconsider current practices, actions, and interactions. If original practices are maintained (i.e., change is resisted), the boundary becomes a barrier to social transformation. For example, blocking a person online reduces the opportunity for conflict resolution. Under these conditions, challenges or difficulties are unlikely to be managed unproblematically. On the other hand, collaboration or “joint work at the boundary” (p. 149) offers the opportunity for negotiation and mutual understanding of perspectives. Talking it out and co-developing new or redesigned practices, actions, or interactions “is required to preserve the productivity of boundary crossing” (p. 149). The scholars did not intend for the mechanisms to be considered in a hierarchical arrangement. However, they did suggest that the explication and visibility of perspectives (i.e., identification and reflection) appeared to be conditional for both coordination and transformation. Boundaries needed to be encountered and contested before continuity and the needs of individuals could be satisfied through cooperative practices, actions, and interactions (e.g. coordination and transformation). Table 3.2 summarises the four mechanisms and the corresponding processes described by Akkerman and Bakker.

Table 3.2
A summary of Akkerman & Bakker’s (2011) four mechanisms and corresponding processes for boundary crossing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Corresponding Processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Identification | - othering  
- legitimating coexistence |
| Coordination | - cooperative connecting  
- efforts of translation  
- standardisation or routinisation of practices, actions, and interactions |
| Reflection   | - perspective-making  
- perspective-taking |
| Transformation | - collaboration & co-development of (new) practices |

The boundary negotiation mechanisms and processes conceptualised by Akkerman and Bakker (2011) offer theoretical resources useful for analysing the online negotiation practices of teen girls. At a general level, the mechanisms draw attention to the ongoing and mutual character of the practices, actions, and interactions that shape the girls’ online context. At a specific level,
the mechanisms of identification and reflection offer a way for considering how teen girls engage with the sociocultural structures that form the intersecting domains of networked culture. The mechanisms of coordination and transformation provide common concepts for understanding how the online practices of the girls are either mutually constructed and passed smoothly across boundaries or contested and transformed. Thinking in terms of the four mechanisms also provides a fine-grained way of analysing the processes that the girls use to manage and negotiate online challenges and difficulties. The association between boundary negotiation processes and boundary regulation is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

**Boundary Regulation**

The concept of boundary regulation has been used before to explain how social boundaries are governed. For example, Singh et al. (2013) have focused on the ways in which social boundaries are regulated or governed between schools and university practice. Their work highlights how social rules, routines, and interaction rituals operate to regulate and control social boundaries. Drawing on the work of Bernstein (1996), the scholars described how the relational process of selecting and moving knowledge from one domain to another is governed by power relations. In the Bernsteinian perspective, power relations refer to the strength of the insulation of the boundary between different domains or contexts. “Strong power relations signal strongly insulated boundaries” (Singh et al., 2013, p. 105) and weak power relations signal weakly insulated boundaries. In the thesis, feminine and masculine practice and clearly differentiated identities for girls (e.g., good girl, bad girl; nice girl, slutty girl, etc.) signal strongly insulated boundaries and strong power relations. Through their actions, practices, and interactions (i.e., by talking about the attributes of peers, friends, and other girls), the girls are constructing social boundaries and doing the boundary work of gendered discourses. That is, they are reproducing the different types of feminine identity positions through their talk. From this perspective, boundary regulation is an internal and external set of specific discourses which work to marginalise, exclude, or silence different groups of girls (Singh, 1995b).

The internal and external structure of boundary regulation has been examined in gender studies undertaken by Singh (1995b). She investigated the computer competence of girls and boys in the primary school classroom. Singh found that strongly insulated boundaries existed between expected practice for girls’ and boys’ computer competency and that these boundaries influenced the ways in which girls and boys negotiated and took up computing in the classroom. In her study, the boys in the classroom were constructed as computer experts. The boys’ expertise positioned the girls as incompetent in the basics of computing. In efforts to appropriate and modify the strong power relations of male computer expertise, the girls attempted to contest the modes of regulation organised by the boys. Singh described the different strategies that the
girls constructed to regulate and cross the strongly insulated boundaries of gendered practice. For example, one girl in her study actively questioned the ways in which the boys’ apparent technological mastery of computers silenced their computer use in the classroom. One girl said, “He (the teacher) uses us as messengers, but he uses the boys for all the hard things” (p. 104). Further into the interview, the same girl says. “…some of the girls don’t understand because he (the teacher) doesn’t let the girls try to understand” (p. 104). In questioning the teacher’s reinforcement of boys’ innate talent with technology, this girl’s vocalisations temporarily shifted her into a position to contest the boundary of naturalised technocratic masculinity.

Another girl suggested that the only way she could succeed in computer classroom activities was to position herself within masculine discourses. That is, adopt technocratic, masculine strategies. Although the girl did not take up these masculine practices, her talk identified how masculine discourses displaced or regulated her power to learn about computers. On the whole, Singh found that the girls “internalise[d] regulatory voices to construct their own representations of the feminine” (p. 108) and, in doing so, constructed regulative and controlling positions to please the teacher and the boys. Singh concluded that the specific texts governing boundary regulation offered a valuable focus for considering the ways in which discourses were produced, transmitted and realised in everyday practice. This detailed analysis demonstrated the theoretical importance of coming to understand how teen girls managed and negotiated their everyday experience and boundary regulation through specific discourses concerned with feminine and masculine practice, action, and interaction.

The aim of this study is to consider how teen girls’ online experiences with peers and close friends are constituted in their social identity, and how they negotiate, regulate, and contest the challenges and difficulties that they experience. The concept of boundary regulation offers a tool for considering these aspects of the research problem, and provides an analytic device for considering how the girls organised, positioned, and sanctioned specific discourses to negotiate their everyday experience with peers and close friends.

In this section of the chapter, concepts concerned with boundary negotiation and regulation have been discussed. In conjunction with Goffman’s scholarship on everyday interaction, these concepts are offered as a way of extending previous theorisations concerned with teen girls’ online participation. This framework encourages an investigation that steps outside traditions of sensational discourses about risk, safety, cyberbullying, and sexting to look more closely at the routine everyday practices of teen girls in online contexts.
Conclusion

Chapter Three has focused on concepts that underpin this study’s theoretical framework. The aim was to relate these ideas to the research problem while addressing the gaps found in the literature. In previous chapters, scholarship emphasised explanations for teen girls’ online practice related to discourses concerned with risky behaviour and gendered participation. However, this literature did not investigate or provide tools for considering how teen girls managed and constituted their social identity through their online participation with peers and close friends. A more intense focus on the everyday interactions of teen girls was deemed appropriate for considering this aspect of the research problem.

Drawing on Goffman’s work (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986), everyday experience emerged as a complex micro-sociological phenomenon. Even though Goffman’s writings emerged well before the advent of online interaction, his interpretation of the demands and efforts to save face offered concepts that provide a way of delineating online actions into measurable units of social interaction. While his focus was on how individual agents performed the business of everyday life, he did not ignore the system of beliefs and customs that underpinned rules of conduct nor did he suggest that everyday experience was an isolated event. Instead, Goffman offered the concept of frame to explain how the rituals and rules of conduct constituted forms of social interaction and fabrications of performance and identity. His notion of region shaped a device for coming to understand the challenges and subsets of interaction that naturally emerge when a number of individuals come together. Using these two concepts, Goffman drew attention to the ways in which various external distinctions determined how interactions were managed within situated practice. He described everyday interaction as performance. In this way, he offered several useful concepts (e.g., rules of conduct, fabrication, demeanour, and impression management) for examining how the day-to-day, face-to-face experiences and online interactions of teen girls influenced and shaped social interaction and constituted social identity. Goffman alluded to the impact of social boundaries on everyday experience but he did not focus on how performers dealt with these restrictions.

The remainder of the chapter reviewed concepts from the boundary scholarship literature. The objective was to source theoretical ideas that explained, in more detail, how teen girls negotiated and regulated social boundaries in online contexts. The boundary crossing mechanisms conceptualised by Akkerman and Bakker (2011) offer four processes (i.e., identification, coordination, reflection and transformation) for analysing how boundaries are socially constructed and negotiated through practices, actions and interaction. These mechanisms provide devices for considering how teen girls engaged with, constructed, and transformed boundaries, especially when challenges and difficulties emerge. Boundary regulation (Singh,
1995b; Singh et al., 2013) focuses on how specific texts and discourses are produced, transmitted, and realised in everyday practice. The ways in which the girls govern and regulate strongly insulated boundaries offers a valuable focus for considering how dominant discourses and identity positions are constructed, produced, transmitted, and realised in teen girls’ everyday interactions and online participation.

The theorisations of everyday interaction by Goffman (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986) and the boundary scholarship literature have provided a set of useful theoretical ideas for bringing together the micro-macro linkages of teen girls’ everyday interactions. Reviews from Chapter One, Two, and Three highlight the interactional work required for online participation, the synergies of contemporary interaction, the regulative discourses of gender, and the subjective positioning of girls in networked culture. The next chapter explains how the data for this study was produced and analysed using these theoretical concepts. It outlines the research methods, explains the data generation processes, and describes the data coding and analysis methods. At the end of Chapter Four, the network designed to systematically analyse the data is described.
Chapter Four
Research Methods

Chapter Four presents the research methods and methodology of the thesis. This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section discusses the research design in relation to the ontological, ethical, and pragmatic constraints of the research. The second section of the chapter describes the research design. The third section describes and justifies the methods employed to generate the data. The fourth section explains how the data was collated and coded. In the fifth section, the analytic network is described. The analytic network explains the analysis process and makes crucial links between the theoretical framework, the research questions, data generation instruments, and levels of analytical and interpretative investigation. The chapter closes with a discussion about the trustworthiness of the data and chapter conclusions.

Researching Online Participation

The primary aim of the research design was to select an approach that would generate reliable and useful data about teen girls’ online participation. A growing body of empirical work concerned with young people’s online experience has emerged in recent years. This research has been undertaken primarily through quantitative methods. Chong and Xie (2011) and Song (2010) suggested that quantitative emphasis in studies concerned with new phenomenon was not unusual. Quantitative methods were frequently deployed in nascent research because the nature of the phenomenon could not be assumed from understandings of existing research. For example, surveys have been used extensively to capture the online practices of young people and to measure the effects and prevalence of cyberbullying and sexting. Findings from a number of these quantitative studies were reported in Chapter Two. While quantitative research studies enable sampling of large populations, concerns have been raised about the reliability of quantitative measures to explore online issues in depth, especially troubles such as cyberbullying and sexting. In addition, the reliability and trustworthiness of surveys, particularly when used with young people, have been questioned given inconsistencies in the reported prevalence of cyberbullying and sexting. Measurement problems have been attributed to definitional inconsistencies, context variables, differences in personal characteristics of participants across studies such as age variations, and anomalies in quantitative research methodologies (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Livingstone & Haddon, 2009; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015; Sourander et al., 2010). In recent literature, Ringrose and Harvey (2015) suggested that quantitative studies were seriously limiting in sexting research because they neglected to explore, in detail, personal experiences and social issues related to gender performance and regulation of femininity in social media. Chong and Xie (2011) suggested that once quantitative
studies began to shape the empirical base of a new phenomenon, more critical ways of expanding explanations and seeking new discoveries were needed.

Of late, research concerned with social networking has taken up a wider array of methodological approaches. Many larger studies (see, for example, Cross et al., 2009, Livingstone et al., 2011, and Madden et al., 2013) have used a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative tools such as online surveys with qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups. Mixed-methods studies have been useful in providing sufficient data to support policy and practice directives for cybersafety recommendations. However, these methods have not captured young people’s online interaction in situ, that is, their actions and practices constituted in everyday interaction. As pointed out by Danby (2009), the organisation of social order and social relations is “co-constructed interactionally turn by turn by the participants” (p. 1597). Danby and Farrell (2004) have suggested that understanding everyday activities in situ begins with a theoretical position that views children and young people as competent interpreters and performers of their own interactions and everyday experience. Recent research by Danby et al. (2013) has focused on how young children (e.g. children younger than six years of age) build and maintain complex and rich worlds through their everyday interaction with others. In examining young children’s everyday family practices with mobile technology through video recordings, Danby et al. have shown that children as young 18-months-old and 3-years-old can make sense of their everyday contexts using the interactional and cultural resources they have on hand. Using Ethnomethodology\(^8\) and Conversation Analysis\(^9\), the researchers’ analysis established how family members engaged and disengaged in talk to manage their individual activities with mobile devices and accomplish interaction with each other. Findings from the study support the notion that children’s encounters and interactions with mobile technologies require investigations that feature concrete examples of what children actually do when they engage with new technologies.

An increasing number of studies concerned with how the internet impacts on the daily lives of children and young people have taken up the sociological approach that childhood is not a “universal experience but one that is constructed within specific times, places, and contexts” (Danby & Farrell, 2004, p. 38). For example, qualitative researchers have combined customary methods such as interviews and focus groups with online visual methodologies (e.g.,

\[\text{Ethnomethodology is an approach that “seeks to describe people’s methods of sense-making as documented by them during their everyday interactions with others” (Davidson, Given, Danby, & Thorpe, 2014, p.77).}\]

\[\text{Conversation Analysis is an analytic method for “explicating the ongoing production of sense-making during interactions …of naturally occurring activity” (Davidson, Given, Danby, & Thorpe, 2014, p.77).}\]
observation of social network pages, digital postings, and image production) as a means of piecing together young people’s networked lives. Ringrose and Harvey (2015) “analysed young people’s gendered performativity through their digital images and texts as well as during discussions of networked life in focus groups and individual interviews” (p. 207). The scholars suggested that drawing data together using various methods allowed the participants to “walk [the researchers] through” (p. 207) their online and mobile phone practice. The research team proposed that combined methods provided insight into the complex rules of feminine identity and online image production that underpinned the practice of sexting.

The thesis study aimed to employ a design, similar to that of Ringrose and Harvey (2015), which ensured a focused and descriptive account of the girls’ interactions in networked culture. In considering how the girls’ online experiences might be documented for this research, three critical questions emerged. First, how do teen girls’ everyday online interactions generate or construct an “order of existence” (Gurwitsch, cited in Goffman, 1986, p. 5) and, as a set of real actions, how can they be measured? Second, how can teen girls’ everyday experiences be ethically and respectfully co-produced for research purposes? And third, how can teen girls be encouraged to participate and share their personal experiences with a researcher who they do not know? The impact of these issues on the research design is considered next.

Co-generating Online Interactions with Teen Girls: A Research Encounter

“The meaningfulness of everyday activity” was described by Goffman (1986) as dependent on “a closed, finite set of rules” (p. 5) situated in, but not confined to, a particular moment of mutually monitored interaction (see, for example, the rules of conduct discussed in Chapter Three). Put another way, Goffman suggested that everyday experience was organised by implicit and explicit routines and rituals. The routines and rituals defined the situation and gave meaning to the event. Individuals arriving at any interactional encounter faced the question, “what is it that’s going on here?” (p. 8). Whether or not this question was asked explicitly or implicitly, the answer was assumed by the way individuals proceed in the event on hand. For example, upon entering a room where a meeting is clearly in progress, an individual might apologise for interrupting the meeting (e.g., ‘I’m sorry, I didn’t know there was a meeting in this room.’) or for being late (e.g., ‘I’m sorry, I’m late, there was a car accident on the way in.’). In either case, the constitutive rules of everyday life necessitate an interaction from the individual and this interaction gives meaning to the event. The individuals in the encounter proceed with the affairs at hand given the exchange and a mutually monitored consensus of the situation evolves. In the case above, the meeting might reconvene with little disruption or the members of the meeting might ask the late-comer questions about the car accident, either of
which directs the next phase of interaction. In other words, the my-response, your-response
order or the successive interactions give meaning to the event.

A “definition of the situation” (Goffman, 1986, p. 1) was almost always found in the actions of
the individuals involved in the encounter which allowed the participants to generate or fabricate
an encounter of a given kind. In this way, each segment of interaction had its own special and
separate style of existence which was attended to as real. Goffman offered this organisation of
experience as the fundamental framework of social interaction. He used the term “frame” (p. 11)
to refer to the basic elements and principles of organisation (i.e., the basic frameworks of
understanding available to make sense of the event) that defined the situation, governed events,
and shaped an individual’s subjective involvement in the encounter. He suggested that isolating
events in a linear manner provided a “strip” or “slice” (p. 10) of ongoing activity (i.e., a moment
of interaction) useful for investigation. Goffman (1986) proposed that most streams of everyday
activity offered a natural division of inquiry into “any raw batch” (p. 10) of interaction or
situational exchange. He suggested that examination of the organisation of the frame (i.e., the
rules, routines and rituals) provided a unit of analysis for researching everyday experience.
Goffman also argued that it was the sequence of happenings constructed by those involved or by
those who had an interest in sustaining the frame that were important for making sense of
everyday interaction and the social world. In any social encounter, no one was outside the frame
of experience. The frame was constructed by the participants, they co-generated the encounter
“in the here-and-now” (Danby, 2009, p. 1597). The definition of the situation emerged through
the interactional efforts of the participants to take up the resources available to them and deploy
them effectively. In other words, the focus was on explicating the routines, rituals and rules of
conduct to manage impressions of others and to fabricate an identity that maintained or saved
face (Goffman, 1959).

Goffman’s (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986) understanding of how social interaction was generated
through the co-construction and active deployment of interactional resources (i.e., constructed in
situ turn by turn of the participants) focused on how people made sense of their everyday world.
As pointed out by Danby (2009), talk in interaction is a prime site for examining the situated
production of everyday life. Goffman (1986) admitted that anecdotal stories “could hardly be
data with less face value” (p. 14). However, he explained that analysing frames of activity
through natural observation or through depictions of “frame fantasies” [p. 15] such as anecdotal
stories or accounts provided a “common fund of familiar experience” (p. 16) that “explicate[d]
understandings of everyday life while sharing the common experiences and structures of
interaction that affect[ed] individuals at any moment of their social lives” (p. 13).
In support of these understandings, the thesis examines the ways in which teen girls account for their practices, actions, and interactions in online contexts. Danby (1997) has suggested that any reference, account, or retelling of an event offers a means for coming to understand what children and young people say and do in social contexts and how they ascribe interactions to others. The girls’ accounts are viewed as a way of hearing their reconstituted version of the routines, rituals and rules of conduct that regulate their everyday interactions and online practice. The girls’ retelling of these events, that is, their accounts and anecdotal stories, has potential to relay their understanding of impression management, identity construction, and boundary negotiation with peers and close friends. Likewise, in the process of collecting the girls’ accounts, the girls and the researcher co-construct, generate, and practise the actions that constitute impression management, fabrication, and boundary negotiation. These interactions have potential to highlight the girls’ active engagement with these practices, actions, and interactions. Moreover, because some of the girls engaged in group activities with other girls, these particular research interactions have potential to reveal how they do impression management in front of other girls. The interactions between the girls, other girls, and the researcher were valued for the ways in which they revealed the complex and rich interactions of young teen girls. While it was understood that researcher/adult initiated and designed activities were not everyday and unfolding (that is, naturalistic activities), the research design constructed a context where the girls were able to interaction with each other to “have a say” about matters of concern to them. The shared partnerships that evolved in the research experience were naturally occurring in that they unfolded in a space where the girls had the freedom to participate or not. Their active involvement demonstrated their willingness to play a role in mediating their own experience. Active participation of young people in research is challenging (discussed in more detail later in this chapter) and, therefore, this outcome was an important consideration in the design of this research.

Goffman (1986) used the term frame analysis to describe the analytic process discussed above. He offered frame analysis as an analytical device for considering the social interactions of everyday actors. While subjective experiences claimed by actors are dependent on many elements not directly observable by participants such as emotions, Goffman (1959, 1967, 1986) argued that it was the way actors organised their interactions that privileged others to their feelings, intentions, and perceptions. Given the difficulty in generating subjective experience, especially those experiences involving interpersonal relationships such as those with close friends, Goffman’s (1986) frame of ordered existence has been offered as a starting-point for considering teen girls interactions in networked times.
Research Protocols for Young Teens

The girls who participated in this study were 13 years of age and, therefore, key ethical considerations and professional standards directed the research process. In Australia, research protocol specifies stringent rules of governance for working with young people under 18 years of age. These guidelines were established to ensure that any research conducted with young people was designed and conducted with ethical care. That is, avoidance of harm, and guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity. Following guidelines set forth by Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (GU-HREC), issues of ethical care and informed consent were addressed and approved (see Appendix B). Appropriate protocols for concerned parties which included principals, parents/carers, and students were developed, approved, and disseminated (see Appendix C). Given that the research study involved listening to events and experiences described by the girls about their own lives, they were invited to be gatekeepers of their own research encounter (Danby & Farrell, 2004) by signing their own consent form for participation (see Appendix C). In keeping with the view that young people are “competent witnesses to their own lives” (Danby & Farrell, 2004, p.44), the girls were provided with several opportunities throughout the research process to re-affirm their decision to participate in the project (e.g., “Remember, we are doing this activity for research, are you still happy to contribute?”).

Safeguarding the girls against risk and harm from problematic after-effects of participation in the study such as teasing, exclusion, or bullying was an important component of the research design. The CABLES risk assessment model developed by Koocher (2002) was considered a useful framework for thinking about and analysing these potential risks. He described six domains of risk. In each domain, he conceptualised harm against two broad categories – “foreseeable risks” (p. 80) and “radiating risks” (p. 83). Koocher described foreseeable risk as the most obvious, likely, or anticipated risk a person could encounter during or after the research. Radiating risk included hazards to the self beyond the research context and/or to family members, friends, or other close acquaintances. As an example, a girl participates in a focus group but misses out on her group presentation, she loses marks (foreseeable risk) and her group gets a lower score (radiating risk). The six domains of the framework are cognitive, affective, biological, legal, economic, and sociocultural risk. Koocher used the acronym CABLES to articulate these six domains. Table 4.1 summarises each strand of the CABLES model.
Table 4.1
A summary of the CABLES model developed for research risk assessment (Koocher, 2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>risk to intellectual functioning, learning, academic achievement, and/or self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>risk of emotional distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological</td>
<td>risk of physical injury or illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>risk of liability due to disclosure of confidential information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>risk of financial and/or lost opportunity costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural</td>
<td>risk of social rejection or stigmatisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A safety net for the participants was an important issue raised by authorising entities, parents/carers, and the research team. Koocher’s (2002) model provided a useful set of conceptual tools for thinking about and designing research processes that established a research safety net for the girls. Each domain of risk was considered in the planning and development of the research design and data generation instruments.

Given that teen girls’ were reported as more public and open in their online participation (see Chapter Two), it was anticipated that some girls might be inclined to overshare personal experiences, discuss intimate relationships, and/or talk about conflicts with friends during data generation. This issue was particularly concerning given the high visibility of the research context so particular attention was given to the affective, biological, and sociocultural domains of risk (Koocher, 2002). To minimise problems of oversharing, these risk-prevention strategies were incorporated into the research design: establishing clear and concise research boundaries, scaffolding research questions, developing support networks, creating safety stations, and establishing a reporting protocol. Table 4.2 describes these strategies.

Table 4.2
Risk-prevention strategies employed for reducing affective, biological, and sociocultural risk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish clear and concise research boundaries.</td>
<td>• role of researcher and participant explicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• participation guidelines and expectations discussed, prompted and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reminded throughout data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• privacy issues discussed and reinforced throughout data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaffold research questions.</td>
<td>• start with descriptive questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• move to indirect and interpretive style questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• scaffolded towards opportunity for personal story-telling in non-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>public format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• no probing questions about sensitive topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• redirection from sensitive topics in public format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop support networks.</td>
<td>• parent and teacher support structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• cybersafety guidelines with website links</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Create safety stations. | • cybersafety resource pack  
• health and wellbeing guidelines with website links |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Establish reporting protocols. | • specific staff members identified as safety support  
• local counselling services identified  
• protocol for reporting harmful or risky student behaviour to administration |

These practices have been recommended by Human Research Ethics Committees and scholars who have worked extensively with young people (see, for example, Heath, Brooks, Cleaver, & Ireland, 2009 and Renzetti & Lee, 1993). Two of these practices appeared to be particularly successful. First, establishing clear and concise research boundaries provided strong guidelines for maintaining the girls’ personal privacy. When the girls were prompted and reminded to preserve personal privacy, (e.g., “remember to chat thoughtfully and be considerate of others … remember, we are talking about the people in the story … remember, don’t use your name or the names of your friends”), conversation slippage was easily managed. In the main, personal stories were kept out of most public conversations and only a few girls used the real name of other participants. The most effective strategy appeared to be the use of scaffolded questions. Scaffolding the questions across the various stages of data generation (discussed later in this chapter) allowed the girls’ accounts to become progressively more elaborate as the research context became increasingly more private. There were no documented problems during or after data generation suggesting that the methodological strategies were successful.

Support networks and safety stations were established from resources and web links sourced from appropriate government agencies such as *Beyond Blue Youth*, *Bullying. No way*, and *cyber(smart:)*. This information was provided to the girls and their parents at research entry points (e.g. introductory seminars, parent letters, and the online survey). Participants and guardians were also notified in writing (see Appendix C) and were regularly prompted about research protocols for reporting harmful or risky behaviour. It was difficult to estimate the benefit of developing and negotiating a support network and safety station for students but this practice provided peace of mind for gatekeepers and the research team.

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10 Any disclosed names have been replaced with pseudonyms.
11 *Beyond Blue Youth* is an Australian website that supports youth struggling with depression and anxiety (http://www.youthbeyondblue.com).
12 *Bullying. No way* is an Australian website that provides support and resources for young people and their schools to help minimise bullying (http://bullyingnoway.gov.au).
13 *cyber(smart:)* is an Australian website that provides support and resources for young people, parents and teachers to help improve cybersafety awareness (http://www.cybersmart.gov.au).
The development and approval of each of these components was lengthy. This activity extended the project timeline by several months. Nevertheless, these strategies met the stringent standards set out by the university research ethics committee, as well as the protocols for undertaking research with students in Queensland schools. These practices appeared to successfully create a safety net for the girls throughout their research participation. Problems or difficulties were not reported. One girl even claimed that the study had actually improved her safety knowledge.

I REALLY ENJOYED doing this and it has taught me a lot about how to handle these situations if they ever happen to me. Thank you :). (J28-C18)

Young Teens Participating in Research

Early recruitment attempts suggested that many Year 8 girls did not want to share their online experiences with an unknown adult and researcher.

The girls became edgy and unsettled, there was a lot of hair twirling and body squirming. Eventually one girl raised her hand and asked, “why do you adults want to know what we do online?” A different girl piped up, “Yah!?” Agreement sounds from other girls. As the group trickled past to collect project information sheets, two of the girls made attempts to prevent others from picking up the paperwork by blocking their pathway to the collection table. (Field Notes 12/11/10)

The challenges of recruiting young people for research have been previously reported (see, for example, Bassett, Beagan, Ristovski-Slijepcevic, & Chapman, 2008 and Nguyen et al., 2012). On the other hand, Sieber (1993) suggested that recruitment challenges could be alleviated by attending to issues of participant trust and research transparency. Using ethnographic-like processes in her work, Sieber found that participant recruitment improved. Her ethnographic-like recruitment methods included informal conversation around meals such as morning tea, small group discussions with staff or parents, and telephone conversations with possible participants and community members. Sieber found that these processes were particularly useful for participant recruitment when several people were involved in the consent process (e.g., young people, parents, and school administration), the topic was significant or sensitive for the participants (e.g., personal experiences previously not shared with an adult), and there was potential for the research to be poorly understood by consenting parties.

14 This data coding method is described in greater detail in this chapter. Abbreviation codes is used as follows: J# = Journal Question and C# = School and Participant.
Given the early indication that recruitment was going to be challenging, a number of Sieber’s (1993) ethnographic-style recruitment methods were used in this study to increase Year 8 girls’ participation. These processes involved:

i) one-to-one discussions with year-level coordinators, school counsellors, deputy principals, and school principals;

ii) a project presentation for Year 8 girls;

iii) a parent information night;

iv) telephone interviews with interested parents; and

v) an information morning tea for staff.

When a few girls agreed to participate, they were asked to encourage friends to join the project. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2003) suggested that this snowball technique was useful when recruitment processes were difficult. In this case, snowball sampling did not increase participation numbers.

Overall, it took six months to encourage 130 Year 8 girls to take part in this study. Recruitment efforts demonstrated that establishing congruence between research motives and participant benefits required high levels of consideration and equal levels of transparency. In the end, efforts to build a trusting and respectful relationship with the participants strengthened their commitment to the project. For example, when technical difficulties interrupted classroom schedules and forced school timeline adjustments, the girls and the schools involved continued to support the project.

**Active Participation**

Undertaking research with young people has been reported as challenging. For example, Bassett et al. (2008) found that teens often considered the research process a “chore” (p. 124) and that this “task-oriented approach” (p. 124) precipitated into patterns of poor communication and one word answers such as ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Danby, Ewing, and Thorpe (2011) highlighted similar concerns when interviewing young children. Through a conversation analysis approach, the researchers examined the talk of a novice researcher interviewing young children. The analysis showed that interview talk with young children could be improved in four ways: (i) developing rapport with the children in a familiar context before the interview; (ii) using an artefact or visual resource to elicit elaborated conversations; (iii) recognising and developing a meaningful partnership between the interviewer and the child (e.g., recognising the child as a competent verbal and nonverbal communicator); and (iv) taking a broad perspective on data collection practices and opportunities (e.g., video-taping in situ talk wherever possible). While video-recording was not an option in the thesis study, other practices recommended by Danby et al.
(2011) underpinned several of the research activities. For example, opportunities to have informal conversations with the girls were arranged prior to the research event, visual resources were used throughout the project to encourage talk, and overlapping and elaborated responses were encouraged.

Participatory research has been offered by Mallan, Singh, and Giardina (2010, 2013) as a way of encouraging young people’s active participation in research. In their study, the researchers adopted “the principles of participatory research to involve high school students in innovative and agential forms of technologically-based research collaboration” (2013, p. 114). One of the fundamental principles that underpinned their research model was maintaining a commitment to shared agency so that the partnership between the researchers and the young people minimised “dominant-subordinate” or “active-passive relationships” (2013, p. 117). Shared agency was encouraged through informal focus groups, reflexive interview spaces, and a dedicated interactive online website that included a discussion forum for participants to respond to and ask questions of their peers and the research team. Each participant was provided with a special participant ID card and a unique username and password to access secure areas of the online space. Mallan et al. reported that the participants liked the idea of membership to the project, some were even informally observed showing off their ID cards to non-participating peers. However, despite the young people’s eagerness to be a member of the project, response rates to the online forum were minimal and other online narrative activities were more productive when administered by a research team member in face-to-face sessions of class time. The research team concluded that the online activities were a paradoxical space that “lure[d] the participants with the promise of belonging, but in reality individuals chose their own particular forms of participation or non-participation” (2013, pp. 118-119). A similar level of interactive online engagement was planned for this project. However, given the findings of Mallan et al. (2010; 2013), virtual moderation and collaboration was incorporated into the online activity to strengthen the girls’ active participation while attempting to attenuate researcher presence (the online activity is discussed in the data generation section of this chapter).

Other strategies for eliciting talk in research activities have been recommended by Barter and Renold (2000), Hazel (1995), and Punch (2002). These scholars suggested a variety of techniques for working with young people that accounted for differences in personal participation style, improved participation confidence, and helped to stimulate conversation about topics not often open to discussion with adults. They believed that certain strategies attended to these characteristics which improved the quantity and the quality of young people’s contribution to research but also made it more enjoyable for the participants. Key strategies described by the scholars included using a variety of data collection settings, incorporating illustrations and other mediums into the research design to visually anchor the activity to young
people’s life experience, and involving the participants in the data generation process. In this study, similar strategies were used to engage the girls. These strategies included variety in data collection method and setting (e.g. computer lab, virtual classroom, online instruments), variety within the data generation tools (e.g. illustrations, video clips, open-ended scenes for story development), and interactive tasks (e.g., texting, drawing, & painting on an interactive whiteboard). These elicitation techniques were incorporated into the research design for two reasons. First, incorporating methods used successfully by other researchers ensured generation of good quality data. Second, the strategies, instruments, devices, and protocols developed in the research method offered a way of improving teen girls’ communication about their online interactions. In other words, the research tools could also serve as devices for encouraging the girls’ reflection about their current online communication and interaction patterns. Table 4.3 describes these strategies and highlights the function of each practice.

The strategies designed for data generation activities appeared to be effective in engaging the girls. However, there were several design challenges. These challenges included ensuring that the strategies were suitable for the girls’ technical skill level, the activities were suitably matched to the girls’ familiarity to the research issue, and the tasks were engaging. Pilot testing data instruments with same-aged non-participants helped to address these concerns but, in particular, it highlighted the need to avoid strategies that undermined the girls’ abilities or patronised their experiences.

The techniques summarised in Table 4.3 appeared to be effective in managing the girls’ diverse interests, tastes, and skills while generating both general and specific instances of their online participation. The flexible yet familiar mediums used throughout data generation appeared to provide the girls with the opportunity to expand on personal responses while allowing them to keep pace with the activities in ways that were relevant to them. Several girls reported that they had fun. The girl’s account below summarises several aspects of The Group Activity that the girls enjoyed.

The headsets were really funny, and chatting into it even though we were in the same room was different but fun as well. The chatting was funny because even though we could talk together in the room, we were choosing to communicate online, something every teenage girl would choose. (J25- C1)

15 Abbreviation codes: J# = Journal Question and C# = School and Participant.
Overall, the strategies appeared to provide an appropriate set of practices for encouraging research contributions in an area subject to privacy concerns. Moreover, the excerpt highlights the importance of choosing a research context that is familiar to young people.

Table 4.3
Summary of strategies used to engage participants (Barter & Renold, 2000; Hazel, 1995; Punch, 2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variety in Setting and Method</td>
<td>• online survey in computer lab&lt;br&gt;• group activity in virtual classroom&lt;br&gt;• online reflective journal in computer lab</td>
<td>• to provide different levels of confidentiality and privacy&lt;br&gt;• to address varying skills and competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations</td>
<td>• Emoticon Illustrations&lt;br&gt;• cartoon scenes</td>
<td>• to capture interest&lt;br&gt;• to expand imagination&lt;br&gt;• to provide visual reassurance for opinions and ideas (i.e., a visual anchor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Vignettes</td>
<td>• video clips with concrete storyline and familiar characters</td>
<td>• to increase confidence and extend opinions&lt;br&gt;• to provide visual reassurance for outlining opinions and ideas&lt;br&gt;• to prompt empathy with characters to extend comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Vignettes</td>
<td>• open-ended scenes for story development</td>
<td>• to apply concepts to another person allowing for consideration of abstract ideas and interpretative thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Tasks</td>
<td>• option to contribute to group activity through texting, writing, drawing, and painting</td>
<td>• to create an icebreaker&lt;br&gt;• to create a relaxed and engaging atmosphere&lt;br&gt;• to maintain interest&lt;br&gt;• to keep research familiar and relevant to them&lt;br&gt;• to use creativity to formulate and expand abstract ideas&lt;br&gt;• to increase group sharing and memory prodding to explore issues more broadly&lt;br&gt;• to warm up for individual accounts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Managing the stringent ethical standards set out by governing organisations, encouraging participation, and developing strategies for participant engagement were labour-intensive tasks. In some ways, the regulatory nature of these activities had potential to interrupt the flow of communication in the research project, a tendency to close down relevant conversations and truncate the girls’ accounts of their everyday practice. With this in mind, every effort was made to create a safe and reasonably private research environment in a school context familiar to all of the girls (i.e., the computer lab). In this space, the girls were noticeably relaxed and willing to share their ideas and personal experiences.
Research Design

The research design had two aims. The first aim was to gather general information about the character of teen girls’ everyday experience with networked culture. For this purpose, an online survey was developed to find out more about the practices and strategies teen girls use in online contexts with peers and close friends. The second aim was to find out more about the ways teen girls negotiated and managed the challenges and difficulties of online participation and how these experiences were integrated into their everyday interaction. For this purpose, an online group activity and online journal were developed. The data generating instruments are discussed in the next section of the chapter. In this section, the research design is described.

The research was designed in two stages. The first stage of the study was undertaken between April and June 2011 and involved dissemination of the online survey. One hundred and thirty Year 8 girls aged 13 years volunteered to participate in Stage One. These girls attended one of four co-educational high schools in southeast Queensland, Australia. Three of these schools were private schools and one was a government school. In Australia, the term private school refers to schools that receive some government funding, largely from federal government sources, but also charge student fees whereas government schools are largely funded by state government sources. In Australia, schooling (P-12) is chiefly the responsibility of state governments. Consequently, it is at the state level that responsibility rests for funding building infrastructure, training/education, registration, employment, and ongoing professional development for teachers, curriculum design and delivery, as well as evaluation/assessment practices. In recent decades, the Australian federal government has become increasingly involved in P-12 schooling, injecting funds into private schools, developing and rolling out national curriculum and testing, promoting national partnership schemes, and developing national standards for teaching quality (Singh, Heimans, & Glasswell, 2014). While the schools participating in this study were located in the same broad geographic place in the state of Queensland, the cultural and socio-economic dynamics of each varied. Table 4.4 summarises the variations between the schools. In the main, the schools had varying levels of cultural diversity but three of the schools (i.e., A, B and D) were high performing academic institutions with an upper middle class demographic. School C had a lower middle class demographic and a stronger trade and vocational learning focus. In all of the schools, mobile phone use had explicit guidelines for at-school use. These protocols suggested that the schools were implementing at least some of the ACMA cybersafety guidelines outlined in Chapter One. The information in this table was compiled from the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority’s
The sociocultural variation between schools was considered a valuable research asset because the online survey aimed to generate a multivoiced interpretive account of teen girls’ online experience (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979). Through this mixed demographic, it was expected that a range of girls’ accounts would be generated. As suggested by Rabinow & Sullivan (1979), “there [would be] no privileged position, no absolute perspective, no final recounting” (p. 6).

Table 4.4
Summary of sociocultural variation between study schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
<th>School C</th>
<th>School D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sector</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Enrolment</td>
<td>Almost 2,000</td>
<td>Over 1,000</td>
<td>Over 1,000</td>
<td>Almost 1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Diversity</td>
<td>LBOTE(^{18}) Over 10%</td>
<td>Under 30%</td>
<td>Under 20%</td>
<td>Over 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Population</td>
<td>Less than 5%</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Less than 5%</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSEA Distribution(^{19}) Top Quarter</td>
<td>Half</td>
<td>More than half</td>
<td>More than one quarter</td>
<td>Less than half</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Focus</td>
<td>Academic, Vocational, Trade, &amp; Performing Arts</td>
<td>Academic &amp; Performing Arts</td>
<td>Academic, Vocational, Trade, Sports, &amp; Performing Arts</td>
<td>Academic &amp; Vocational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-School Destination</td>
<td>University Half</td>
<td>Three quarters</td>
<td>One quarter</td>
<td>Three quarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational Over 10%</td>
<td>Less than 5%</td>
<td>Over 20%</td>
<td>Over 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employment Approximately 30%</td>
<td>Over 10%</td>
<td>Approximately 30%</td>
<td>Less than 10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A date and time for survey dissemination was coordinated with each school. At each location, the girls completed the survey on a school computer through a hyperlink posted on a secure page in the school portal. A technical team and teacher supervisors were provided by each school. A time limit was not set but most girls completed the survey in less than 15 minutes.

\(^{16}\) ACARA is funded by the Australian federal government (http://www.acara.edu.au/default.asp).

\(^{17}\) In Australia, the term private school refers to schools that receive government funding and also charge student fees whereas government schools are largely funded by government sources.

\(^{18}\) LBOTE = Language Background Other than English (This acronym was the policy term used at the time of the study. Recently, this term has been changed to English as an Additional Language/Dialect [EAD/L].)

\(^{19}\) The ICSEA distribution contextualises the background composition of the school’s student community; the scale represents relative disadvantage (bottom quarter) through to relative advantage (top quarter) measured through information provided by parents/carers to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. The standard Australian ICSEA distribution is top quarter = 25%, top middle quarter = 25%, bottom middle quarter = 25%, and bottom quarter = 25% (ACARA, 2013).

\(^{20}\) Any personally-owned communication device (e.g., laptops, smartphones, tablets, and personal organisers).
Stage Two of the study was completed in June 2011. This stage of the study involved two data generation processes - an online group activity and an online journal. Both of these instruments aimed to explore the girls’ online experiences using a more personalised and in-depth approach. The Year 8 girls from School C were selected as participants for this stage of the study. Nineteen girls who had taken part in Stage One agreed to participate in Stage Two. The girls from School C were nominated because their school was the only site with access to ElluminateLive™. The web conferencing platform is discussed in detail in the next section. Unfortunately, it was not possible for the other three schools to access the platform within the time frame of the study.

The school coordinator divided the girls into four groups, three groups of five and one group of four. In the main, the girls were grouped by subject timetabling. This format meant that three groups of girls were from the same home-room class (i.e., pastoral care or tutor class) and, therefore, knew each other reasonably well. The fourth group was comprised of five girls from three different subject streams. These girls were less familiar with each other but were happy to participate in the same group. Each group of girls was scheduled to participate in the activities over a three-week period. This schedule was developed in conjunction with the school coordinator and the on-site technical team. The aim was to minimise disruption to classroom routine and academic commitments. Three of the girls became ill and had to drop out of the project. The remaining 16 girls completed Stage Two.

Data Generation

An online survey, an online group activity, and an online reflective journal were chosen as data generating instruments for this study. These instruments intended to address the unique nature of teen girls as research participants (discussed earlier in this chapter) but also aimed to employ a research method that generated reliable and useful data about teen girls’ online participation. Each instrument was piloted with a small group of non-participating girls 13 years of age. These instruments are described next.

The Survey

The online survey, referred to here as The Survey, was designed and disseminated through the Griffith University survey tool LimeSurvey™. The Survey (see Appendix D) began with 20 Likert-scaled and tick-the-box questions. These questions collected basic demographic information about the girls’ school context, their engagement at school, their access to digital devices at school and at home, and their online practice. In the first four sections of The Survey, each set of questions concluded with a free-text option (e.g., “Your online experiences and strategies may be unique. If so, here’s an opportunity for you to share your ideas with us...”).
In the final section of The Survey, the girls were asked to respond to and interpret specifically-designed Emoticon Illustrations\(^{21}\). The Emoticons were created by an art teacher from a non-participating girls’ high school. The Emoticons were designed with consideration to themes found in popular teen literature (e.g. *Girlfriend* Magazine), subjects brought up in casual conversation with teen girls, and experiences from the artist’s involvement in teaching teen girls. The illustrations aimed to represent a number of social interests and practices typical of girls aged 13 years (see Appendix E). In The Survey, the girls were asked to interpret the illustrations in relation to what they considered to be typical online behaviours of teen girls. In the second part of the question, the girls were asked to select three of the Emoticon Illustrations that they believed represented their own online behaviour and then explain why.

Using Emoticon Illustrations in The Survey had two purposes. First, it was expected that the colourful and contemporary illustrations would help capture the girls’ interest. Second, as an interpretive task, it was expected that the illustrations would prompt the girls to share more details about their online experiences with other teen girls. Both of these ideas appeared to be true because almost all of the girls contributed to these particular questions with at least a few words and more than half of them shared longer accounts. Table 4.5 shares text examples of some of the girls’ accounts in response to these questions. Most of the girls’ accounts were applicable to teen girls in general but close to one quarter of them shared more personal actions and practices. Examples of these types of accounts are summarised in Table 4.6. More than half of the girls provided lengthy responses to the Emoticon questions suggesting that the illustrations helped to initiate and extend their input. Abbreviation codes used in the following tables are: S# = Survey Question and A#, B#, and D# = School and Participant Number.

### Table 4.5
*Summary of girls’ survey accounts concerned with other girls’ online practice.*

| |  
|---|---|
| | 
| | laughs at other people for the stuff that they post (S73i-A4) 
| | uses online services to be annoying or provoke someone into getting angry (S73i-B8) |

\(^{21}\) The illustrations used in this study are more similar to symbols that are now called emoji. Emoji are pictographs (e.g., symbols and signs) used in online contexts to depict actions and events rather than emotions. This term was not being used at the time the illustrations used are described as Emoticon Illustrations.
Table 4.6
Summary of girls’ survey accounts concerned with personal online actions and practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>when I am in a relationship, I post it on Facebook (S73e-A7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always talk about love to my friends (best friends of course) online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(S73e-D1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Group Activity

The web conferencing platform Elluminate Live™ was used to design and host four sessions of an online group activity. This software provided an effective platform for designing and developing a virtual classroom event referred to here as The Group Activity. In the Elluminate Live™ environment, the girls were able to interconnect with each other and myself (i.e., the Researcher) using several synchronised mechanisms. These mechanisms included instant messaging (IM), live chat (LC), feedback tools (e.g., hand raising option, drawing tools, etc.), and an interactive whiteboard. Each of these mechanisms offered the girls a number of options for contributing to and participating in The Group Activity. In addition, the Elluminate Live™ platform had suitable recording and archiving facilities for data generation. Figure 4.1 illustrates the nature of the virtual classroom.

For each session of The Group Activity, the girls were stationed in the school computer lab with their own desktop and corresponding headset with microphone. The school technical team initiated each session so that functionality of the Elluminate Live™ system and the girls’ equipment could be checked. A school staff member and the technician were available for assistance and supervision during each session. Moderation of the activity was undertaken from a separate room. The girls were encouraged to participate independently but given the close proximity of the other girls and the low-level of supervision in the computer lab, sharing inevitably occurred. Sharing was not considered problematic but instead considered important for establishing a relaxed research environment.

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22 Elluminate Live™ has since been acquired by Blackboard Inc.
The girls had unlimited access to the Elluminate Live™ communication mechanisms throughout The Group Activity. This freedom created an environment characterised by highly visible communication practices. From the beginning, the girls showed a strong proclivity towards overlapping and multi-modal styles of interaction. The screenshot in Figure 4.2 highlights the enthusiastic engagement of the girls during one of the online group activities. Attempts to conceptualise the interactivity through still photography has been difficult but the number of overlapping interactions is clearly evident in the screenshot.

The Group Activity was presented in four sections using a PowerPoint slide show (see Appendix F). Each segment was staged to build the girls’ confidence, encourage their interaction, and provide them with opportunity to introduce personal stories and experiences on their own terms. The activities were designed to progress along a continuum from simple straightforward questioning to more complex forms of interpretation and analysis. The four sections of The Group Activity involved a practice session, a discussion about five survey Emoticons, an analysis of two video clips, and discussions about two vignette illustrations.
Figure 4.2. The girls’ interactivity during one of the group sessions.

The PowerPoint presentation began with a project overview and a brief discussion about the rules for participation (see Slides 2 and 3). Once the girls settled into the online environment, the practice session commenced. In the practice session, the girls were introduced to the communication mechanisms (see Slide 4) and then they were asked to respond to a few basic questions about their mobile phones (see Slides 5 and 6). In this segment, the girls were encouraged to answer the questions using all of the Elluminate Live™ communication tools. By the end of the practice session, the girls were able to use the tools with confidence and most had adapted well to the online space.

In the next section of The Group Activity, the girls were asked to view Slides 7 and 8. Each slide contained Emoticon Illustrations from the survey. These particular Emoticons were selected because they represented actions commonly linked to girls’ online participation. For example, the Emoticons on Slide 7 illustrated telling secrets which included gossiping and sneaky behaviour while the Emoticons on Slide 8 were concerned with personal appearance and social performance. The girls were asked to expand on or explain in more detail the online actions represented by these Emoticons. Prompting questions (e.g., what do you think that means?) were needed to encourage and direct discussion.

Section Three of The Group Activity introduced the girls to two video clips. The videos were shortened versions of publically available YouTube clips. The first video clip was 32 seconds long and depicted a kitchen scene where four teen girls met to do their homework. The conversation turns nasty. This video clip is described below and is referred to in the thesis as Video One.
The scene opens with Megan and her friend sitting in the kitchen doing homework. Megan’s mother is preparing food in the background. Two other girls arrive. One of the girls, Jessica, calls out pleasantly, “Hi guys”. The two settle in to do their homework with the others. Within moments, Jessica starts to put Megan down. “Megan? You’re a tramp. Brian Finch told me you guys made out. Everybody knows. He said your breath smells like garbage and he almost puked. He said you’re the most desperate girl he knows … besides your mom. How many boyfriends does she have anyway? Lots? Your make-up makes you look like a clown.” She finishes with a smug look. Megan looks embarrassed. The other girls are silent but have a shocked look on their faces. The camera pans to the mother. She looks confused. The clip ends.

The second video clip was one minute and six seconds long and illustrated how quickly gossip, rumours, and untruths travelled through communication devices such as mobile phones. This video clip is described below and is referred to in the thesis as Video Two.

The scene opens with a teen girl at her school locker. She looks around to see everyone watching her. She moves to other areas of the school and the same thing happens – everyone is watching her, looking at her. The camera speeds up and fast tracks through a number of school scenes where peers are reading text messages on their mobile phone and showing others the message. The final segment slows to a classroom where a mobile phone is read by one student and then shown to the student in the row behind. The girl gasps and then whispers to the student behind her and so forth. More fast scene changes follow which shows more students reading phone messages and sharing information. The clip ends with peers secreting looks at the girl from the opening scene.

A group discussion followed each clip prompted by the leading question - “what do you think was happening in the scene”?

In the last part of The Group Activity, the girls were asked to look at two slides with different illustrations. The first illustration showed a teen girl engaged with several technological devices and social media services (see Slide 11). In the second diagram, the same girl was shown in a sequenced set of actions that involved mobile phone communication between friends (see Slide 12). For each illustration, the participants were asked to create a story or vignette about the girl’s circumstances. Several girls found the interpretative nature of the illustration task difficult. It was necessary to prompt these girls with questions to encourage vignette development (e.g., “What do you see?”, “What does she have in her hand?”, “What does the sign say?”, “Why would she do that?” and so forth).

The last two sections of The Group Activity aimed to provide the girls with the opportunity to comment and describe teen girls’ everyday experiences without making reference to or exposing their own personal experience. Several scholars have supported the use of illustrations and vignettes as a way to elicit stories while maintaining a safe research environment (see, for

The Group Activity appeared to produce a research environment that the girls enjoyed. Fourteen of the 16 girls nominated The Group Activity as their favourite task. Some of these girls enjoyed the session because they could share ideas with friends and ask them for assistance while other girls liked the technology. Abbreviation codes used in the following excerpt are: J# = Journal Question and C# = School and Participant Number.

All my friends were here with me and I felt comfortable (J25-C12)

… if you don’t get something, you just ask, and they’ll tell you (J25-C20)

There was a little chat box that we could all talk to each other in. There was also :) the headphones, they were sooo cooooolllll ;P (J25-C8)

I liked that we could all talk on the microphones and chat to each other, it was really cool! :) (J25-C16)

The Group Activity appeared to be successful in providing the girls with the opportunity to share their opinions and ideas about their online participation. Because moderation was managed from a separate room, a communicative relationship between the girls appeared to emerge. The girls appeared to be confident and relaxed.

The Journal

At the end of The Group Activity, each girl was asked to complete an online journal referred to here as The Journal. The Journal consisted of five online pages. Four of The Journal pages asked the girls questions about the video clips and the illustrations from The Group Activity. Each page listed a set of six questions and concluded with a free-text option. The last page of The Journal asked the girls questions about their participation in the project (e.g., “What did you enjoy most about participating in this research?”). The Journal was developed using the Griffith University survey tool LimeSurvey™ and was accessed through a secure hyperlink located on a private page of the girls’ school portal. The Journal is presented in Appendix G.

The aim of The Journal was to provide the girls with a private setting so that they could explore their own feelings and personal understandings about the group activities without peer input, judgement, or reprisal. Asking the girls to write about their online participation in The Journal rather than in a face-to-face interview was expected to improve their confidence and increase their willingness to share experiences. Nevertheless, when the instrument was pilot-tested with Year 8 girls, several of them had difficulty answering the questions without some assistance.
To overcome this difficulty, a modified version of the Bain, Ballantyne, Mills, and Lester (2002) reflective thinking framework was used to redesign and scaffold The Journal questions. These scholars suggested that reflective writing was advanced by moving through five components or levels of progressive thinking. These levels included: reporting (e.g., describing what happened), responding (e.g., expressing feelings about what happened), relating (e.g., connecting what happened to personal experience), reasoning (e.g., considering why it happened), and reconstructing (e.g., reframing possibilities for what happened). To simplify The Journal task for the girls, each journal task prompted the girls’ to respond using six question stems. The question stems were:

i) Describe in detail …
ii) How did you feel about …
iii) What experiences have you had that helped you to …
iv) What do you think is the key issue …
v) What do you think should happen if …
vi) Do you have anything else to say about …

The scaffolded questions seemed to sustain the girls’ focus on the task. This strategy also helped to promote a smooth transition from simple description to more carefully reasoned journal entries. A small number of girls asked for reminders about content from The Group Activity but no girls required clarification about the significance or meaning of the questions. Overall, the quantity and quality of the girls’ interactions indicated that this format provided the participants with a safe space for sharing their beliefs and personal experience about teen girls’ online participation.

The Journal appeared to support attention to privacy and safety while simultaneously providing a space for the girls’ to write about their personal experience. More direct methods of data collection such as face-to-face interviewing have potential to silence young people’s voice (Bassett et al., 2008). In contrast, The Journal generated a vibrant set of personal interpretations from the girls’ about their everyday experiences. Figure 4.3 summaries the data generation processes used in this study.
Interesting Moments and Difficulties

The Survey produced a large corpus of useable data but some interesting moments and difficulties arose that did not occur during the pilot session. The first situation involved unusual response patterns to some Emoticon Illustrations. Using stimulus materials such as the Emoticon Illustrations to elicit and encourage interaction from young participants’ was not a new idea. The work of Hazel (1995) and Punch (2002) supported this technique. Hazel suggested that the presentation of pictures provides younger participants with a “visual anchor” (p. 3) that allows them to construct stories or describe experiences with more confidence. Largely, the girls’ responsiveness appeared to support this notion. However, presenting illustrations in the online survey had one distinct disadvantage. The girls could not ask questions to clarify the meanings associated with each illustration. Interesting accounts in The Survey to Question 73 suggested that some misinterpretation of the illustrations had occurred. Table 4.7 summarises these accounts. Abbreviation codes used in the following tables are: S# = Survey Question and A#, B#, C#, and D# = School and Participant Number.
The first Emoticon in Table 4.7 signified being silly. However, close to one quarter of the girls associated this illustration with the elderly and the aging process (e.g., “Oh no! I’m growing gray hair!” [S73h-A29]). Close to one third of the girls from School A associated the teasing Emoticon with unique qualities such as throwing up and dying hair purple. Particularly distinctive accounts were “grape-giver” (S73i-A12, A19, and A20) and hitting someone with a “weird/pink berry” (S73i-A30 and A31).

Possible explanations for these accounts are offered. First, there may have been a difference between the adults’ view of what the Emoticons illustrated and the girls’ view of what the Emoticons illustrated. In other words, the adults and the girls may have associated different meanings to the emotions illustrated. This empirical example highlights how young people who live in worlds primarily designed and constructed by adults, bring their own meanings and interpretations to events as well as the possibilities for creative action and personal agency (Goffman, 1959, 1967, 1970, 1986). Second, during The Survey some girls may have been sharing their ideas with other participants and in-group definitions for the emotions may have been constructed. On the whole, sharing and confirming ideas with each other was not considered overly problematic but rather typical given the low-level supervisory conditions of The Survey. Misunderstanding the intent of the illustration was somewhat concerning, but Arnett (2005) and Way (2005) pointed out that unexpected or spirited response patterns can be a research blessing. In this case, these unexpected interpretations produced robust data that seemed representative of teen girls’ everyday interactions. The responses illustrated that in-group construction around the meanings of the Emoticons offered insight into the ways that language and symbols are used by teen girls. Unlike signs and symbols used for public safety (e.g., go, stop, poisonous, and so forth), Emoticons are about capturing emotions which are more fleeting, shifting, and changing. The context-specific meanings attached to the illustrations showed that, as yet, signs and symbols used to express emotions online do not have universal meaning. On the other hand, the girls’ engagement with the Emoticons produced a vitality that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emoticon Illustration</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Account</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                       | Being Silly | • Oh no! I’m growing gray hair (S73h-A29)  
|                       |           | • No, my grandparents are coming over (S73h-A20)  
|                       |           | • Grandparents are here, can’t talk sorry (S73h-B13)  
|                       |           | • Crazy old people (S73h-C13)  
|                       |           | • Having to visit grandma (S73h-D5)  |
|                       | Teasing   | • I’m dying your hair purple (S73i-A26)  
|                       |           | • Grape-giver (S73i-A12)  
|                       |           | • Just mopping your head (S73i-A17)  
|                       |           | • Some guy hit me with a weird berry today (S73i-A30)  |
revealed something about the character and interaction of teen girls themselves. It was concluded that the Emoticons offered a way of connecting with the symbols and signs used by teen girls and this likely improved the quantity and the quality of the data corpus. As pointed out by Way (2005), “an openness to the unexpected…cannot be maintained if one listens only for what is expected …” (p. 534). Providing definitions of illustrations used in surveys might prove to be useful for particular types of research.

A second situation arose that created some difficulty. On three of the four planned dissemination dates, technical problems arose. In one instance, an unscheduled upgrade to the survey software disrupted data accumulation and storage. In the second case, the fibre optic cable to the University infrastructure was accidently cut by construction workers so the survey tool was not accessible, and, on the third occasion, the survey hyperlink failed for unknown reasons.

In the first case, data retrieval was managed but this task took several weeks. In the two other instances, survey dissemination was rescheduled but the job of reorganising time and space placed additional demands on the school coordinators. This process required some ‘smooth talking’. Although the problems were resolved, technical interruptions and connectivity problems need to be considered when planning online survey dissemination, especially in school settings as schools are busy places. Therefore, the organisation and technical aspects of survey dissemination need to run smoothly. Appropriate plans should be put in place such as providing a paper-based survey option to minimise issues related to connectivity and technical problems with software platforms.

The survey generated important data about the girls’ online practice but the planning and dissemination processes were laborious. In particular, the technical difficulties interrupted the research flow and extended timelines by several months. On the other hand, the survey produced a rich set of data. The structure provided the girls with the opportunity to participate on their own terms, either through general tick-the-box questions or by sharing their own personal experiences in free-text options. Even though most participants chose to share their ideas through general accounts about “other girls” (e.g., “most girls …”) rather than from their own experience (e.g., “I usually …”), the majority of the girls contributed through to the end of the survey. In the main, the instrument appeared to be sensitive to the research needs of these young people. A set of data was generated about teen girls’ daily experience with online participation. Such data is not often accessible or visible to adults.

The Group Activity was not without some challenging moments. The girls’ enthusiastic and free flowing communication was difficult to control from the remote computer platform. In two
sessions, the girls became very loud and overly boisterous. It was necessary for the supervising staff to enter the computer room and resettle the girls. Following these interruptions, the girls were encouraged to continue their participation in a manner appropriate to the school environment and the research context. The girls quickly re-engaged in The Group Activity. Other interruptions occurred such as the school bell, messages over the public announcement system, other students trying to access the computer lab (e.g., knocking on the windows and rattling the door handle), and an unscheduled tutorial group sharing the computer lab. Most of these issues appeared to be relatively normal school interruptions so most of the girls were not bothered. However, the appearance of an unhappy teacher during one session created a reasonable amount of distraction and some interesting interactions were captured (see discussion in Chapter Seven). These interruptions were not experienced during pilot testing but it was clear that unique research conditions such as this virtual classroom require careful planning. Five recommendations for research in a virtual classroom include:

i) notify all school staff of research dates and times;
ii) prompt and remind staff and non-participating students that the computer lab will be unavailable;
iii) in a highly visible place in the computer lab, post the date and time of the event;
iv) on the day, place a notification on the door of the research area; and
v) request a thorough cross-check of class timetabling and other school events.

The Group Activity was well-serviced in the Elluminate Live™ platform. It was a reliable software platform and system breakdowns and connection drop-outs were not experienced. Nevertheless, there were connection difficulties between the moderating computer and the computer lab in two of the sessions. These difficulties were associated with local power troubles and resulted in loss of communication (e.g., audio transmission) between the girls and the Researcher. Elluminate Live™ itself was unaffected and the system continued to archive the girls’ interactions. The girls were aware of the connection difficulties but continued to engage in lively conversation. The extent to which the communication drop-out influenced the girls input cannot be estimated but their conversation did veer off to some interesting topics. The excerpt below highlights one such moment. In this segment, the girls from Group Activity Four were discussing Slide 8 of the activity when the Researcher’s connection dropped out. The conversation moves to an off-topic discussion. Abbreviation codes used in the following excerpt are: G1, G2, and G4 = Girl One, Girl Two, and Girl Four and LC = Live Chat.

G2-LC: That looks like my Mum.
   (laughter)
G1-LC: That looks like my Mum!
   (laughter)
G2-LC: That looks like my Mum!
Working in the virtual classroom was not straightforward. Amongst other things, the researcher’s role often shifted between the asymmetrical and overseeing position of adult to a participating player to an overhearing non-participating audience member (Danby, 1997). The girls moved and shifted between various positions as well. Creating and maintaining this research environment was labour-intensive and inordinately messy. However, the aim was to create a balance between engaging young people in discussion about personal experiences and generating good quality data relevant to the research problem under investigation. An intriguing set of data emerged and most of the girls agreed it was “really cool and fun” (J25-C11). More important, the girls had a unique opportunity to share their views and personal understandings about their online participation with an interested adult. “Thank you Roberta for the chance to have my say xx” (J28-C11).

Collating and Coding Data

Several complex sets of data were generated throughout the research process. For interpretative purposes, these sets were consolidated into two main groups: frequency/prevalence themes that included how many or how often, and analytic themes which included actions, practices, and strategies (Saldana, 2009). Frequency themes were drawn mainly from The Survey. These themes were comprised of categorical and ordinal questions (e.g. “pick the strategy that you use”) and word counts of free-text accounts (e.g., how many times a word or phrase appears in data sets). The analytical themes were drawn from the categorical and ordinal questions of The Survey, Instant Messaging and Live Chat in The Group Activity, and free-text accounts in The Journal. The themes that emerged reflected the scholarship reviewed in Chapters One, Two, and Three were quantitatively compared across the data corpus to avoid random selectivity (Saldana, 2009). These data were selected and used in the analysis to highlight the important attributes of teen girls’ everyday interactions (Goffman, 1967). Table 4.8 provides a summary of these data collation methods.

Table 4.8
A summary of data collation methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency Themes</th>
<th>Analytic Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Categorical and ordinal data from The Survey (e.g. how many girls own a mobile)</td>
<td>• Categorical and ordinal data from The Survey (e.g., which safety practices do you use?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Free-text accounts from The Survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequency themes are reported in non-percentile or non-algebraic equivalents. For example, rather than claiming that 91% of the girls owned a mobile phone, this figure was converted to *almost all of the girls*. Table 4.9 summarises the non-algebraic terms used for reporting the frequency themes and prevalence values of the girls’ accounts. This practice was purposefully implemented to minimise over-conflation and generalisation of the analyses to teen girls outside the study. This approach ensured that all of the girls in this small scale research were recognised as significant contributors to the study (Denscombe, 2010). Analytic themes are reported using the theoretical language introduced in Chapters One, Two, and Three (e.g., cybersafety policy discourse, gender discourse, subjective positioning, boundary crossing practice, Goffman interactional concepts, and so forth).

Table 4.9
A summary of non-algebraic terms used to report frequency and prevalence values of the girls’ accounts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical Value (e.g., approximate number of girls)</th>
<th>Non-Algebraic Prevalence Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>• a few girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>• a small number of girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• several girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>• less than one quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>• more than one quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• close to one third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• about one third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>• close to half</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• over half</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>• close to two-thirds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• many of the girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>• more than three quarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a large number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>• almost all of the girls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the data were organised into groupings, each contribution was coded by data source and participant number. The codes were developed to assist with data validation, to reduce cross-
reporting, and to improve in-text identification (Saldana, 2009). The codes for each data source are described in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10
A summary of data identification codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Code &amp; Exemplar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey</td>
<td>• The Survey (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Question number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School code (A-D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Participant number (e.g., S75-D12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Group Activity</td>
<td>• The Group Activity (GA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Session number (1-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Girl number (G 1-6) or Researcher (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mechanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Instant Messaging (IM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Live Chat (LC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interactive Whiteboard (IWB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e.g. GA4, G3-LC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Reflective Journal</td>
<td>• The Journal (J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Question number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School code (A-D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Participant number (e.g., J28-C18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Coding Interactional Episodes**

The girls’ free-flowing and overlapping interactions in The Group Activity were the most difficult to manage and organise for analysis. The complexity of the data is highlighted in the field notes below. These field notes were taken during two different sessions of The Group Activity. In each excerpt, the girls have just finished their training session in the ElluminateLive™ platform.

During this noisy exchange, two of the girls sideline their conversation, they are giggling and chatting but what they are saying is not clear. (Field Notes 25/05/2011)

At this point, all of the girls are talking without their microphone and some girls are typing messages into the chat box. There are several seconds of verbal exchange between these girls. The conversation is overlapping and hard to understand but it is clear that a few girls are attempting to correct one girl’s spelling mistakes. (Field Notes 15/06/2011)

Fortunately, the Elluminate Live™ recording and archiving features provided time-stamped video, audio, and text files for each session. Once the audio files were transcribed, the three sets of data were combined to create a sequenced interactional timeline for each session. The timeline for each group was developed by manually linking interactional events (e.g., entry points of talk or interactive work on the whiteboard) in a flow chart (see Appendix H).
The end result was a concise map of the girls’ interactivity within each group session. These strips of interactivity (Goffman, 1958, 1967, 1986) required an analytical method that captured the structures and processes of the girls’ interactional moments. Goffman’s (1986) interaction order described in Chapter Three was taken as a suitable unit of analytical measure for this purpose. By anchoring the start and finish of important interactional segments of The Group Activity, individual comments, unique artwork, and other interesting accounts became more meaningful (Goffman, 1986). That is, stand-alone accounts and interactions were more analytically significant when fixed within the unit of the interaction order. The segment below is an example of an interactional episode from Group Activity One marked by a start and finish anchor. The girls are discussing the kitchen scene in Video One. The interactional episode starts with the researcher’s question and finishes with the off-topic question by another girl in the group. While the question by Girl 2 may have been part of her complex interactional work to shift attention away from Girl 1’s story (i.e., take the pressure off Girl 1 to answer the researcher’s question), the segment was interrupted by technical issues and was not resumed. In other words, the interactional moment closed and a new topic was raised. Abbreviation codes used in the following excerpt are: R = Researcher, G1 and G2 = Girl One and Girl Two, and LC = Live Chat.

**R-LC: Does anyone have an example they can think of that might be similar?**
**G1-LC: Oh yeah, I have a personal story**
**R-LC: Oh, okay.**
**(Girls giggle.)**
**G1-LC: Wellll, uummm**
**R-LC: Did it turn out okay?**
**G1-LC: No … errr … yeah … sort of**
**R-LC: Sort of?**
**G1-LC: Some people started saying that I’m mean and stuff and then it turned into a bigger lie**
**R-LC: So, how did you handle that?**
**G1-LC: Uuummmm I don’t remember … I think I just told people that it is not true**
**G2-LC: Excuse me?**
**R-LC: Yes?**
**G2-LC: Is it supposed to have like all the screens going through?**

**The Analytical Network**

Chapter Three described the theoretical framework. Conceptual ideas from the work of Goffman (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986), Akkerman and Bakker (2011), and Singh et al. (2013) were offered as a set of tools and a language for unpacking the complexity of teen girls’ online practice. At the beginning of this chapter, attention was drawn to the methodological challenges that paralleled this research. Goffman’s (1986) notion of situated reality (i.e., frame analysis) was offered as a way of coming to think about teen girls’ online experience as “an order of
existence” (Gurwitsch cited in Goffman, 1986, p. 5). In line with Goffman’s view (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986), the research was designed to generate slices or strips of teen girls’ ongoing interaction and their anecdotal accounts about their everyday experiences with peers and close friends in networked times.

This section of chapter describes how data generated through The Survey, The Group Activity, and The Journal were analysed in relation to the theoretical framework reviewed above. This process involved the development of an analytic network. The _analytic network_ was designed as a mapping tool for connecting the internal theoretical constructs discussed in Chapters One, Two, and Three to the research problem described, the questions posed in Chapter One, and the data generated for the research study as reported in this chapter. The analytic network was developed by drawing on the scholarship of Asvoll (2014). Asvoll used the acronym A-D-I to connect the reflexive relationship in interpretative research between abductive ideas (A), deductive thinking (D), and emergent inferences (I). He loosely described abduction as the “detective mode” (p. 291) of research, a phase where the researcher attempted to sort out the facts from little or unknown details, ideas, and assumptions about a phenomenon. He referred to deduction as locating the probable, applicable, and recognisable consequences of abductive explanations to a logical, valid or self-evident proposition, premise, hypothesis, or theory (e.g., if $x$ is happening then $y$ must be the case). Asvoll went on to explain that inductive processes were modes of inference that allowed for abductive ideas and deductive theories to be rejected or confirmed by a phenomenon’s empirical facts. The particulars of the analytic network are discussed next.

**Mapping the Analytic Network**

The analytic network is depicted in Table 4.11. This table illustrates the internal relationship and coherency between the concepts and theoretical framework discussed in Chapters One, Two, and Three, the research problem that was identified and the questions asked in Chapter One, data generation (i.e., The Survey, The Group Activity, and The Journal), and the analytical devices and theoretical resources central to the study. The dialogical nature of Asvoll’s (2014) notion of interpretative research was considered consistent with this analytic network.

In Table 4.11, the first column identifies the theoretical tenets of the thesis. These constructs include: online participation as an everyday experience of networked culture, self as a performing agent in networked culture, and boundary negotiation and regulation as everyday practices in networked culture. The absence of empirical reporting on these three aspects of teen girls’ online participation identified them as significant components for research.
The second column in Table 4.11 replicates the research questions outlined in Chapter One. These questions are: What practices and strategies do teen girls use in online contexts to navigate their everyday experience with peers and close friends?; How are teen girls' online experiences integrated into their everyday interactions with peers and close friends, and how do these interactions constitute their social identity?; and How do they manage and negotiate challenges and difficulties that arise? The third column identifies the instruments used to generate the data for each theoretical construct and research question.

The fourth column in the table summarises the analytic devices (i.e., the questions) developed to collate data into first level codes or units of analysis. These devices were designed to categorise and organise the data corpus into thematic units appropriate for analytic investigation. Saldana (2009) suggested that first level coding systems facilitated the organisation of large sets of data into subcategories or extracts for easier interpretation. In this case, the first level coding method was designed to identify important themes, conditions, interactions, practices and strategies related to teen girls’ online practice with peers and close friends. According to Saldana, the “bottom line” criterion (p. 51) for first level coding was whether or not the coding method allowed the researcher to make new discoveries, add insights, and make connections about the phenomenon under investigation. With this in mind, the analytic devices used for first level coding were developed by considering what was mentioned in the literature, what was not fully explained in the literature, and what was missing from empirical reporting concerned with teen girls’ online practice. For example, in Chapter One cybersafety recommendations were described in detail and young people’s engagement with these guidelines noted. At the same time, empirical reports about young people’s online practice had not explained how teen girls aligned these practices to their everyday interactions with peers and close friends. This absence prompted three questions: What online practices and strategies do the girls use in their everyday interactions with peers and close friends? How do these practices align to cybersafety recommendations? How do these practices differ from cybersafety recommendations? These questions became analytic devices for first level analysis. As part of the abductive work of the A-D-I approach, the thematic units that emerged from this first stage of analysis were converted into preliminary abductive assumptions about teen girls’ online practice. These units were reorganised into smaller more select themes and concepts through second level analysis.
Table 4.11
Summary of the analytic network.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Construct</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Generation</th>
<th>First Level Analytic Devices</th>
<th>Second Level Analytic Devices</th>
<th>Theoretical Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Participation as an Everyday Experience of Networked Culture</td>
<td>What practices and strategies do teen girls use in online contexts to navigate their everyday experience with peers and close friends?</td>
<td>The Survey i) tick-the-box ii) free-text The Group Activity The Journal</td>
<td>1. How do the girls describe their online participation? 2. What practices and strategies they use in online contexts? 3. How do these practices align to cybersafety recommendations? 4. How do these practices differ from cybersafety recommendations?</td>
<td>What did the girls say about: i) the rules and regulations for cybersafety? ii) online privacy and privacy settings? iii) their own online practice? iv) other girls’ online practice? v) the demands of online participation? vi) the differences between online and offline practice? vii) the significance of their relationship with others in online contexts?</td>
<td>Cybersafety Discourse At-Risk Discourse Policy Discourse Social Identity Everyday Performance Rules of Conduct Routines and Rituals Fabrication Networked Culture Regions and Region Behaviour Social Boundaries (Negotiation and Regulation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Performance in Networked Culture</td>
<td>How are teen girls’ online experiences integrated into their everyday interactions with peers and close friends, and how do these interactions constitute their social identity?</td>
<td>The Survey i) free-text The Group Activity The Journal</td>
<td>1. What practices and strategies do the girls use to manage, negotiate, and perform their social identity in everyday interactions with peers and close friends? 2. How is their performance of social identity enacted in online contexts? 3. What cultural resources (i.e., rules, rituals, and routines) do they use to manage and shape their social identity in networked culture?</td>
<td>What did the girls say about: i) the importance of managing their social identity in online contexts? ii) the capacity of teen girls to manage their social identity? iii) their impression management practices and strategies?</td>
<td>Impression Management Practice Rules of Conduct Routines and Rituals Fabrication Social Identity Demeanour Fabrication Regions and Region Behaviour Gendered Performance (Different Types of Femininity) Social Boundaries (Negotiation and Regulation) Rules of Conduct Routines and Rituals Regions and Region Behaviour Social Boundaries (Negotiation and Regulation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary Negotiation and Regulation in Networked Culture</td>
<td>The Survey</td>
<td>The Journal</td>
<td>The Survey</td>
<td>The Journal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What challenges and difficulties do they experience, and how do they manage and negotiate these situations?</td>
<td>i) free-text</td>
<td>The Group Activity</td>
<td>1. How do the girls describe their online negotiations?</td>
<td>How did the girls describe, differentiate, and categorise:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Journal</td>
<td></td>
<td>i) unknown people?</td>
<td>i) unknown people?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ii) adults/parents??</td>
<td>ii) adults/parents??</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>iii) different groups of girls?</td>
<td>iii) different groups of girls?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>i) what makes them comfortable or uncomfortable in online contexts?</td>
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<td>v) the ways that they negotiated challenges and difficulties that were negotiated?</td>
<td>v) the ways that they negotiated challenges and difficulties that were negotiated?</td>
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Cybersafety and Policy Discourse
- Rules of Conduct
- Attributes
- Gendered Performance (Different Types of Femininity)
- Social Identity

Primary Frameworks
- Social Boundaries (Negotiation and Regulation)
- Regions and Region Behaviour
- Rules of Conduct
- Rituals and Routines
- Gendered Performance (Different Types of Femininity)
- Social Identity
In Table 4.11, the fifth column lists second level analytic devices. These questions were used for a more focused investigation of the thematic units that emerged from the first level of analysis. The aim of this second level of analysis was to re-interpret first level thematic units through specific devices constructed from the concepts and theoretical framework (e.g., dominant discourses; performance, rules of conduct; social boundaries, power and control relations, subject positioning, etc.) reviewed earlier in the thesis. For this purpose, data was drawn from free-text options of The Survey, text and chat messages from The Group Activity, and open-ended questions from The Journal. The aim was to prioritise and honour the girls’ voice through their actual words and actions. Saldana (2009) referred to this practice as “in vivo coding” (p. 74). He suggested that this coding method was particularly useful for research with children and young people because their actual words enhanced and deepen adult understandings of their experiences, cultures and views. Throughout the thesis, where the girls’ actual words or text accounts have been used to describe or support research interpretations, the passage has been placed in quotation marks or indented in direct quote format (except in Table 4.12 where thematic units have been italicised for emphasis). Once second level analytic units were extracted from the data corpus, they were synthesised into inferential statements, ideas, and relationships. The relationship between these statements and the concepts and the theoretical framework were analysed using the interpretative approach described by Asvoll (2014). In other words, the inferential statements, ideas, and relationships were interpreted in tandem with the abductive and deductive ideas and propositions drawn from Chapters One, Two, and Three. This interpretative strategy forced an ongoing somewhat cyclic process of looking and re-looking, considering and re-considering the thesis inferences against what was known and not know about teen girls’ online practice. By underpinning the analytic approach with Asvoll’s (2014) A-D-I strategy, the analytic network shaped a large corpus of data into inductive ideas and relationships concerned with teen girls’ online participation with peers and close friends in networked culture. The results from this process are reported in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. Chapter Eight discusses the interrelationship between the analyses and the research problem. An example of the analytic process is described next.

**Teen Girls’ Online Privacy Setting Practice: An Example**

Table 4.12 summarises an example of the how the analytic network was used to interpret the data concerned with the girls’ online privacy setting practice. This unit of analysis was prompted by the research question, what practices and strategies do teen girls use in online contexts to navigate their everyday experience with peers and close friends? As a first level device, the investigation was narrowed down by asking the more specific question, how do these girls practice cybersafety?
The girls’ accounts concerned with their cybersafety practice were extracted from The Survey (tick-the-box and free-text questions). At a later stage, accounts and interactions from The Group Activity and The Journal were analysed in the same manner described below. However, for clarity, the example is limited to analysis of the data from The Survey. The first step involved compiling a frequency summary of the girls’ reported cybersafety practices (see Figure 5.5). These values were drawn from tick-the-box questions in Section Three of The Survey.

Table 4.12
An example of how the analytic network was used to analyse the girls’ contribution from The Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Construct</th>
<th>Online Participation as an Everyday Experience of Networked Culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>What practices and strategies do teen girls use in online contexts to navigate their everyday experience with peers and close friends?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Generation Instrument</td>
<td>The Survey: tick-the-box and free-text options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Level Analytic Device</td>
<td>How do the girls practice cybersafety?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Category</td>
<td>privacy setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abductive Assumption</td>
<td>Online privacy is important to these girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Level Analytic Device</td>
<td>What do the girls say about online privacy and privacy settings?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excerpts from Question 72 of The Survey</th>
<th>Data Extract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I have used online chat once and used a fake name to protect myself but after my mother told me things about online chatrooms and dangers of them I immediately stopped using the site and just talked to people I know online. I always use privacy settings for my own safety and because I follow my parents’ rules which is that it is compulsory to use privacy settings that only my friends can see (S72-B3). | • a fake name to protect myself (2)  
• my mother told me things about ... dangers of them (1)  
• just talk to people I know (1)  
• I always use privacy settings (1)  
• I follow my parents’ rules (1)  
• compulsory to use privacy settings that only my friends can see (1, 3) |
| I always would block someone I didn’t know because my safety is very important and I am very strict about privacy. I always use privacy settings because if I am on a social networking site then I want to feel safe (S72-B21). | • always would block someone I didn’t know (1, 2)  
• my safety is very important (1)  
• I am very strict about privacy (2)  
• I always use privacy settings (1)  
• I want to feel safe (1) |
| I ALWAYS use privacy settings ... because in case there are people looking at my site and they look at my personal details (S72-A3). | • I always use privacy setting (1)  
• people looking at my site (2)  
• they look at my personal details (2) |
| I always use the privacy settings and only add my two closest friends to my favourites, so only they can access my information (S72-A25). | • I always use privacy settings (1, 2)  
• only add my two closest friends (2, 3)  
• only they can access my information (3) |
Inferential Statements, Ideas, and Relationships

| Rules are important for protecting identity, privacy and safety. (1)  |
| (Cybersafety Discourse; Social Identity; Rules of Conduct; Rituals and Routines; Fabrication) |
| Protecting personal identity from other people, especially unknowns, is important. (2)  |
| (At-risk Discourses; Everyday Performance; Social Identity) |
| Online privacy practiced with friends is different than online privacy practiced with other people. (3)  |
| (Social Identity; Rules of Conduct; Rituals and Routines) |

*Figure 5.5* shows that most of the girls agreed they used privacy settings and that many of them withheld information to protect themselves, thought before sending messages, blocked mean friends, reported people who sent cruel or unkind messages, told parents about online problems, and asked friends for help with online problems. The frequency of these actions suggested that they were appropriate units for analysing the girls’ reported cybersafety practice. Because more than three-quarters of the girls claimed they used privacy settings, it was deemed a suitable exemplar for this discussion.

To find out more about the girls’ use of privacy settings, their free-text accounts from Question 72 of The Survey were searched for word chains and phrases about online privacy and privacy settings. Accounts that used words and phrases related to online privacy were extracted from the data corpus. Each account was thoroughly reviewed and relevant units of text were extracted. Thematic units emerged. These units were collapsed into inferential statements, ideas, and relationships. The three inferential relationships emerged: rules are important for protecting identity, privacy and safety; protecting personal identity from other people, especially unknowns, is important; and online privacy practiced with friends is different from online privacy practiced with other people. Following Asvoll’s (2014) strategy for interpretative research, these inferences were interrogated and interpreted using the concepts and theoretical resources described in Chapters One, Two, and Three (e.g., Cybersafety Discourse; Social Identity; Rules of Conduct; Rituals and Routines; Fabrication, and so forth).

In this analytical example, the girls described their experience with online privacy and privacy settings. By interpreting their accounts through the theoretical resources discussed earlier in the thesis, the importance the girls placed on following the rules and regulations concerned with cybersafety was highlighted. One of the girls explicitly links her everyday practice to the “compulsory rules” of parents. At the same time, the girls’ accounts suggested that the demands of online participation centred on balancing rules for safety, protecting personal details from the surveillance of others while attempting to share their everyday experience with close friends. Moreover, the importance of performing in multiple ways (e.g., following rules, protecting privacy, not talking to unknowns, communicating with friends within the confines of governance) points to the affect that online participation has on everyday experience and social identity.
The analytic process described above demonstrates, in the simplest way, how the analytic network was used to move the large corpus of data generated from three instruments into extracts or units for interpretation. Through the process of collating categories of data extracts into themes and drawing on abductive assumptions about the girls’ online practice, the somewhat amorphous mass of data was synthesised into inferential relationships that were interpreted against the theoretical tenets of the research. In the final section of this chapter, the trustworthiness of the data is discussed.

**Trustworthiness of the Data**

The interpretative nature of this research placed a strong emphasis on inductive reasoning. Therefore, the rigours of procedure and empirical operation were important concerns. The plausibility or the credibility of interpretative research is a primary issue. Miles and Huberman (1994) used the term validity to describe this aspect of qualitative research. Cohen et al. (2003) also pointed to the importance of reliability in qualitative work. They referred to reliability as the quality, the precision, and the accuracy of the study as well as the replicability or auditability of the findings. One approach to dealing with validity and reliability has been triangulation. Greene (2007) described triangulation as the use of a collection of data methods (e.g. survey, interviews, and document analysis or field observations, focus groups, and archival record review) to measure the same phenomenon. In certain styles of research, confirming data across several methods is considered an effective process for improving validity and reliability of inductive inferences. Greene suggested that this process was important if research teams intended to draw inferences from their work to inform or support policy or procedural planning. On the other hand, she also noted that different ways of thinking about the inductive inferences of interpretative research had potential to add value to empirical work, in particular, when the study intended to explore, expand, or clarify accounts of a specific or new phenomenon situated in a particular environment.

The usefulness of triangulation for qualitative inquiry has been disputed by a number of scholars, especially for empirical work that seeks a comprehensive and complete account of a particular phenomenon. For example, Richardson and St Pierre (2005) offered crystallisation as an alternative concept to triangulation. These scholars imagined the validation or credibility of qualitative work not as a triangle but a crystal. They suggested that a crystalline form allowed for

… an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and are altered, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract [light from] within themselves, creating different [colours], patterns, and arrays [of light], casting off in different directions. What [a researcher] see[s] depends on [the] angle of repose…

(Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 963)
In many ways, Asvoll’s (2014) A-D-I strategy is similar to the notion of crystallisation. Like crystallisation, the strategy moves from a cloudy non-empirical stage of detective work and abductive assumption. In exploring and deliberating on the many angles or aspects of the phenomenon, the process allows for a thorough investigation of what is known and not known about the issue. The starting-point is a multiple telling of the same event. The strategy shapes abduction and deduction into a process of induction that both crystallises and connects reflexive and inferential relationships to empirical findings. What is known and understood about the issue is clarified and measured against new dimensions of the phenomenon that are heard. The A-D-I approach, like crystallisation, is underpinned by a reiterative process of looking and re-looking, confirming and reconfirming inferences until interpretative ideas are clarified and possible claims (new and old) are generated. Fit to existing ideas helps to support the credibility of the work while new claims offer future exploration. The significance of the work rests with the ability of the approach to add to understandings about the phenomenon rather than to generate explicit empirical facts about the event. Richardson and Pierre (2005) have encouraged this interpretative approach in exploratory qualitative research and Asvoll (2014) has described it as a suitable method for nascent research. Put another way, generating inferential statements, ideas and relationships through inductive thinking offers a credible process for empowering research with new ideas and concepts for future exploration.

This study investigated a new phenomenon. That is, teen girls’ online participation with peers and close friends in networked culture. The investigation aimed to be a critical telling of how particular teen girls described and practiced their everyday experience under these new social conditions. The interactions, claims and anecdotal stories of the girls are but “one realm of reality” (Goffman, 1986, p. 3) capable of being measured in a multitude of ways. They have been captured and analysed in a specific way – a way that is consistent with the sociological ideas and concepts outlined earlier in the thesis. Through analysing frames of real and anecdotal stories, the study had provided a common fund of experience that shares an understanding of teen girls’ everyday life and social reality. The truthfulness of data is embedded in the ways the girls’ interactions and accounts have privileged others to their feelings, intentions, and perceptions.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of Chapter Four was to present a research method that was appropriate for generating and systematically analysing data on teen girls’ online participation in networked culture. The research design recognised that young people should not be treated as passive subjects in research, especially research that investigates phenomenon directly linked to their personal experience. The importance of teen girls’ real world experience was considered
relevant for untangling the debates and issues fundamental to their online participation. Goffman’s (1986) notion of frame analysis was introduced as a way of generating and analysing teen girls’ everyday experience. Ethical considerations related to research with young people were highlighted. The avenues important for improving research with girls 13 years of age were discussed.

The data generation instruments were described and their value in capturing teen girls’ interactions and accounts explained. Despite the complexity of the data generation process, a large data corpus was collected. No claim was made that these interactions and accounts revealed the full lived experience of the girls. Nevertheless, the data generating instruments clearly brought the girls’ into the research process making their everyday experience and practice more visible. Difficulties were faced but these encounters were useful for analysing unexpected shifts in performance as they unfolded.

The participants were introduced in this chapter and specifics of the research design were described. One hundred and thirty girls 13 years of age participated in the first stage of the study. Nineteen of these girls agreed to participate in the second stage of the study and 16 participated. The 16 girls attended School C, the only school that had access to the ElluminateLive™ platform. Chapter Four went on to describe the details of data collation and coding as well as the organisation of the analytic network. The analytic network was described and important links to scholarship and the theoretical framework were articulated. As described by Asvoll (2014), this analytical process was not a one way investigation. Instead, the research methods and the data generating process engaged a reiterative style of thinking that separated the data into particular analytical units which aimed to improve current understandings about teen girls’ online experience in networked culture.
Chapter Five
Cybersafety Practice

This chapter presents an analysis of the data concerned with the girls’ everyday experience of online participation and their cybersafety practice. Data for this analysis came primarily from The Survey which was undertaken by 130 Year 8 girls from four high schools. Sixteen of these girls were involved in The Group Activity and The Journal. Data generated from these two instruments was also analysed and some of these accounts and interactions have been analysed alongside the survey data. Chapter Four detailed the research method and described the data collection instruments. Chapter Four also explained that the data was organised and analysed by generating and employing a set of analytic questions (see Table 4.11). Four of these analytic questions were concerned with the girls’ everyday experience of online participation. These four questions have provided the structure for this chapter. The questions are:

1. How do the girls describe their online participation?
2. What practices and strategies do they use in online contexts?
3. How do these practices align to cybersafety recommendations?
4. How do these practices differ from cybersafety recommendations?

This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, the girls’ online participation in networked culture is described. The second section highlights the girls’ cybersafety practice while the third section discusses their patterns of internet interaction. The chapter concludes with summary of the analyses.

The Girls’ Networked Culture

Most of the girls in this study appeared to be well-connected and participating in networked culture. All but one girl had internet access and most of the girls reported up to three hours a day of internet activity. A small number of girls reported high daily usage rates of over four hours (see Figure 5.1). Ninety percent of them had a mobile phone and many owned a personal computer/laptop. Several girls kept their computer/laptop in the bedroom and many of these girls did not turn off their phone or computer/laptop at night (see Figure 5.2).
Many of the girls showed a strong interest in networking on social media and messaging on mobile phones (see Figure 5.3). Although social networking was not nominated as the number one way to communicate with friends, it was clearly popular with the girls. Facebook was particularly popular and a number of them expressed high levels of enthusiasm for this service (e.g., “ollaaaaaa I love talking to my wall” [S75-A18]; “I love Facebook!” [S72-A28]). One girl described the value of Facebook for young people. She wrote, “I think it is important for most teenage girls to be involved in things like Facebook. It is a good way to keep in touch with people and friends and it is a great way to communicate 😊” (S75-A4).

Figure 5.1. The girls’ access and daily internet usage.

Figure 5.2. The girls’ access to computer/laptop & mobile phones.

Figure 5.3. The girls’ favourite way to communicate with friends.
Most of the girls used the term Facebook interchangeably to describe their social networking practice. No other networking site was named so it seemed reasonable to assume that this site was the girls’ preferred networking platform. However, the ACMA (2012) reported that social networking language is “dominated by Facebook-centric terms to the point where children and young people talk[ed] exclusively in terms of their Facebook use when referring to social networking” (p. 2). Consequently, these teen girls may have been active members of other services but were using the term Facebook as an interchangeable term for social networking.

Messaging by phone was slightly more popular than chatting by phone. A small number of girls nominated Skype as their favourite way to communicate with friends whereas a few girls preferred emailing (e.g., Hotmail). MSN Messenger and Twitter were mentioned in free-text accounts but no one reported these options as their preferred service. Popular smartphone applications such as Instagram and Snapchat had not been released at the time.

The majority of these girls appeared to be immersed in both online and offline worlds. They had a strong interest in online communication as depicted in Figure 5.3 but they also enjoyed face-to-face communication. Indeed, for most girls, chatting face-to-face was the preferred way to communicate with friends. For these girls, face-to-face communication minimised misunderstandings. “I prefer to talk with friends face-to-face as sometimes on computers or phones a message can be misunderstood” (S72-B30).

In The Group Activity, 16 girls were shown an illustration of a teen girl engaged with a laptop, a mobile phone, and several Web 2.0 applications (e.g., Facebook, Sims, and iTunes). All of these girls described the illustrated action as multitasking. For these girls, multitasking was doing homework online, researching projects on the internet, chatting on the phone, networking and messaging friends, playing games, and listening to music “all at the same time” (J13-C12). The girls claimed that multitasking was a common practice amongst teen girls and that the illustrated actions were comparable to their own behaviour. “Every afternoon I’m on Skype, Facebook, emails, and doing homework” (J15-C3). A different girl was always “multitasking with different programs” (J15-C4) while a third girl claimed that when she got bored with “just doing homework”, she used “Skype and Hotmail at the same time” (J15-C1). Most of these girls enjoyed multitasking and claimed it reduced boredom, allowed them to chat with friends, do their homework, and ask each other for assistance at any time. For these girls, online participation appeared to be a novelty still and their enthusiasm was strong.
Cybersafety Practice

In Australia, the most nationally accepted set of cybersafety recommendations comes from the ACMA. These recommendations were discussed in Chapter One (see Table 1.2). The guidelines included methods for controlling information (e.g., keep profiles private) and responding to information (e.g., block it). Many young Australians are able to describe these safety guidelines (see, for example, Beavis et al., 2012) and the girls in this study were no exception. Three-quarters of them claimed that they followed safety guidelines (see Figure 5.4). When asked about their safety practice, the girls’ reported use of many of the ACMA recommendations. Figure 5.5 summarises the girls’ response.

![Figure 5.4. The girls’ cybersafety practice.](image)

![Figure 5.5. A summary of the girls’ reported use of recommended cybersafety practice.](image)

Controlling Information

Three key strategies recommended for controlling online information include: keeping profiles private, protecting personal details and passwords, and protecting personal reputation. Most of
the girls indicated that they were reasonably proficient in these areas. Controlling personal information was mainly managed through privacy settings. Many girls reported that they controlled the flow of information by sharing their profiles with “selective people” (S72-B10) such as family members and friends. Most of the girls reported that they “never accepted friendships with strangers” (S72-B20) or people that they “hadn’t actually met” (S72-B23). As one girl explained, “I always check to see if I personally know the person before accepting their friend request” (S72-B2).

Many of the girls did not provide personal details such as their home address, birth date, or their full name on social media profiles (e.g., “I use a name that is completely unlike my real name and I always refrain from giving my details such as what country I live in, when and where I was born and mentioning anything personal” [S72-A7]). A few girls reported that they checked their privacy settings on a regular basis to make sure that “no randoms” (S72-B2) could look at their photos or personal information. “I googled myself and found my profile so I went straight to my privacy settings and changed it back” (S72-A16).

The majority of the girls were adamant about privacy. On the whole, there was a strong and consistent tendency for these girls to control their privacy in a desire to feel safe.

I absolutely always keep my private information private. (S72-B23)

I always use privacy settings in Facebook or MSN or whatever social network where people I don’t know could look at my photos, wall or anything else. (S72-A12)

My safety is very important and I am very strict with privacy. I always use privacy settings because if I am on a social networking site I want to feel safe. (S72-B21)

This tendency was consistent with findings reported in other studies. For example, Madden et al. (2013) found that teens aged 12 to 13 years were more concerned about their personal privacy and were less likely than older teens (i.e., 14 years and over) to share personal information on their social media profiles.

Protecting passwords was mentioned less frequently by the girls, although a small group indicated that they changed their password regularly. A few girls protected their password by not writing it down. One girl explained, “I never write down passwords because I feel that if someone finds it they will try to get into my accounts” (S72-B20). A few girls shared passwords with parents so that they could check the effectiveness of the girls’ privacy settings and the appropriateness of online content.

Three-quarters of the girls agreed that they followed the think before you post guideline. They appeared to translate this process into never bitching about somebody, never pretending to be
someone you’re not, never using foul language, not spreading rumours, and not saying mean things. Some girls avoided posting pictures to social media but it was not clear if this practice was used for controlling information or if it was related to parent rules and regulations. On the whole, the girls indicated that they were cautious about their privacy and, therefore, controlled personal information in responsible ways.

Responding to Information

Three practices recommended for responding to inappropriate online information include: blocking it, reporting it, and talking about it to someone. The girls showed a strong proclivity towards blocking inappropriate contact and inappropriate information. Close to two-thirds of them claimed that they used blocking processes to safeguard their online participation (see Figure 5.5). The girls blocked people that they “didn’t interact with much” (S72-A9) or people they “did not like or didn’t talk to anymore” (S72-B13). Most of the girls claimed that the main purpose of blocking was to stop mean or annoying people from communicating with them. More than two-thirds of the girls indicated that they would report someone if the person was cruel or sent an unkind message. One girl advised, “if someone [is] being mean to you, tell your mum or tell someone about it” (S72-B16). Another girl added, “I always tell my mom or dad if someone is making fun of me online and if someone is talking bad about me, friends, or family” (S72-B14). A few girls suggested that the message should be printed as evidence, shown to a parent or guardian and “then if it keeps happening tell the police” (J5- C16 & C18).

Most of the girls agreed that they would ask for help or seek assistance with online problems. While a number of them indicated that they would ask a friend for help, more girls claimed that they would speak to their parents instead (see Figure 5.6). Reasons for this preference were not clear although more than one quarter of the girls suggested that adults were in a better position to make sure that a person who sent a nasty or mean message would “get in trouble” (J11-C11) and would be “heavily dealt with” (J11-C1). On this point, one of the girls shared a verse from a poem she had read, “just tell an adult and they’ll stop them in their tracks” (J23-C20). The girls’ accounts suggested personal capability. However, their free-text accounts from The Survey and The Journal demonstrated their hopes for adult intervention during troubling times. “Parents should become aware and occasionally talk to their children asking them what’s going on for them” (J11-C19). While the girls’ positive view towards reporting online troubles appeared to support findings reported by Cross et al. (2009) and Livingstone et al. (2011) (i.e., the girls demonstrate a higher penchant for reporting online problems than boys), the actual number of reports made by the girls was not collected in this study.
Responding to Contact Controls

School regulations for mobile phones and other personal communication devices drew comment from close to half of the girls in The Group Activity. These girls reported that it was important for them to have access to their phones at the least during breaks and lunch time. At the minimum, they wanted to have access to text messaging during breaks. Contact with parents was cited as the key reason. “What if you’re really sick and you can’t get to the office or something. You feel like you want to call your parents” (GA2, G1-LC). A different girl added, “I text my mum during lunch times and stuff and ask her how her day is and everything - [if] my phone [was] taken off me til 3:20, [it] would be like weird” (GA2, G2-LC). Many other girls agreed that it was important to have contact with parents in the event of an emergency or changes to school pick-up plans (e.g., wanting to go to a friend’s place after school). While most of the girls reported parent contact as the reason for wanting their phone during school hours, a small number admitted to sending text messages to friends during class time. “You have them on silent and like they’ll vibrate in your pocket but you’re not allowed to like have it out” but you can “sneak it out and have a peek” (GA2, G3-LC). The girls’ classroom texting strategies appeared to have potential for information, ideas, and images from outside the class to pass through into the classroom context. For this reason, many of the girls claimed that nominal contact (i.e., no texting and phones off) during teaching time was beneficial. These girls suggested that by controlling the flow of communication between groups of girls, they were less distracted and less likely to be worried by gossip. Two girls provided these accounts of other girls’ mobile phone use at school. “Most girls are obsessed with socialising”, “spend a lot of time messaging each other”, “do too much gossiping and judge people before they get to know them. How do they fit work in?” (S75-A9, A13, & A29). Another girl explained, “I don’t get distracted … which means I can do my work” (S33-B5). These accounts suggested that the insulation of the boundary between the classroom context and outside the classroom had been weakened by some of the girls’ texting strategies and, therefore, classrooms appeared to be increasingly more porous to content that was previously blocked during lesson time. For some girls, the weakening of classroom boundaries to outside content was constructed as distracting and worrisome.
Patterns of Internet Interaction

The ways in which the girls adopted and engaged with recommended cybersafety practice highlighted the different patterns of internet interaction that they took up to navigate their encounters with other people in online contexts. The girls’ patterns of interaction are discussed in this section.

The New Normal

Near universal internet access (AIMIA, 2012) and the accessibility of social media services such as Facebook have made online participation typical, common place, and an everyday occurrence. Sharing information and connecting with friends through online participation is part of everyday life and has become “the new normal” (boyd, 2014, p. 8). Like most young people, the majority of these girls were totally immersed in online communication. Their strong interest in various communication platforms was depicted in Figure 5.3. Beyond nominating these platforms as popular, their text accounts demonstrated that they had an awareness and understanding of Web 2.0 applications. It was clear that the communicative flexibility of new technologies was valued by these girls and that multitasking was a common practice. Almost all of the girls reported that their online experiences were good. Most of them demonstrated an awareness of online risks and these girls seemed equipped with strategies to stay safe although caution appeared to be the norm that regulated much of their practice.

The girls in this study appeared to be young people skilled and comfortable with technology and online interaction. They had similar patterns of internet access and device ownership to other young Australians. For example, in 2012, the ABS reported that 98 percent of Australian teens had internet access (identical findings) and the AIMIA (2012) indicated that 77 percent owned a computer/laptop (similar findings). On the other hand, in comparison to other young Australians, these girls were more likely to own a mobile phone. Almost all of them owned a mobile phone whereas the AIMIA (2012) reported that about three-quarters of Australian teens owned a mobile phone. The AIMIA figures were not aggregated by gender so it was difficult to compare figures to determine if the phone ownership found in the thesis was specific to ‘girls’ or ‘these’ girls or these ‘schools’. However, both Lenhart et al. (2012) and Madden et al. (2013) have reported gender differences in mobile phone use. For example, Lenhart et al. (2012) found that 12 to 13 year old girls were more likely than same-age boys to have a mobile phone (67% girls, 47% boys) and Madden et al. (2013) reported that teen girls were more likely to access the internet via a mobile broadband service (29% girls; 20% boys). Based on these findings, it seems likely that the phone ownership reported here was gender-related.
In comparison to young people in other countries, these girls had a comparatively high level of access to communication devices and internet services. For example, they were more likely than same-aged Americans to have their own computer/laptop. Madden et al. (2013) reported that the vast majority of American teens under 14 years of age (81%) shared a computer with another family member. In comparison to European (EU) children aged nine to 16 years, the girls in this study were more likely to access the internet at home (98% girls, 87% EU) and were more likely to connect to the internet when “out and about” [50% girls, 9% EU] (Green, Brady, Olafsson, Hartley & Lumby, 2011, p. 7). Given these figures, it was probable that the girls in this study had more opportunity to connect with friends online than their counterparts in other western communities.

In contrast to Americans teens, the majority of these girls showed no signs of ‘Facebook fatigue’. Van Grove (2013) described Facebook fatigue as an adult-like weariness linked to the pressures of constant texting and posting. Common Sense Media (2012) reported that 45 percent of the American teens in their study were frustrated by their friends’ texting or surfing the net while hanging out together and 43 percent wished that they could unplug sometimes (i.e., disconnect from the internet). For most of these girls, online participation appeared to be highly regarded (e.g., “it is a great way to communicate :)” [S75-A4]) and popular (e.g. “I love Facebook!” [S72-A28]). Reasons for the difference between the American group and these teen girls were not clear but the starting-age for social media take-up may help to explain. For example, most of the teens in the thesis study were 13 years of age and likely newcomers to Facebook. Many of the teens in the American study were older girls and, therefore, it’s possible that the newness or novelty of Facebook had worn off. As the girls in the thesis study become older and engage with Facebook longer, they may experience a loss of interest too.

In 2011, the ACMA reported that cybersafety strategies appeared to be working well and that many young people had a high awareness of online risks and understood the strategies required to stay safe. Most of the girls in this study appeared to demonstrate a similar level of awareness and many seemed equipped with the necessary tools to surf the net safely. In the main, they appeared to be “fairly normal” 13-year-old girls. At the same time, several points of interest were raised by the girls in relation to normal teen girls’ online interaction. The excerpt below highlights some of these points.

I think most girls my age use things like Facebook and mobile phones, in fact you are actually considered weird not to. There is only one person in my group without Facebook and we all try and talk her into getting it because it’s a really fun and good way to connect. But I always know where to draw the line, whether I have been on line too long or whether or not to add a person. There are times when I talk to people and get no response for different reasons and for the most part, I don’t care if they don’t reply unless it’s someone I have a crush on ….. then I care ….. but I think that is fairly normal for a 13 year old girl. (S75-A33)
In this excerpt, the girl pointed to key attributes attached to most normal 13-year-old girls. Her account suggested that most normal 13-year-old girls had mobile phones and used Facebook. Girls who did not use new technologies and SNSs were “weird”, in other words, not normal. By attaching certain attributes to the use of new technologies and SNSs, her account suggested that not normal girls were pressured to become normal, to take up or adopt the rules of conduct appropriate for girls their age. This account highlighted the expectation for being connected, and, in part, suggested that the strength of the boundary between being normal and not normal influenced teen girls’ online practice. In other words, the attribute of being connected (i.e., using new technologies and SNSs) seemed to create a strongly insulated boundary that controlled who was in and who was out of the normal group. This girl’s account hinted that pressures to be connected had raised tensions between girls who had stricter controls on their internet use and limited device ownership.

This girl’s account also highlighted the point made by Castells (1996) concerned with establishing and maintaining boundaries around virtual time and timeless time. By referring to her ability to “draw the line” to manage her time and online connections, she accounted for her construction of time and space boundaries between interconnected places, people, and ideas. Her apparent confidence to manage these boundaries and create an impression of safe practice highlighted two significant points. First, the compression and de-sequencing of time in networked culture (i.e., 24 hour, 7 day connection across places) appeared to be a condition accepted by this girl as normal and second, regulating temporal and spatial relations in networked spaces appeared to be a common component of teen girls’ online participation. In addition to these points, this girl’s account highlighted how various categories of people were assigned different expectations for online communication such as patterns of return action. For example, she advised that if someone did not reply to her online communication, she was not bothered (e.g., “I don’t care if they don’t reply) but then goes on to suggest that it does matter if it is someone she has a crush on. She described this expectation as “fairly normal for a 13-year-old girl”. This declaration suggested that it was likely other 13-year-old girls had similar expectations for their crush. She did not describe other types of relationships (e.g., best friend to best friend communications) but it seemed possible that other groups of people had an equivalent set of communication expectations which guided her online practice.

On the whole, most of the girls constructed an everyday online experience that was intensely participatory and well-established. By and large, the majority of the girls reported online participation that included networking, texting, and messaging with friends. For example, most of the girls indicated that had a mobile phone, home access to a computer, a Facebook profile, and that they used SNSs and text messages to keep in touch with friends. In addition, those girls who were regular users of SNSs described this activity as a good way to organise social
activities and find out what was happening with friends. Most of the girls appeared to be plugged-in and switched on. This state of engagement appeared to be the new normal (boyd, 2014).

**Another Normal**

Not all of the girls constructed themselves as being completely immersed in networked culture. Instead, a small number of girls claimed that they did not use social media. A few of these girls indicated that they used texting facilities on their phone to stay in touch with friends but primarily, they preferred face-to-face communication. These girls claimed genuine disinterest in SNSs such as Facebook. One girl explained,

> I don’t have Facebook because I find it not that important to chat with a friend online. The only way I communicate with my friends is to text message and call. I do these things but I don’t do it very often and I only do it when it is important. (S72-B42)

One girl talked about a general unfamiliarity with most social media services. “I don’t have anything like chatrooms, Twitter and all that stuff. I don’t even know what most of that stuff is anyway”. (S72-B16)

Another girl indicated concern about the effects of social media on young people’s lives.

> I think people my age shouldn’t have Facebook. I don’t have Facebook, it causes an unnecessary invasion into people’s private lives and encourages people to lie about their age. I know there will be plenty of people who disagree with me but that is my view. (S75-A7)

Undercurrents of risk and danger were linked to participation levels. One girl said that she did not use Facebook and MSN because she was “aware of the dangers” (S72-B12). A small group of girls suggested that they operated from a much more precautionary stance. These girls talked about the ways in which they planned overly meticulous and elaborate practices to safe-guard their identity and protect themselves from harm. One girl constructed for her approach as follows:

> Well, I do use Facebook and Hotmail but I’m quite cautious about the dangers of Facebook. I make sure I check my personal settings and how non-friended people see my profile. I also have Hotmail but I set random reminders from things such as Facebook and random advertising things and chains even from friends to junk and delete them. I make sure I don’t open them or put all my emails into files then with the ones I don’t want I sweep them which removes them permanently and makes sure more messages don’t come from them. (S72-B4)

In this extract, the possible dangers of Facebook are noted. These dangers included different categorises of people (e.g., non-friends), viewing of profile information, chain emails from friends, and advertising emails with possible viruses. She negotiated and managed these dangers
by checking personal settings (e.g., how non-friends see personal profile on Facebook), setting personal reminders to junk and delete files, and not opening random advertising and other emails that might contain viruses. Many of these strategies are consistent with cybersafety recommendations for controlling personal information (e.g., keep profiles private). However, this girl also talked about how she “sweeps” email files and permanently removes them to make sure further messages do not come from those sources. It was not clear if this strategy referred to removing email viruses with anti-virus software or if she was simply deleting the file of problem emails from her computer. In any case, her account showed how she managed her online safety in more complex ways than other girls in the study.

In contrast to the overly cautious, a few girls described a relaxed, almost lackadaisical approach to their online participation and personal safety. These particular girls were somewhat dismissive of the rules and protocols recommended for safe online participation. They openly reported using other girls’ names to camouflage their own identity (“I use the name H**** cuz she’s my girlfriend” [S72-A15]) and one girl claimed that she made up lies so people would think she was trendy. In contrast to most girls who agreed that they used code names to protect their identity, two girls constructed this practice peculiar. As one girl put it, “I never use weird names to protect myself that is just sad : (“ (S72-C2).

**Risk Control**

On the whole, most of the girls in this study demonstrated a strong desire to be connected through new technologies and Web 2.0 applications such as Facebook. Nevertheless, not all of the girls shaped their online participation in exactly the same way and normal continued to be experienced in several different ways. The analyses reported in this chapter showed that the girls tended to talk or account for their patterns of internet interaction in relation to their understanding and engagement with risk prevention strategies. These patterns were similar to those reported by the ACMA (2011) in their report *Like, post, share: Young Australians’ experience of social media*. The report described five categories of online behaviour defined by the ways in which young people engaged with online risk. These categories included claimed conformists, relaxed maintainers, vulnerably influenced, responsible risk takers, and knowing naughties (see Table 1.3). For the most part, the girls accounted for their online practice in similar terms to claimed conformists. That is, the girls talked about engaging in online interactions to stay connected with friends but, at the same time, they were actively aware of the dangers or risks associated with online activities. They actively managed their privacy settings and tended to distance themselves from the risky behaviour of others. In the main, these girls claimed that they abided by the safety rules set out for them. Most of them consulted with parents when online troubles emerged.
A small but significant group of girls talked in an overly protective and excessively concerned way about their online safety. The extent to which the girls’ talk about the dangers of online participation interrupted or minimised their everyday interactions with others was not clear. This talk may have been a face saving or impression management strategy that the girls engaged in as part of the research interaction. The ACMA (2011) did not report on a group of this nature. Further research would need to be conducted to examine if these interactions represented another category of girls that might be categorised as inhibited worriers.

A few girls described patterns of interaction similar to relaxed maintainers. That is, their talk was all about accepting the risk possibilities involved in social networking with friends but they considered their online safety practices sufficient to protect them from more extreme problems. These girls’ practices focused mainly on using privacy settings designed by SNS providers. Their accounts suggested that they were less worried about being overly protective of their personal identity and were somewhat more relaxed in terms of their content postings and image uploads. In other words, they talked about their personal experiences, posted images that weren’t too revealing and were happy for their friends to see what they were up to and what events they were attending.

Another small group of girls appeared to be somewhat more risky than the rest of the girls in the study. They talked about the strategies they used for appearing trendy (“just so everyone knows I am super trendy” [S72-A17]) and using other people’s names to attract attention. For the most part, their actions appeared to be attention seeking behaviours used perhaps to gain social acceptance or group recognition. Regardless of intent, these girls appeared to have more confidence in online contexts than the other girls and their patterns of internet interaction were similar to the group described by the ACMA (2011) as vulnerably influenced.

Conclusion

This chapter presented an analysis of data generated from The Survey accounts of 130 Year 8 girls from four high schools and 16 girls involved in The Group Activity and The Journal. The analyses focused on the girls’ accounts of their everyday experience of online participation. Attention was drawn to the girls' comparatively high level of access to communication technology and their accounts suggested that they were texting, messaging, and posting across a significant number of pathways. Most of the girls talked about being networked individuals (i.e., they used new technologies and participated in SNSs). Very few of them constructed themselves as being disconnected from online participation.

The girls accounted for their online participation in a variety of ways. Three-quarters of them suggested that they were well-versed in online safety guidelines and practiced strategies for
controlling and responding to information. These girls claimed that they always managed their personal information with care. Their accounts suggested that they kept their profiles private, protected their passwords, and regulated their online reputation skilfully. The ways in which the girls talked about their online interaction was similar to the group of young people described by the ACMA (2011) as claimed conformists. That is, they claimed they were actively aware of online risks, abided by the rules set out for online participation, and were mostly inclined to distance themselves from the risky behaviour of others. In contrast, some girls’ accounts described an overly cautious approach to online interaction while a smaller group of girls shared accounts that suggested they had a more relaxed attitude towards online dangers. There was some suggestion that 13-year-old girls attached particular attributes to online interaction (e.g., normal and not normal) and, therefore, it seemed likely that at least some of them felt pressured to adopt or create the impression that they were wholly engaged with new technologies and connected to SNSs. There was also some suggestion that teen girls had particular expectations and desires for online communication different individuals (e.g., boys) and that these hopes influenced the ways they managed and regulated their online practice.

In contrast to popular views that teen girls were prolific users of social media, at least a few of the girls were not totally immersed in the new normal of networked culture. Few of these girls fully explained their limited participation. Reasons for this were not clear. There was a sense that not being connected was not normal (i.e., “weird”) and, therefore, the girls may have been less inclined to openly account for their restricted style of participation. One girl did offer this explanation:

My friends and all the people around me are very important but I have discreetly discovered that family does come first. I love my family and they are my safe sanctuary which is probably the most important thing to me right now. I find that man-made creations such as technology [are] quite unnecessary and if I have people with me, I am happy. (S33-B3)

In this excerpt, family (“they are my safe sanctuary”) and face-to-face communication (“if I have people with me, I am happy”) were specifically pointed to as important aspects in this girl’s life. In her account, friends were constructed as very important but not as important as family. “Man-made creations such as technology” were described as unnecessary. Although she constructed the family as “the most important thing to [her] right now”, she also claimed that she “discreetly discovered” family came first. This account pointed to the possible tension between what was normal practice for 13-year-old girls (i.e., hanging out friends and using new technologies) and the opposing side of what was not normal (hanging out with parents and not using new technologies). While few accounts expanded on this dichotomy, the ways in which constraints on new technologies influence social boundaries between different groups of girls seems to be important and further investigation is recommended.
This chapter has investigated the girls’ online participation from the perspective of cybersafety. The interpretations in this chapter were theorised from accounts produced mainly through questions that focused on cybersafety and at-risk discourses. The girls’ responses appeared to be positioned in relation to these discourses. This outcome was not unexpected since cybersafety and online risk management have been at the forefront of home and classroom education programs for several years. Moreover, the research interaction was inevitably co-produced by the girls and the researcher. This co-generation requires acknowledgment that the girls might have tempered their accounts (e.g., tried to give the correct response) in recognition that the researcher was an adult similar to a teacher. Therefore, this chapter offers a situated account of the girls’ online practice and their alignment to cybersafety conventions. In Chapter Six, the girls’ online participation is read through a different lens and is concerned with how they integrated their everyday performance with peers and close friends in online contexts to constitute their social identity.
Chapter Six
Social Identity and Online Participation

The girls’ account of their online practices, particularly in terms of dealing with risk and safety discourses, were analysed in Chapter Five. The girls accounted for the ways in which they managed online practices, taking up positions of awareness related to online risk, and attributing success to their own online navigational capacities. The aim of Chapter Six is to analyse the online interactional data from The Group Activity and the girls’ accounts from The Survey and The Journal. The focus of the analyses is on how the girls’ co-constructed their everyday interactional performances and how they constructed their social identity in online contexts with peers and close friends.

In this chapter, the data is read through Goffman’s (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986) theoretical resources described in Chapter Three. These theoretical resources facilitated the development of an analytic network and a set of analytic devices. These tools were described in Chapter Four and have been used in the analyses presented in this chapter. This Goffman-style lens has facilitated fine-grained analyses of the girls’ online interactional practice and their everyday performance of social identity. These analyses offer significant understandings into how teen girls’ constitute and perform their social interaction in online contexts. For this reason, these same analytic tools might be useful for parents and teachers to educate young people about online interaction and to encourage them to reflect on and change their online practice.

The overall theme of this chapter is concerned with the everyday performance of teen girls in networked culture and focuses on the second question critical to this study: how are teen girls’ online experiences integrated into their everyday interactions with peers and close friends, and how do these interactions constitute their social identity? Three analytic questions have been used to organise and structure the chapter. These questions are:

1. What practices and strategies do these girls use to manage and perform their social identity in everyday interactions with peers and close friends?

2. How is their performance of social identity enacted in online contexts?

3. What cultural resources (i.e., rules, rituals, and routines) do they use to manage and shape their social identity in networked culture?

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, the analysis is concerned with how the girls’ managed and negotiated their everyday interaction with peers and close friends. The second section of the chapter offers interpretations of how the girls enacted and constituted
their social identity in online contexts. The final section of the chapter concludes with a discussion of the analyses.

**Everyday Performance: The Manufacture of Experience**

For Goffman (1959, 1967, 1986), everyday experience was not simply the reproduction of rules and routines established through dominant discourses. Instead, he conceived interactants as intelligent agents with the capacity to define and manipulate situations to produce actions and performances of their own making. This is not meant to suggest that everyday interactions do not reproduce rules, rituals and routines. Without doubt, online interactions are constrained by the affordances of online platforms (see, for example, Doherty, 2006), and by girls’ internalisations of appropriate and acceptable online conduct. At the same time, however, Goffman’s (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986) theories point to the agency of girls and possibilities for creative action within these constraints. Goffman proposed that each performance or unit of interaction provided an organised system for coming to understand the rules, rituals, and routines of everyday experience. He explained that in the context of situated practice, orderly but unique units of interaction took place. Goffman described these units as the interaction order. As explained earlier in the thesis, the interaction order is offered as a device for getting up close to and reading the everyday “doings” (Goffman, 1986, p. 22) of teen girls and their friends.

**The Interaction Order**

In Chapter Four, the interaction order was described as a specialised coding mechanism for isolating units of social interaction. This mechanism was considered particularly useful for quarantining segments of the girls’ interactions in The Group Activity. The interactivity in these sessions was ongoing and overlapping but the interaction order provided a way of segmenting the girls’ interactions into identifiable units with a start and a finish marker. Using the interaction order as an analytic unit provided a glimpse into significant stages of the girls’ interactional practice.

**Getting Started**

At the beginning of each group session, the girls routinely took up actions and practices that helped them to orientate to the setting (i.e., coming to understand what it was that was going on). They asked questions (“Which one’s the whiteboard?” [GA2, G4-LC]), played with the equipment (“It’s funny, I can hear my own voice” [GA3, G1-LC]), and checked out who was who (“I’m getting confused. Who said hello?” [GA1, G3-LC]). Table 6.1 highlights some of the girls’ orientating interactions from each session of The Group Activity.
An important organisational routine and a natural interactional response to new social settings was explained by Goffman (1986) as orientating to the task or “anchoring of the activity” (p. 247). The aim was to come to understand the frame so that individuals could shape their identity and fit their actions to “what it [was] that was going on (p. 247). Frame is defined by Goffman as “the principles of organisation which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them” (p. 10). While the girls orientated to the task in a variety of ways (e.g., asking questions, calling out, making noises, and so forth), each girl demonstrated the need to understand the possibilities of interactional patterns and boundaries of the research setting. On their own, these actions may appear insignificant, however, when read through the lens of the interaction order, these simple interactions highlight the girls’ preliminary steps towards establishing an understanding of the routines required to maintain an appropriate social identity in the research setting (i.e., give the appearance of being competent). Table 6.1 summarises some of the girls’ orientation tasks from Group Activity One (GA1), Group Activity Two (GA2), Group Activity Three (GA3), and Group Activity Four (GA4).

Table 6.1  
A summary of the girls’ orientating practices in The Group Activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Activity One</th>
<th>Group Activity Two</th>
<th>Group Activity Three</th>
<th>Group Activity Four</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1-IM: who said hi?</td>
<td>G1-IM: this is so cool</td>
<td>G2-LC: Nothing (giggles)</td>
<td>G2-LC: Why are we in the waiting room?</td>
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<td>G1-LC: I’m getting confused. Who said hello?</td>
<td>G4-LC: Which ones the whiteboard?</td>
<td>G1-LC: This is fun</td>
<td>G1-LC: Wooooohhh!</td>
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<td>G2-IM: hello</td>
<td>G1-LC: I think it is that big red thing</td>
<td>G2-LC: Yah</td>
<td>G2-LC: Sasha, has yours gone all white? Has yours gone white?</td>
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<tr>
<td>G3-IM: hai</td>
<td>G2-IM: guest 3 must be me lilly lol</td>
<td>G1-LC: What are you doing now?</td>
<td>G1-LC: Why’s it gone white?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G5-IM: there is no guest 3</td>
<td>G2-LC: Blah, blah, blah (giggles)</td>
<td>G3-LC: Yah it has</td>
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<td></td>
<td>G2-IM: oh lol</td>
<td>G1-LC: It’s funny, I can hear my own voice</td>
<td>G1-LC: Yah same</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G2-LC: I can’t hear my voice</td>
<td>G2-LC: I don’t know why</td>
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Building Character

Once the girls settled into The Group Activity, they were encouraged to explore the environment and test out the communication devices. Different patterns of interaction emerged. Some girls went very quiet. These girls appeared to be trying to work things out for themselves, some trying to go undetected while others seemed to be observing the actions of others before experimenting on their own. Other girls became noisy and demanding. These girls frequently called attention to themselves (“Oh my gosh look at…look I wrote ppl for people” [GA2, G5-LC]; “It was me everyone” (GA2, G4 draws devil ears on one of the Emoticons on the Interactive Whiteboard), made unusual noises (“loolooloolah lahlahlah”[GA1, G5-LC]), or complained loudly (“Miss it’s very hard” (heavy sigh) … “I can’t hear anything! Argh! [GA4, G3-LC]).

In each session, one girl tended to take up the role of group leader. This girl appeared to have the strongest technical skills. She engaged with the communication tools first. She sometimes interpreted and explained their function to the other girls but most often initiated new activities (e.g., using the messaging facility or the drawing tools). These leadership roles appeared to be most clear when the girls engaged with the Interactive Whiteboard for the first time. Once the lead girl ‘discovered’ the Interactive Whiteboard drawing tools, the other girls in the group quickly followed her actions. This interactivity is summarised in Table 6.2. In the excerpt, the girls from Group Activity Four are engaged with Interactive Whiteboard activities. The interactions suggest that the group are following the actions of Girl 2. Abbreviation codes used in the following excerpt are: G1, G2, G3, and G4 = Girl One, Girl Two, Girl Three, and Girl Four, and R = Researcher.

Table 6.2
A summary of the girls’ interactions from Group Activity Four.

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Role allocation appeared to be a fundamental component of anchoring the activity. The allocation of roles was not overtly discussed by the girls. Instead it seemed to be implicit to the setting. That is, skilled girls took leadership over the activities and this action appeared to set the mood or mode of conduct for the session. The girls’ interpersonal relationships were not known beforehand and, therefore, it was not possible to determine if this division of labour was typical of their school experience with the girls in their group or was related to the research setting. In any case, once the girls took up a role, they appeared to be cast into a position with particular obligations and expectations for conduct. For the most part, the girls remained in character for the duration of the research activity. In other words, the girls appeared to take up a character and then practice the particular rules, rituals, and routines appropriated for that character. For example, in each session the lead girl continued to interpret and explain each new activity, respond to questions first, and supervise the conduct of others. Lead girls were more likely to reprimand others for their inappropriate language (“No, no swearing” [GA4, G2-LC]) and behaviour (“Shona, stop grumbling!” [GA1, G1-LC]). Maintaining and regulating the frame appeared to be an obligation deemed appropriate for the leader of the group. Girls that were loud and demanding from the beginning (e.g., Shona), continued to be loud and demanding throughout their session. Lead girls continued to reprimand these characters throughout each session.

Staying in character appeared to be important for maintaining the organisation of the activity. Each role/character seemed to be marked or bracketed by obligations and expectations (i.e., rules of conduct) for their behaviour. Goffman (1967) referred to this aspect of interaction as demeanour. He used this term to describe how individuals adhered to the rules of conduct that were relevant to their role or others’ interpretation of their character. If the individual is well demeaned, they will close off avenues of perception that contaminate or disrupt others’ impression of them. The aim is to maintain face. Several of the girls demonstrated this capacity, in particular the lead girl in each session. However, the frame can be interpreted in a number of ways especially if not all of the participants in the frame share the same understanding of the setting. That is, some might be in doubt about what is going on, some might have wrongly anchored to the frame (misinterpreted the frame) or some might not be willing to conduct themselves by the rules of conduct allocated to their role. Any one of these situations has potential to disrupt the smooth flow of interaction. If tensions emerge other participants in the setting are forced to take action or correct the frame (i.e., frame clearing). Goffman (1986) referred to these episodes as moments of “ordinary trouble” (p. 300). This preliminary analysis of the girls orienting to the online activity reveals that dominant discourses are not simply reproduced in everyday online interactions.
Ordinary Trouble

The girls’ ability (or desire) to maintain the face-work required for their role in The Group Activity varied considerably. Some girls consistently maintained a demeanour that adhered to the expectations for their role (usually the lead girl) while other girls frequently challenged the rules of conduct for the group as well as the routines and rituals considered appropriate for their role or the role of others. When rules or routines were challenged in this way, The Group Activity was often disrupted. In the main, contradicting the claims made by other girls (e.g., claim to a role) or failure to abide by the rules set out for the encounter (e.g., off-point behaviours) were moments of trouble that demanded attention from other group members. Setting the frame straight was a routine most often taken up by the lead girl.

The interactions summarised below are sequential to the series of interactions highlighted in Table 6.2. In this exchange, the girls from Group Activity Four have moved to clearing or erasing the Interactive Whiteboard. To this point, Girl 2 has been leading the Interactive Whiteboard activities. She claims the right to clear the board. However, because the task has been taken up virtually, it is difficult to determine who is actually clearing the work from the Interactive Whiteboard screen. The following exchange occurred. Abbreviation codes used in the following excerpt are: R = Researcher, G1, G2, G3, and G4 = Girl One, Girl Two, Girl Three, and Girl Four, LC = Live Chat, and IM = Instant Messaging.

R-LC: Anyone tried the eraser?
G2-LC: I will!
G3 & G4- LC: I will!
G1-LC: I want to!
G3 & G4- LC: Yeahh!
G2-LC: I’m doing it!
G1-LC: It’s not erasing
G2-LC: It’s erasing for me!
G3-LC: Who’s erasing?
G1-LC: Me!
**G2-IM: I DID IT SASHA GRRR**
G2-LC: I did that!
**G1-IM: wtf**
G3-LC: I did that!
G1-LC: I did that!

When Girl 2’s position as leader is contested by the other girls (e.g., I want to!), a series of terse interactions followed. All of the girls became quite loud (e.g., squealing and chatting loudly), each insistent that they were erasing the Interactive Whiteboard. Two of the girls (Girl 2 and Girl 3) moved their interactions to the Interactive Whiteboard. Both messages were somewhat out-of-character and less in keeping with the nature of the research frame (i.e., the larger frame of interaction or “the main action” [Goffman, 1986, p. 201]). The girls’ exchange suggested that there were several frame layers working simultaneously to give meaning to their relationships.
and interactions. According to Goffman (1986), when frames operated within frames, sometimes the rules that bound each frame were in opposition and individuals were forced to take up sideline actions (e.g., out-of-frame activities). By moving their interactions to the Instant Messaging facility, the girls were able to slip out-of-character briefly to contest each other’s actions. While Girl 1 made one more comment about erasing the Interactive Whiteboard, the issue was dropped and Girl 2 recovered her leadership by being the first to draw on the next slide appearing on the Interactive Whiteboard. The other girls followed her lead although Girl 1 was a bit slow realigning to the activity. The smaller frame space was cleared, at least for the moment. Switching channels (e.g., Live Chat to Instant Messaging) appeared to be an effective strategy for managing this terse moment. It provided opportunity to shift out-of-character momentarily with little damage to the character portrayed for the group. However, it is important to note that this sequence of responses, while appearing sequential, was in fact much less tidy than the transcript reflects. In the examination of online interaction, the sequencing of events is often overlapping and difficult to represent in text form. The sequencing of interactions in online talk is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Out-of-Frame Activity

The Group Activity was officially a research setting. However, the mere spatial arrangements of the computer lab provided the girls with plenty of opportunity to engage with out-of-frame activity (i.e., activities that are not part of the main frame). For example, the girls were able to chat to each other informally, have conversations that were off-the-record (e.g., they could switch their microphones off), and engage with students in the computer lab that were not part of the study. These subordinate channels of activity were interesting because they offered a glimpse into the girls’ capacity to engage simultaneously with the main line of activity (i.e., the research setting) and a range of other events. The girls’ ability to use the spatial arrangements of the computer lab to maintain involvement inside and outside the central frame highlighted their natural tendency and capacity to fabricate the face-work required for sustaining a storyline across a range of events. An example of this out-of-frame activity is below and discussed next.

Abbreviation codes used in the following excerpt are: T = Teacher, G1, G2, G3, and G4 = Girl One, Girl Two, Girl Three, and Girl Four, R = Researcher, F2F = face-to-face, IM = Instant Messaging, and LC = Live Chat.

T-F2F: Are you talking to each other on the microphones because you are sharing things really, really loudly
G2-F2F: Okay (softly)
G3-F2F: Okay (softly)
G2-IM: Holy gosh
T-F2F: Okay because when you talk use the microphone!
G3-IM: I’m scared
R-LC: Is someone talking to you?
G2-IM: A teacher yelled at us :p
During Group Activity Four, the girls were talking very loudly and not using their microphones. A teacher from another classroom entered the computer lab and chastised the girls for making too much noise. When the teacher entered the room, the research space immediately became a space that was sustaining two different activities. The demands of the teacher (“Are you talking to each other on the microphones because you are sharing things really, really loudly!”) stressed a classroom character that was quite different from the expectations and obligations of the research setting (“Hello? Girls?”). The simultaneous character of the moment forced the girls to manage two different sets of demands, right then, right there. This suddenness to act brought about “momentary confusion to the line of action” (Goffman, 1959, p. 140) and the smoothness of frame was temporarily disrupted. The girls responded by a show of commitment to the teacher’s request (e.g., they became quiet and subdued). On the surface, they were compliant with the teacher’s demand (“Okay”). However, they managed the duplicity of the situation by shifting some of their interactions to the Instant Messaging facility. This action provided a screen or a concealment track between the two frames of activity. In the research frame, they were spontaneous (“Holy gosh”), emotional (“I’m scared”), guarded (“we got in trouble”), defensive (“:p”), and incredulous (“Goly gosh … gee whiz”) yet in the classroom
setting, they were compliant to the teacher’s expectations. The flurry of activity that emerged highlighted how the girls were able to effectively navigate two streams of activity, create a kind of consensus of sorts (e.g., the teacher’s demands were honoured), and reconnect with the research activity. The girls made a show of valuing the adult authority in both camps by being apologetic but their Instant Messaging demonstrated that they had the capacity to interact across a range of events, navigate challenges, manage impressions, and shape their social identity to the frame. This encounter is an example of the girls’ front stage work with the teacher (i.e., their performance for the main frame) and their back stage work with peers (i.e., their performance for maintaining social identity with peers). This front stage and backstage performance demonstrated how the girls managed face, that is, their self-image in terms of approved attributes with the teacher and their peers.

By examining the girls’ activities through Goffman’s (1986) interaction order, attention was drawn to their ability to shift and modify their social identity to suit the setting at hand. Whether the encounter was face-to-face or initiated through Live Chats, Instant Messages, and drawings on the Interactive Whiteboard, the girls’ actions demonstrated, in a single frame of activity, how rules of conduct were ritualised through practice, how character and demeanour interacted to shift and shape ordinary experiences into challenging moments, and how subordinate lines of activity were regulated through these same practices. These analyses have drawn attention to how teen girls’ performance of social identity was enacted through everyday interactions.

**Managing Social Identity**

The self as an interactional worker was conceptualised by Goffman (1959) as an individual who performed and managed impressions for observing others. He explained that the individual acted in a particular way so that he/she expressed the self to others in the best light possible. Goffman (1967) used the term “social face” (p. 10) to describe the self that was presented or performed for others. In the thesis, the term social identity has been used to describe the ways in which teen girls constituted this self (i.e., their social face) to others through their everyday performance. In this section of the chapter, accounts concerned with how the girls managed and negotiated their social identity in networked culture are presented.

**Rules of Conduct**

In free-text accounts from The Survey and The Journal, the girls provided accounts of the ways that they purposefully managed and shaped their identity to maintain or gain acceptance with friends. For example, a number of the girls suggested that “being nice” and “being responsible” helped to preserve their personal image, build their reputation, and improved friendship harmony. Over two-thirds of the girls indicated that being nice involved not sharing personal
stories online. Half of them suggested that being a responsible friend included not sending friends upsetting messages. One girl offered this advice, “don’t spread rumours or do stupid things” (S75-C5). Several girls indicated that chatting nicely and not being “b****y to friends” (J17-C2) minimised difficulties and improved personal image. One girl explained, “When you’re behaving properly and others do the same, Facebook is a really fun social interaction. And me, myself, find Facebook very fun” (S75-A31).

Survey accounts suggested that close to two-thirds of the girls were proud of their online behaviour. These girls indicated that they managed their personal reputation well. “I understand how Facebook can be dangerous but I am always careful about what I say and who I talk to” (S75-A31). Many of the girls identified suitable ways to cultivate their online identity which included being careful about the type of pictures and content posted and sharing friendly status updates. These girls claimed that taking inappropriate pictures and posting them on Facebook had undesirable consequences for a girl’s reputation. In the main, they said that it was important to avoid particular behaviours such as swearing, gossiping, and showing-off because these actions were not well-received by others and had potential to damage their standing with friends. As one girl put it, “girls do too much gossiping, and judge other people before they get to know them. Some girls just need to grow up and stop acting stupid” (S75-A29). In The Journal one girl wrote, “I think Year 8 girls should be able to go online and talk to their peers without all the swearing because some girls in our grade just have a mouth like you wouldn’t believe” (J17-C16). Another girl expressed it like this: “They hang wif da bois and wear da sickesttt clothheesss da all sluts” (S75-A23). Other girls spoke in general terms about the character of teen girls’ behaviour (e.g., girls are not very nice) and several of them suggested that “girls [were] more likely to behave badly towards each other online” (S75-B2).

The ways in which the girls identified and characterised good and bad online practice suggested online interaction was associated with a particular set of rules. In other words, the girls’ account suggested that they had obligations, expectations, routines, and rituals that regulated their online conduct. These rules seemed to have significant power to regulate the ways in which the girls performed their online identity. For example, by adopting appropriate practices for online interaction (e.g., not swearing; putting up appropriate images and postings; being nice and responsible), the girls’ appropriated or manufactured an identity with good character (e.g., a good girl). This identity performance required skilful adoption of positive attributes (e.g., discretion, sincerity, and good command of language) and effective acquisition, revealment, and concealment of information such as care in posting images and content (Goffman, 1959). When a girl failed to maintain what others saw as appropriate online conduct, that is, the rules were broken, her character came into question and her good girl identity was at stake. This undesirable position was associated with bad girl behaviour. Through the presentation or non-
presentation of approved attributes and rules of conduct, the girls appeared to manage and control their online identity and govern or regulate the identity of other girls.

The good-bad girl themes that the girls articulated through their rules of conduct were similar to the gendered discourses and feminine subject positions described in Chapter Two. In Chapter Two good girl-bad girl and nice girl-naughty girl identities were linked to depictions of how girls and young women negotiated, regulated, and contended feminine subject positions in online contexts. While the literature did not specifically link these discourses to impression management practice, Jackson and Vares (2011) pointed out that feminine subject positions created a profoundly contradictory and dilemmatic space for girls, a space that was almost impossible for them to inhabit without some sort of tension. Morrison (2010) noted that despite the desire to have their own unique online style, girls continued to feel pressured to conform to the sociocultural messages concerned with femininity. Several other scholars (see, for example, Ringrose et al., 2012) reported on the hypersexualised pressures of social networking which included posting sexy or body-revealing images. Few girls in this study claimed that other girls’ online postings were slutty or whorish. However, they did suggest that some girls posted inappropriate content for boys’ attention (e.g., “girls my age take inappropriate photos of themselves and post them on Facebook for boys attention” [S75-A24]). The ways in which the girls negotiated, regulated, and contended these aspects of interaction are discussed more explicitly in Chapter Seven. Here, the focus has been on how the appropriation and/or manipulation of the rules of online conduct influence identity performance.

Impression Management

A set of impression management practices and strategies was described in Chapter Three, Table 3.1. This table included control practices (e.g., intentional efforts to improve personal image), covering strategies (e.g., intentional efforts to conceal personal situation), uncovering practices (e.g., intentional efforts to uncover the truth), and counter uncovering strategies (e.g., intentional efforts to reclaim image when cover has been blown). These practices and strategies have been used as analytic units to analyse how the girls shaped their social identity through their interactions with peers and close friends in online contexts.

Across the corpus of data, the girls’ accounts showed that many of them employed online practices and strategies that aligned to Goffman’s (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986) description of impression management. Control and covering practices were easily recognised as stand-alone actions. Some of these practices included self-control, strategic output, and shows of discretion, loyalty, and integrity. Covering strategies appeared to be the more common action and were reasonably strategic and intentional. Examples involved deterrence, deliberate conflict, open criticism, story-telling, fake impressions, and the use of smokescreens. Some uncovering
practices were noted. These practices included questioning, interrogation, and short-term monitoring. Table 6.3 provides examples of some of the girls’ impression management practices and strategies drawn from free-text accounts in The Survey and Live Chat extracts from The Group Activity. Overall, these accounts and interactions suggested that most of the girls were reasonably well versed in the art of impression management. Some dynamic moments of impression management were captured in Live Chat sessions of The Group Activity.

Table 6.3
*A summary of the girls’ impression management practices and strategies from The Survey and The Journal.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Practices</th>
<th>Intentional effort to improve personal situation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-control.</td>
<td>Some girls feel pressured to do things online more than in real life … I would never do that (S75-B38).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic output.</td>
<td>I don’t give out important information such as mobile phone numbers on social networking sites unless it is in a private chat or messaging (S72-B15).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show of discretion, loyalty, &amp; integrity.</td>
<td>I try to be myself online and not pretend to be someone I am not.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covering Strategies</th>
<th>Intentional effort to uncover the truth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deterrence.</td>
<td>When friends act inappropriately, swear, or put up disturbing images, I immediately block them (S72-A21).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberate conflict.</td>
<td>If she starts being mean just swear at her … tell her to shut up (GA3, G2-LC).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open criticism.</td>
<td>She is very mean, that’s a hooooorrribble person, I don’t like her (GA1, G2-LC).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story-telling/Faked impressions.</td>
<td>I make up lies so people will think I’m trendy (S72-A14).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smokescreen.</td>
<td>I always ask questions only my real friends will know whilst skyping to identify whether this is my real friend. But I do so casually as I may get teased or picked on after this as they may think I am very protective of myself (S72-C8).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uncovering Practices</th>
<th>Intentional effort to get behind the “noise” to uncover the truth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questioning.</td>
<td>I ask my sisters about the person that added me just in case (S72-B28).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogating</td>
<td>If someone is mean to me on the internet, if I know them, I wouldn’t block them however I would ask them face-to-face why they said that (S72-B35).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term monitoring.</td>
<td>I don’t accept people straight away, I look at their profile and their friends first (S72-A13).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Impression Management: A Live Chat Example**

The following Live Chat exchange took place between two girls from Group Activity Four. Prior to the encounter below, the girls in the group were discussing the importance of having a mobile phone at school. All of the girls were talking about how they would feel if they were not allowed to use their mobile phones until the end of the day (3:20pm). At that time, the two girls below (Girl 3 and 4) agreed that having a mobile phone was very important. Girl 3 said she needed a mobile phone to stay in touch with her parents while Girl 4 said she wanted her mobile phone to keep up-to-date with Facebook. Further into the discussion, Girl 3 admits that she doesn’t really care about having a mobile phone. Girl 4 picks up on Girl 3’s shift in demeanour. Below is the exchange between these two girls. Abbreviation codes used in the following excerpt are: G3 and G4 = Girl Three and Girl Four, R = Researcher, F2F = face-to-face, and LC = Live Chat.

R-LC: In this scene, the girls are not allowed to use their mobile phone until 3:20pm, how would you feel about that?

G4-LC: That’s not good!

G3-LC: … I wouldn’t really care.

G4-LC: I would.

G3-LC: I’m not like attached to my mobile phone … I um … don’t really worry about that.

G4-LC: You don’t even have one (loud)

G3-LC: Yah I do (defensive)

G4-LC: Do you? You never have it at school.

G3-LC: Whot?

G4-LC: Do you use your mum’s?

G3-LC: I don’t. I don’t. When I had it, I wouldn’t really use it during the day (voice fades)

G4-LC: I use it a lot!

When Girl 3 states that a mobile phone is not really that important to her (“I wouldn’t really care”), Girl 4 makes attempts to uncover the girl’s indifference (“you don’t even have one”). Girl 3 tries to counter Girl 4’s uncovering move by indicating that she did have a phone (“yah, I do”). Girl 4 continues to make attempts to uncover the truth by questioning Girl 3 (“Do you?”). She then goes on to say, “you never have it at school” suggesting that she has been keeping an eye on Girl 3. Girl 4’s actions are typical uncovering moves. In the end, it seems that Girl 3’s cover story has been blown but she makes a brave attempt to reclaim her position with a revised story (“I don’t. I don’t. When I had it, I wouldn’t really use it during the day.”). At the end of the episode, Girl 4 makes her position clear -“I use it a lot!”. Girl 4 has managed to align her practice to the group’s normative view on mobile phones (e.g., they are very important) and, in this way, stages a show of loyalty to girls her age (e.g., I have one and I use it a lot).

This exchange appeared to be an important part of Girl 4’s identity work. With the aim to fit in and be part of the group, she uses particular strategies to reveal the falsehoods or
misrepresentations of another to strengthen her own position. The exchange highlights the complex work of staging an identity through impression management strategies to align to standards that the group has co-constructed in and through their talk. Undermining the self-work of another person (Girl 3) was inherent to the process. From the perspective of Girl 3, this work might seem unworthy, mean, or even bitchy but she does not counter Girl 4’s final response. A temporary kind of “interactional modus vivendi” emerged. That is, “together the [girls] contribute[d] to a single over-all definition to the situation which involve[d] not so much a real agreement as to what existe[d] but rather a real agreement as to whose claims concerning [the mobile phone issue] would be temporarily honoured” (Goffman, 1959, p. 21). Girl 4’s attempt to uncover what she believed was the ‘real’ truth about Girl 3’s claims was an example of one girl working hard to maintain her standing in the group while the other girl was working hard to derail her position.

In contrast to online participation, this episode was marked by a period of continuous face-to-face presence and “a setting that stay[ed] put” (Goffman, 1959, p. 33). The impressions were marked to the interactional moment and even though some tension between the girls lingered (e.g., Girl 3 disengaged from the discussion for several minutes), the episode passed without further discussion and the performance was terminated. Given the permanence and high visibility of online contexts, there is a reasonable chance that episodes like the one described above might become more heated and challenging. In online contexts such as Facebook, a running story of who posted what and when they posted it has potential to interrupt any attempt to conceal or cover-up damage to the self. Many more people can see mistakes, difficulties, and treacheries and it becomes difficult to reclaim a cover when a cover has been blown. The visibility of online interaction suggested that a sizable set of effective impression management strategies are needed by teen girls to manage and maintain a consistent and positive online identity. Moreover, the girls’ exchange highlights how mobile phones have become a necessary teen girl accessory for achieving both face-to-face and online impression management. Teen girls who do not possess a mobile phone are not cool, equally bad is if they have to use their mother’s phone and don’t possess a personal device themselves. Similar findings were reported by Carrington (2012). She found that mobile phones were important cultural artefacts for young people. Alongside the design and utility features of the devices, they provided young people with the opportunity to demonstrate particular identities and build a sense of belonging.

Frame Governance

Earlier in this chapter, the discussion focused on the girls’ interactional practice in online contexts. The analyses suggested that the girls took up positions or roles within The Group Activity as part of their orientation to the encounter. Once these roles were taken up, the girls appeared to make a reasonable effort to conduct and present themselves with the attributes and
the character appropriate to that role and the frame at hand. Goffman used the term “frame” to articulate the basic elements and principles of understanding available to participants to make sense of the event. For example, one of the basic elements of being a cool teen girl is owning a personal mobile device capable of texting and accessing SNSs such as Facebook. The ways in which the girls appropriated these elements or rules of conduct to fabricate and present their identity within the research frame are discussed in this section. The analyses demonstrate how the frame informed and regulated what was expected by the girls and how the girls managed involvement in the research frame. Two modes of interactional involvement emerged in the analyses: ritual maintenance and ritual transgression.

**Ritual Maintenance: Enforcing the Rules**

Ritual maintenance refers to the interlocking obligation of maintaining the prescribed rules of conduct for the encounter (Goffman, 1986). Failure to maintain the rules has potential to lead to disruption and tension and, therefore, most often, at least one individual takes up actions to sustain the frame and minimise disruptions. The ways in which the girls maintained or governed the research frame are summarised in two units of interaction from Group Activity One. The first unit of interaction is below. Abbreviation codes used in the following excerpt are: G1 and G3 = Girl One and Girl Three, LC = Live Chat, and IM = Instant Messaging.

```
G1-LC: Who’s guest three?
G3-LC: Me!
G1-LC: You spelt sneaking (heavy inflection) wrong! Oh no, it’s around
G3-LC: I, I, I, fixed up my round
G1-LC: Urmm, no you didn’t, it says (she spells it out) a-r-o-u-i-n-d
G3-IM: Around*
```

Previously in Group Activity One, Girl 1 had established herself as the group leader. She was moderator of activities and ruler of conduct. She assumed this character or took up this position early in the encounter by actively and quickly orientating herself to the setting (see Table 6.1). In the segment above, when spelling errors were found in the Instant Messaging stream, she sourced the person responsible (“who’s guest three?”) and then went on to describe the spelling error to the girl (Girl 3). Girl 3, being caught out with the spelling error (“I, I, I,”), suggested that she had already fixed the error. Girl 1 responded with an “urmm” suggesting a *you-can’t-fool-me-attitude* and then pointed out that the error was still visible - she spelled it out for emphasis. Girl 3 corrected the spelling error.

In this episode, Girl 1 has taken up the task of ensuring her interpretation of prescribed expectations for the research encounter is met. In her position as lead girl, she aimed for the constancy and patterning of interaction deemed appropriate for the setting (i.e., interactions with an adult researcher that is similar to a teacher). Deviations from expectations (e.g., spelling
mistakes) would not do. By revealing Girl 3’s mistake and suggesting how her actions could conform to the rules of conduct, Girl 1 closed off avenues that could contaminate or disrupt the character of the encounter. Moreover, by maintaining the research frame (i.e., the main activity of the event) she has strengthened her position as group leader.

Later in the same session, the girls from Group Activity One were watching Video Two that was about gossip spreading at school through mobile phones. The following exchange occurred. Abbreviation codes used in the following excerpt are: G1, G2, G3, and G4 = Girl One, Girl Two, Girl Three, and Girl Four, and LC = Live Chat.

G3-LC: Ooohah, I love this movie!
G1-LC: I’ve seen this movie! It’s about rumours and gossip.
G2-LC: Yeah.
G4-LC: Yah.
G3-LC: Yeah, what Danah said, yeah what Danah said … I agree (loud)
G4-LC: Ummm.
G3-LC: Brummmmmmmmm mmm mmmm mmm (goes on for several seconds).
G1-LC: Shona stop grumbling! (harsh)

This segment began with Girl 3’s enthusiastic response to the video clip. Next, Girl 1 claimed that she knew the film and what it was about. Girls 2 and 4 agreed with Girl 1’s summary of the clip. Girl 3 loudly and repeatedly agreed with Girl 1’s description of the film. When there was little response from the group, Girl 3 began to make loud noises. Harshly, Girl 1 told her to stop grumbling.

Girl 3 appeared to be making attempts to gain attention from the other girls in the group, especially Girl 1. She was overly enthusiastic about the activity (“Ooohah, I love this movie”) and her agreement with the movie content was excessive and repetitive (“Yeah, what Danah said, yeah what Danah said … I agree”). However, for the most part, her moves were met with little response from the group with the exception of Girl 4 (“Ummm”). It was not clear if this response was intended as an act of deterrence or if it was simply a brief acknowledgement of Girl 3’s contribution. In any case, Girl 3 responded with a loud and distracting “brummmmm” and Girl 1 chastised her. This reprimand suggested that Girl 3’s noisy contribution was “too much involvement” (Goffman, 1986, p. 346) and not welcome given the frame of activity. Through her actions, Girl 1 reinforced her obligation as leader to maintain the rules and routines of the research setting. Reinforcing the rules of conduct to govern the frame of interaction appeared to offer the opportunity to strengthen her identity position as well as meet the demands of face (i.e., present an acceptable self).
Ritual Transgression: Breaking the Rules

The very idea of asking teen girls to share their private life with an adult researcher suggested the possibility that at least some of the girls might undertake a research performance that differed from their everyday performance with friends. In other words, the girls would perform or construct an identity specifically for the research interaction, and this performance would probably differ from their everyday interactions with peers. There were several moments in each session of The Group Activity that hinted at this possibility. Although these moments could only be taken as interactions generated for the research setting, it did highlight that rules were broken when the girls engaged with peers, and when this happened, tensions emerged. The account in the previous section offered an example of one such moment. The example below is more specific. This exchange emerged when an unexpected technical problem left the girls from Group Activity Four unsupervised in the computer lab. In this excerpt, the girls discovered that they were unsupervised and they began to communicate more freely. The shift in the girls’ conversation suggested that they were aware the interactional frame had changed. Abbreviation codes used in the following excerpt are: G1, G2, G3, G4, and G5 = Girl One, Girl Two, Girl Three, Girl Four, and Girl Five, R = Researcher, LC = Live Chat, and IM = Instant Messaging.

G2-LC: Roberta? (loud)
G1-LC: Whew, whew (loud)
G4-IM: Roberta u there
G2-LC: Roberta? (very loud)
G5-LC: Hey! (very loud)
G3-IM: ROBERTA
G4-LC: Tara can you hear me? (softly)
G3-LC: Oh, I can hear you (softly)
G4-LC: Hey (softly)
G3-LC: Halloo (louder)
G1-LC: Can you hear me? can you hear me? (loud)
G2-IM: I CAN
G1-LC: Can Robertaaaaa! Roberta Roberta Roberta Roberta Roberta Roberta
   Roberta (low silly voice) Roberrrer Roberterrrr (high shrill voice)
G3-LC: Roberta are you there? (worried)
R-LC: Can you hear me now?
G1-LC: Hi Roberterrr, what’s up my friend? (silly high voice)
   (nervous giggles in the background)

Earlier in the session, Girl 3 and 4 were reasonably constrained, verbally contributing little. In this exchange, they take steps to get involved. They started with Instant Message queries (“Roberta u there”). Once they discovered they were unsupervised, they began to communicate directly with each other through the Live Chat facility (“Tara can you hear me?”). They spoke softly. It might be that they didn’t want to draw attention to their conversation. Regardless, their actions were more subdued than the other girls. In contrast, Girls 1, 2, and 5 drew attention to themselves in a variety of ways. Openly questioning in loud voices (“Roberta?” [loud]; “Hey!” [very loud]) and calling out (“Whew, whew!” [loud]). Girl 1’s actions stood out amongst the
others. She demanded attention (“Can you hear me? can you hear me?” [loud]) and then engaged in silly low and high voices (“Roberrrrter Roberrrr”). Her character shift was noticeable. Girl 1’s performance appeared to worry Girl 3 (“Roberta are you there?” [worried]). The transgressions of Girl 1 appeared to make her uncomfortable. When the connection resumed and I returned to the setting, all of the girls went quiet except Girl 1. She continued to play her role a little bit longer with one last “Hi Roberrrr, what’s up my friend?” The nervous giggles in the background suggested that the girls were well aware of Girl 1’s transgressions but none of the girls added anything further. The break in frame closed and the session moved on. That is, the “spate of activity” (Goffman, 1986, p. 345) that shifted the governance of the frame from the main action ended and the framing of the research activity was re-established.

This exchange was a unique and spontaneous performance of the girls from Group Activity Four. While the passage cannot be taken as a real world encounter (i.e., an unsupervised, unsolicited event), the exchange highlighted what can happen when a group of girls come together with a peer-only audience. The girls’ interactions became less orderly and the rules of conduct loosened. Some girls took the opportunity to drop their character and take up a different demeanour. Fitting in appeared to become an immediate necessity but how the girls did this varied. Nevertheless, it was the technical malfunction that changed the rules of conduct and the attention-seeking behaviour of Girl 1 that appeared to shift the character of the frame. Her attempts to fit in by sticking out seemed to push at the girls’ expectations for acceptable conduct. The stability of the frame and the assumed agreement between the girls about the character of the setting appeared to be in danger of disruption. Goffman (1967) suggested that in real life moments, these types of conditions had potential to lead to tension and dissonance, and, ultimately, loss of face and embarrassment.

**Embarrassment**

Goffman (1959) suggested that managing identity in settings with overlapping or coinciding utility (e.g., settings with more than one audience) was difficult. He explained that the greater the number of actions the setting serviced (e.g., consider Facebook), the more likely “out of play behaviours” (1959, p. 123) slipped onto the stage and subjected the actor to embarrassment. The girls in this study appeared to share similar sentiments about the possibility for certain types of interactions to slip through online management controls to cause them embarrassment.

The excerpt below is from The Group Activity. In this exchange, the girls from Group Activity Two were discussing the content of Video Two (i.e., rumours being spread at school via mobile phones). They were concerned with how gossip and rumours moved through mobile devices and services such as Facebook to affect them at school. The trustworthiness of mobile phone
contact was questioned. Abbreviation codes used in the following excerpt are: G1, G2, G3, and G4 = Girl One, Girl Two, Girl Three, and Girl Four, R = Researcher, and LC = Live Chat.

R-LC: What was the main issue in the video clip?  
G1-LC: Um, lies?  
G2-LC: Lies can travel really quickly.  
G3-LC: Well anything can happen really quickly when you’re at school like someone’s going out with someone and the whole school knows like in 10 minutes.  
R-LC: Oh … okay so it’s pretty fast?  
G1, G2, & G4 –LC: Yahp  
G3-LC: Yah, so that’s why you’ve gotta be careful what you say at school and like um on Facebook and stuff.  
G1-LC: If you say something bad about someone or someone says something bad about you, you uh can’t …  
G2-LC: You can’t take it back.  
G1, G2, & G4-LC: You can’t take it back easy.  
R-LC: Oh … okay  
G3-LC: You could but no one would believe you.  
R-LC: So, what would you be thinking?  
G3-LC: Umm, I wouldn’t trust the person online …I don’t really trust anyone online.  
G1, G2, & G4 – LC: NO! (loud)  
G3-LC: No because you don’t know if that’s actually them.  
G2-LC: Yah, you never know if it’s actually them.  
G3-LC: Like if you really want to talk to someone you talk to them on your email.  
G2-LC: Yah because like it’s actually given to you.

In this exchange, the girls were discussing the speed and spread of untruthful postings. They expressed concern over their inability to take things back that they might have accidently posted. “Yah, so that’s why you’ve gotta be careful what you say at school and like um on Facebook and stuff” (Girl Three). The potential for the whole school to know “like in 10 minutes” (Girl Three) suggested that managing impressions to avoid embarrassment was paramount to protecting the girls’ social identity. The girls’ unwillingness to trust even their “real good friends” (Researcher) demonstrated that online participation had a shadier side that challenged most of them. A number of the girls expanded on their views about online gossip and rumours in their free-text accounts to The Journal. One girl advised that she would “feel really embarrassed and stupid” (J8-C16) if something bad happened to her online in front of everyone. Another girl explained that it would be especially difficult if an incident happened “out of the blue. It would be worse because you wouldn’t know if they were kidding or not so it would be worse and it would hurt more” (J5-C2). Several of the girls claimed that they had had experiences with someone being mean to them in front of other people so they understand the implications of embarrassment quite well. “People would be offended and feel really bad about themselves” (J5-C5).
In Journal accounts, the girls offered a set of positive attributes and rules of conduct for avoiding embarrassment. “Never speak about someone because you never know who’s listening” (J4-C7); “be careful for what you do, don’t send mean/rude stuff” (J16-C16), avoid “saying horrible things” (J1-C4), try “chatting nicely” (J17-C1), do “not be b****y to friends” (J17-C2), and do not cyberbully, gossip, or be nasty (J17-C3). A number of the girls reported that gossiping, rumour spreading, and general meanness were common practice amongst Year 8 girls. In many cases, their online safety mechanisms did not prevent these types of actions from slipping onto the main screen of online contexts. Indeed, a small number of girls admitted that they had slipped up themselves (e.g., “everyone has done that at some point of time, including me” [S75-A10]).

In The Journal and The Survey, several girls expressed resignation over the fact that girls their age behaved badly online (e.g. “sadly, for most girls, they are mean to each other” [J17-C3]). These actions included showing-off for boys, being mean, and gossiping. The girls talked about the strategies required to prevent being embarrassed by others’ bad behaviour. While most of them expressed honourable intentions and were keen to take up the positive attributes associated with good online practice (“I always know where to draw the line” [S75-A33]), sometimes the identity work needed to avoid embarrassment required a different approach (e.g., “I really did feel like saying those sort of things to her face and in front of her mum considering she was my best friend” [J3-C19]). For these particular girls, embarrassment (i.e., saving face) required more protective and defensive modes of interaction (e.g., blocking; ignoring, telling others off, and so forth). The power of embarrassment to shift the girls’ practice to take up less valued attributes and practices suggested that this specific emotion operated as a universal, sociocultural boundary of significant importance (Goffman, 1956) to Year 8 girls.

Whether benign or dissonant, the girls’ accounts and interactions highlighted that their social practices were complex. Their interactions did not necessarily equate to adult-defined responsible behaviour but they talked about the processes they had in place to deal with the “grubby, gossipy business of staging a show” (Goffman, 1959, p. 133).

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented an analysis of data generated from the girls’ online interactions in The Group Activity and their accounts from The Survey and The Journal. The analyses focused on how the girls integrated their online practice into their everyday interactions with peers and close friends, and how these interactions constituted their social identity. The data was analysed using the three analytic questions described at the beginning of the chapter and Goffman’s (1986) analytic unit, the interaction order. By analysing the girls’ online interactions through the
interaction order, attention was drawn to the ways in which they generated or fabricated their social encounters to manage and negotiate the everyday events and ordinary troubles of social interaction. The analyses emphasised the important task of managing impressions to save face and the critical function of the rules of conduct and frame governance for managing social identity.

Role allocation (e.g., taking up group leadership) appeared to be a fundamental component of their everyday interaction and online practice. This division of labour appeared to cast them into positions or characters with particular obligations and expectations for conduct. Staying in character seemed to be important and being cool was firmly monitored by at least one girl in each Group Activity. The girls talked about a number of identities and gendered discourses that regulated appropriate online behaviour (e.g., nice versus mean conduct). The online attributes proposed by the girls aligned to several of gendered subject positions discussed in Chapter Two. This finding suggested that the girls’ everyday interactions and online practice were loosely linked to macro structures. At the same time, the girls’ performance in The Group Activity highlighted their need to play at impressions and their capacity to switch and reshape identities on the spur of the moment. Their performance was always in relation to someone else and therefore, their performance was constituted in the order of the events on hand. Sometimes the girls were ritual maintainers, sometimes they were ritual transgressors. The rules and routines by which the girls performed were dynamic, shifted frequently, and were often challenged by other group members.

The need to save face was demonstrated by the girls’ intentional efforts to protect their own character. Uncovering the untruths of others was a standard practice for saving face. Worries about embarrassment in face-to-face and online contexts reinforced the need to save face regardless of the rules and routines for appropriate conduct. Often the self-work needed to avoid embarrassment required an approach that pushed at the rules of politeness. The visibility of the girls’ impression management struggles suggested that navigating the demanding frames of social media required skills and abilities that maintained a consistent and positive online identity while simultaneously minimising troubles. How the rules of conduct were ritualised through online practice, how character and demeanour interacted to shift and shape ordinary experiences into extraordinary moments, and how subordinate lines of activity were regulated through these practices suggested that the girls drew on a number of cultural resources to manage and navigate their online practice with peers and close friends.

This chapter explored how the girls performed their identity through everyday interaction and online practice with peers and close friends. Goffman’s theoretical resources have offered an explicit way for coming to understand how moments of situated practice and personal agency
shaped and constituted teen girls’ social identity in networked times. Moreover, the analysis has shown how the girls’ practices and strategies were underpinned by the possibilities for creative action within the constraint of dominant discourses and online platforms. The research frame did not constitute a natural conversation with the girls nor was it a real world experience of their online participation but as Goffman (1986) once quipped, “individuals act upon what is said to them, and these actions in turn become inextricably part of the ongoing world” (pp. 500-501).

In the next chapter, the challenges and difficulties the girls faced in online contexts are examined. In particular, the chapter focuses on how the girls accounted for the ways in which they negotiated, regulated, and contested social boundaries (e.g., differentiated feminine identities) in online contexts.
Chapter Seven  
Navigating Online Boundaries  

In this chapter, data are being analysed and reported along the theme of navigating online boundaries. Chapter Five described the girls’ online practice in relation to cybersafety recommendations. The analyses highlighted how most of the girls’ accounts suggested that they adhered to cybersafety protocols. In Chapter Six, Goffman’s (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986) theoretical constructs were offered as tools for systematically analysing data concerned with how the girls managed their online practice and social identity under networked conditions. Neither of these earlier chapters explicitly articulated what challenges and difficulties the girls faced in navigating online contexts or how they managed these experiences. Chapter Seven offers one way of explaining how the girls managed and negotiated these experiences. Four analytic questions have provided the structure for this chapter. These questions are:

1. How did the girls describe their online negotiations?
2. What practices and strategies did they use to navigate these experiences?
3. What challenges and difficulties did they describe?
4. How were their challenges and difficulties negotiated?

The analysis in this chapter draws on data taken from free-text accounts of The Survey, Live Chat and Instant Message interactions from The Group Activity, and free-text accounts from The Journal. Analysis of these units was facilitated by drawing on the boundary scholarship of Akkerman and Bakker (2011) and Singh et al. (2013). This scholarship has offered explicit terms and concepts for reading how the girls negotiated social boundaries in online contexts.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines how the girls described, differentiated, and categorised people in online contexts. Attention is drawn to the routines, rituals, and regulatory practices used by the girls to negotiate the boundaries and interactions within and between different online social groups. The second section of the chapter summarises the everyday challenges and difficulties that the girls faced with friends and other girls in online contexts. The chapter closes with a discussion of the analyses.

Online Social Groups

This section of the chapter examines the ways in which the girls described, differentiated, and categorised people in online contexts. In particular, attention is drawn to how the girls constructed and maintained social boundaries around their in and out of group friends in online contexts. Akkerman and Bakker (2011) described social boundaries as sociocultural similarities.
or differences that led to dis/continuity in action or interaction. They explained that social boundaries constituted what counted and what didn’t count as participation in particular domains or social contexts. Akkerman and Bakker described how markers of difference (e.g., attributes) created, maintained or contested the expectations, routines, and rules of conduct that influenced social interaction and boundary construction. Through interactional processes that constructed or recognised identity differences, social boundaries between groups of people were fabricated and expectations, routines, and rules for interaction were established. In this section of the chapter, the girls’ research interactions highlight how they accounted for different group members, how they identified and tested whether or not the person had the attributes of a group member, and how group membership was regulated. The discussion draws attention to the expectations, routines, and rules of conduct that the girls used to engage with different groups of people in online contexts.

**Unknown People**

Many of the girls described a group of people that they did not communicate with online. These individuals were people that the girls did not know. A small number of girls used the term stranger to account for unknown people but one girl called them randoms while another girl called them weirdos. One girl explained that an unknown person was someone that “you never had a face-to-face conversation with” (S72-B22). The girls claimed that they had specific routines for preventing contact with unknown people. For example, almost all of the girls said that they had strict privacy controls to protect themselves from unknowns (“I always have my settings on private so no one I don’t know can’t find me” [S72-C6]). Many of the girls claimed that they regulated personal information on their profiles (“I never give away any personal details like my address or full name” [S72-A11]) and about two-thirds of them claimed they used concealment strategies to protect their identity such as creating a fake name (“I use fake names when I join a club that I am not sure of to protect myself” [S72-B44]). Some girls also said that they stayed away from particular sites (e.g., online chatrooms) where unknowns were more likely to be found. A small number of girls provided reasonable detail about their measures for managing unknowns. One girl wrote,

> I never tell anyone my surname or location or phone number or any personal things if I don’t 100% know them. For example, I have my aunty’s and uncle’s friends on Facebook so if they ask me about my birthday party I would reply the details in private messaging but would never tell my new friend or strangers as they could be lying [about] their identity and could result in stalking. (S72-C11)

In this excerpt, attributes and expectations for unknown people have been identified (“don’t know them 100%” and “could be lying”), rules of conduct (“I never tell anyone”) and strategies for keeping details private (“reply details in private messaging”) have been established, and interactional difficulties have been named (“could result in stalking”). By positioning some
people as dangerous, this girl fabricated a strongly insulated boundary between herself and unknowns, one that she strictly regulated. Many other girls’ accounts constructed unknown people as dangerous and unsafe. These girls also used strict privacy settings to protect their identity and to prevent unknown people from moving into in-group categories (e.g., “friends”). As one girl put it, “if you only add people that you know for sure then there is a lower chance of some weirdo adding you” (S72-A28).

The girls’ accounts suggested that they actively constructed strongly insulated boundaries around unknown people in online contexts. They appeared to generate and maintain these boundaries by attaching attributes and expectations associated with dominant cybersafety discourses concerned with risky behaviour and young people’s wellbeing. The degree to which these boundaries protected the girls from online problems with unknowns was not clear. However, the girls did not report any online problems which suggested that their actions generated reasonably effective safety boundaries around unknown people.

Parents

Parents were the adult group that the girls said they talked to most in online contexts. For most of the girls, this contact was by mobile phone although a small number of them reported using social media services such as Facebook to stay connected with parents. Most of the parent contact was described as routine queries about school pick-up times and requests for after-school visits with friends. Other girls suggested that they maintained mobile phone contact with parents to ease concerns about emergency situations. “Well…it’s good that like if you’re really sick and you can’t get to the office or something. You feel like you want to call your parents” (GA2, G2-LC). A few girls said that they asked parents to assist with strategies for personal safety and online time management (“I got my parents to set privacy settings on my computer with a password that I don’t know that restricts certain websites and has a time limit so I can focus on other things” [S72-B6]). A small number of girls talked about sharing passwords with parents for safety reasons while a significant number of girls claimed that they went to parents instead of friends when safety issues or online troubles occurred (see, Figure 5.6, Chapter Five). In the main, the girls constructed parents as more helpful than friends when online problems occurred. For instance, when online troubles emerged with friends or other girls, many of the girls said that they sought assistance from parents first. “…if I was going to give advice I would say…if someone was being mean to you then tell your mum” (S72-B16).

Half of the girls claimed that they had family rules for online participation. These girls explained that their online contact with friends was organised around parent internet rules and, most commonly, related to night time access to mobile phones. The girls claimed that night time guidelines included turning off the phone or handing the device over to a parent (e.g., “My mum
makes me put it in the lounge room with her” [GA2, LC- G3]). A small number of girls described a two-tiered practice that involved phones off at night when at home but on all night when away from home (e.g., at a weekend sleepover).

The girls constructed parent supervision as a common practice although some of them also talked about how this supervision made them uncomfortable.

I think parents need to have some trust in their kids sometimes because it’s a bit embarrassing when you’re talking to someone online about what happened at school and your mum is over your shoulder watching and skype is embarrassing if your mum or dad walks over when you’re talking to friends. (S75-A11)

In this excerpt, the girl commented specifically on how young people need to be trusted and that parent monitoring was embarrassing. The girls’ efforts to manage what happened at school and what happened at home in the same interactional moment highlighted how participatory expectations and rules of conduct for one social group (e.g., parents) overlapped with and challenged the expectations and rules of conduct for another social group, in this case, friends. Her simultaneous work to construct positions within both categories pointed to the complicated process of fabricating and managing impressions under the inherent condition of adult surveillance in networked culture.

Most of the girls did not openly talk about practices for evading parent regulations although a few of the girls explained how they managed to work around internet restrictions. One girl said she accessed her Facebook page at the public library, another girl indicated that she used her friend’s internet service to access certain downloads (e.g., music) while a third girl said she accessed the internet from popular hotspots like McDonald’s fast food outlets when her credit ran out. The ways in which these girls constructed and negotiated parent regulations suggested that at least some of the girls made considerable effort to side step parent regulations to stay connected with friends. On the other hand, many of the girls who talked about having parent rules for their online participation also indicated that parent monitoring of rules was not overly rigid. Over half of these girls said that they did not turn off their mobile phone at night and a slightly smaller but significant number said that they kept their laptop in their bedroom. While most of the girls did not describe their night time interaction, some of the girls provided accounts of relative autonomy from parent supervision after hours. These practices appeared to be well outside cybersafety recommendations.

Explanation for the girls’ accounts of parent regulation and monitoring of online interaction was not addressed specifically in the research interaction. However, the girls’ indicated that parent trust was important (see Figure 7.1) and their accounts suggested the ways in which parents
managed online regulation had significant impact on how parent-child boundaries were constructed, negotiated, and regulated.

![Diagram showing parents' trust in girls]

*Figure 7.1. Girls’ accounts of parent trust.*

High levels of parent trust and expectations for self-monitoring appeared to position the girls as capable and mature young adults whereas lack of trust and heavy monitoring seemed to position them at-risk and possible victims for problematic online encounters. The girls’ accounts implied that characteristics of trustworthiness and self-regulation were important teen girl attributes. By fabricating these attributes, the girls seemed able to position themselves within parallel social groups that operated on different rules of conduct. In other words, governing impressions of trustworthiness and the capacity for self-regulation appeared to enable the girls to transition smoothly between subject positions pleasing to parents such as good girl and safe girl and the trustworthy, self-governing teen girl obligation that appeared to characterise rules of conduct for peer interaction. The analyses suggested that the girls negotiated co-existing boundaries between parent and peers by creating, either openly or covertly, an image of themselves that coincided with others’ expectations for their character. By displaying the attributes associated with good demeanour, in this case, trustworthiness and personal control, the girls were able to weaken the insulation of the boundary constructed by parents and strengthen the insulation of the boundary constructed by teen girl expectations. However, negotiating the expectations and rules of conduct between parents and peers was also governed by some of the girls’ need for adult support and assistance when online problems with peers and friends became unmanageable (discussed later in this chapter).

**Friends**

I think friendship is the most important thing in life apart from family. (S33-B12)

Most of the girls in this study constructed friendship as very important. Survey accounts showed that the girls associated many positive attributes with friends such as loyalty, trustworthiness, thoughtfulness, helpfulness, kindness, dependability, niceness, cheerfulness, and being supportive. The girls used a number of different terms to describe friends such as “best friend”, “real friend”, “bestie”, “BFF”, and so forth. In the main, a friend was constructed as a
confidante, someone to share personal experiences with and someone to help with problems. “My friends are extremely important to me, I go to them for all my problems or questions, especially school ones” (S33-B8).

The girls identified “good friends” as someone they could “hang-out with” during school breaks, have fun with, and were not judgemental. The girls indicated that friends contributed to feelings of belongingness and being liked. One girl said, “We all stick together, we help and support each other with decisions (S72-A2). Another girl added, “When I go to school I enjoy socialising with my friends. I feel like I belong” (S33-A15). This girl explained,

I think the most important thing in school apart from school work is friends because if we didn’t have good friends people will start hating school and hating being at school as there is no one to hang out with at lunch and if you sit alone at lunch people will look at you like you’re a loner and that isn’t a nice feeling at all. (S33-B41)

This girl commented specifically on the importance of having good friends at school. Good friends made school a better place and, more important, they regulated and governed personal attributes associated with status and popularity. Not having someone to hang out with makes you a “loner”, an unenviable position that had potential to create impressions linked to social sanction and disapproval.

According to the girls, friends did not act inappropriately, swear, put up disturbing images, break promises, steal boyfriends, tell secrets after a fight, spread rumours, exaggerate, or say hurtful things. These actions and interactions were unexpected from friends. Very few girls claimed to have had these experiences with friends but several of them agreed that it would not be nice. Some girls said they would feel “intimidated” (J3-C16), “really bad and horrible” (J3-C18), and “really angry” (J9-C1) if friends treated them in unexpected ways. Other girls suggested that it would be “really embarrassing” (J8-C12), “confusing” (J8-C5), “…soooo rude” (J2-C9), “veerrrryyy mean” (J6-C3), and “b****y […] sorry for the swear word but I am just so against it]” (J5-C20). One girl talked about her experience with a friend in more detail.

When I was going out with my boyfriend, I was talking with some friends and they were discussing everything that they had done with their boyfriends and they then came to me and asked what I had done with mine … since I had done nothing, I made up a lie and said that we held hands on the bus. I told them not to tell anyone and a few days later I had 6 people come up to me asking “Was it true?” “Did you really hold hands?” That wouldn’t be such a big deal but it so happens that it was a secret hidden from everyone but the friends I had told myself. It was incredibly irresponsible and disrespectful. (J9-C19)

This girl’s account highlighted two important points about her interactions with close friends. First, the relationship was bounded by a set of expectations that included intimate sharing, trust, and secrecy. In this episode, these boundaries were regulated by expectations for “discussing
everything they had done with their boyfriends” and the obligation of “keeping the secret hidden from everyone but friends”. Second, the encounter highlighted how the rules of conduct operated to generate interactions and produce situated conditions that required strategies to save face. For example, in her efforts to camouflage intimacy with her boyfriend, this girl “made up a lie” about holding hands with him on the bus. Her sudden shuffle to save face (Goffman, 1959) demonstrated that controlling impressions was important enough to forfeit at least one positive attribute, in this case, honesty, to maintain her position in the group. Of interest, this type of slippage did not supersede the expectation that friends did not share secrets. Friends kept private matters private.

It was clear that friends were important to the girls and that these relationships were based on particular expectations, obligations, and rules of conduct. Friends stood up for you, told you things would be okay, they were supportive, and when other people said nasty things about you, “your friends [told] you it’s not true and everything, and ummm, [made] you not believe it” (GA1, G2-LC). While the attributes assigned to friends appeared to define, shape, and regulate the ways in which the girls negotiated friendship, expectations for loyalty and support appeared to be more effective in strengthening the boundary between girls that were friends and girls that were not friends.

**Friendship Privacy**

The girls constructed friendship privacy as essential and, therefore, messages and stories between in-group friends were well protected. For example, more than three-quarters of the girls reported using strategies for governing access to friendship messages. One of the more common ways to protect privacy was to share “important information on social networking sites” (S72-B15) through private messaging facilities not public feeds. One quarter of the girls described specific rules for communicating with friends online. That is, they would ask the other person a secret question, a question that “only a real friend [would] know” (S72-C12). Several girls talked about using made-up names or code names to hide their identity from non-friend people (e.g., “I always like to use code names such as trendy 007” [S72-A17]). One girl described her strategy like this: “I never put my real name on Facebook. I make up a name and just tell my friends that I have it” (S72-D6). A different girl said, “I write my name in Japanese so only my friends know who I am” (S72-C7). A small group of girls used song lyrics and inspirational quotes to communicate private messages to friends (e.g., “every day it’s you I live for, every day I follow after you” (S33-A19). In survey accounts, three girls’ consistently used unusual phrases to contribute their ideas. These phrases were generally meaningless in the research context (e.g., “I talk to my rock … like a boss” [S75-A14]). If the aim was to obscure meaning, these girls were successful.
Different ways for communicating with in and out-of-group friends was clearly articulated. Many of the girls talked about using encryption strategies and other processes of concealment to protect online messages from out-of-group people. For example, over two-thirds of the girls indicated that they used abbreviated language (e.g., SuP for what’s up?) and special icons (e.g., <3 = love) when communicating online with friends. As one girl explained,

I KNOW most girls my age like using abbreviated words such as lol = laugh out loud or lot of love, heyy = hey-hi-hello, wuu2 = what are you up to, biffle = best friend for life, and others, and there is also some swearing. (S75-C9)

The abbreviated language discussed in the excerpt above was mentioned and/or used by many of the girls in this study. One girl explained her online salutations in more detail.

We have a kind of method of how we talk to particular friends. For example, often with my best friend I write “oi” instead of heyyy. With people I want to get to know better I’ll write “hey”, for a guy I like or a guy friend, I would write “heyyyyyyyyy”. (S75-C1)

This girl’s approach included several deliberate variations on the conversational starter “hey” which suggested that subtle text differences had ritual significance (Goffman, 1981) in teen girls’ online performance and privacy management.

The abbreviated language and specialised icons used by the girls had similarities to leetspeak, a specialised form of symbolic writing used primarily on the internet to mask meaning (Mitchell, 2005). Even though the use of icons, symbols, and abbreviations was common practice, the girls did not discuss the effectiveness of this practice for protecting privacy with friends. However, the symbols and codes used by the girls were reasonably universal and likely understood by most young people. Therefore, in this case, the efficacy of the codes to conceal or protect privacy was unclear. Nevertheless, these strategies appeared to have utility for staging personal conversations in public networks such as Facebook. By bracketing segments of interaction inside sequences of coding, others appeared to be excluded from the conversation. The short excerpt below demonstrates how three girls’ from Group Activity One used abbreviated language and symbols in an Instant Messaging episode to negotiate a private conversation within the public space of the virtual classroom. The excerpt has been divided so that the simultaneity of the messaging is highlighted. Abbreviation codes used in the following excerpt are: G1, G2, G3, G4, and G5 = Girl One, Girl Two, Girl Three, Girl Four, and Girl Five and IM = Instant Messaging.

G1-IM: I cud b with hottie right now he he :)
G2-IM: :p
G3-IM: wahh?? ohh Ned.
G2-IM: haha

G4-IM: hello
G5-IM: hai
G4-IM: :)

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In this segment, Girl One shared her preference to be with “Ned”. Girl Two and Girl Three respond with similar coding. Shortly after the encounter began, Girl 4 and Girl 5 exchanged messages. The Instant Message feed was open to all of the participants, and, therefore these two girls were easily able to follow the “Ned” account but they did not engage in the banter. The cryptic style of messaging and the use of abbreviated language appeared to bracket the “Ned” sequence as a private conversation between Girl 1, 2, and 3. Girl 4 and Girl 5 carried on with their exchange using their own set of abbreviated language and symbols. In the excerpt shared above, the content of the messages between Girls 1, 2, and 3 is clear. Girl 1 has a boyfriend and Girls 2 and 3 are privileged with this information, they are positioned as in-group members. As outsiders to the conversation, Girls 4 and 5 are positioned as out-of-group members. They contest this status by engaging in their own messaging episode to construct their own insider status, albeit in a smaller group. This style of engagement was repeated by other girls in different sessions of The Group Activity. In each case, the girls used the Instant Messaging facility to sideline friendship conversations and to establish in-group and out-of-group boundaries.

The ways in which the girls used coding and abbreviated language to sideline conversations in The Group Activity highlighted two points. First, these techniques appeared to offer the girls important tools for shaping and regulating in-group and out-of-group boundaries and friendship privacy in networked contexts such as Facebook. Second, these rituals offered the girls devices for segregating their research performance from sideline conversations with friends. This practice highlighted one way in which the girls negotiated the front stage region of the research performance with the informal backstage region of friendship. Goffman (1959) described the front stage region as the main stage where individuals performed, acted and expressed the self in ways that maximised appearances and maintained standards. The backstage region was the place where the performer could step out-of-character and drop his/her front. In other words, the back region was where an individual could be themselves. By appropriating the rituals, routines, and rules of conduct from the informal interactions with friends, the girls were able to manage the front and back regions of the encounter with reasonable skill. However, their skill in negotiating the research performance successfully was not necessarily expected to be predictive of their ability to manage friendship privacy in the numerous front and backstage regions of networked culture.
Other Girls

The girls in this study talked about “other girls their age” as a distinctly separate social group and ascribed particular attributes and rules of conduct to the category that differed from the ways in which friends were constructed.

I think that mostly girls my age are obsessed with only 2 things: gossip and boys. Personally I am constantly hearing ‘face-to-face’ and online about other girls going out with boys and dumping them. Also about which girl hates who and which girl is being dramatic and which girl is fat etc. (S75-C11)

Year 8 girls’ obsessive demeanour was talked about in a number of the girls’ accounts. The excerpt above describes in some detail what two things young teen girls were obsessed about: boys and gossip. Going out with boys and dumping them appeared to be part of this obsession while gossiping was attached to being dramatic and talking about who was fat and who they hated. There was general agreement that other girls gossiped too much, were always talking about boys, and swearing too much. “I think that girls do too much gossiping and judge people before they get to know them. Some girls just need to grow up and stop acting stupid” (S75-A29). Other girls worried about their appearance (“Girls are most likely to care about what they look like” [S75-B22]). Inappropriate conduct of other girls also included showing-off and acting too old for their age. “Girls my age act like they are older and think blah blah is cute and get their hair dyed, wear makeup but I think we’re still too young” (S75-B8). Another girl added, “Some girls my age act too old for their age and are really immature doing things like partying too young and smoking” (S75-B37). These accounts suggested that the category of other girls was not just constructed around feminine attributes but also around what was considered appropriate behaviour and attributes for young teen girls.

Several of the girls talked specifically about the conduct of other girls in online contexts. “I think most girls can be really mean on any social network and can hurt girls’ feelings and can end up getting in a lot of trouble” (S75-B17). “Girls like[d] boys” (S75-A26) and for this reason, they behaved badly and acted inappropriately online. One girl said, “I think most girls my age take inappropriate photos of themselves and post them on Facebook for boys’ attention” (S75-B24). Another girl said, “they often post pictures of themselves posing and have friendship fights over Facebook” (S75-B33). Other girls’ online problems were attributed to SNSs, in particular, Facebook. “Girls are most likely to always talk about boys on Facebook and be very immature and swear to others, which is why Facebook should be banned!” (S75-B7). One girl accounted for other girls’ online conduct in this way:

[girls are more likely to behave badly towards each other online as they can be as tough as they want and use foul language and the looks and size of the person who is affected cannot react the same as they would in person. (S75-B2)
In the excerpt above, differences between face-to-face settings and online contexts was pointed to as a reason for young teen girls’ bad behaviour towards each other. Because the look and size of a person was masked in online contexts, girls could take up different identities such as being tough and swearing with less fear of reprisal. Apart from being obsessed with boys and gossiping, swearing was also constructed as problematic, “I think Year 8 girls should be able to go online and talk to their peers without all the swearing because some girls in our grade just have a mouth like you wouldn’t believe” (J17 –C16).

Consistently, the conduct of other girls drew strong response from the girls in this study. For example, in Journal accounts, three girls shared their feelings about the unkind girl from the kitchen scene in Video One.

I was shocked. (J2-C1)
I felt very upset and confused. (J2-C2)
I felt depressed and sorry. (J2-C4)

Another girl shared this story.

I haven’t had many experiences like these but one might have been when we were playing sport and these girls came up to us and started swearing at me and my friends and told us were not good as sport and we felt intimidated. (J3-C16)

Another girl wrote this,

I don’t like being called names, I have been all my life and I don’t like it so I don’t get why this B**** has to cause trouble. How would she feel if it happened to her?” (J6-C20)

One girl reported an online encounter with a girl in her year level.

There is one girl who always calls me names over the internet. After a while she started spamming my Facebook wall with rude comments about my body. The thing I dread about coming to school is that I cannot move classes. I blocked her and reported her to Facebook staff as well as a teacher. (S33, S72-D1)

These girls’ accounts raised two points. First, their stories highlighted that particular types of behaviours were associated with other girls, and that these behaviours were problematic and not well received. Some of these actions included being called names, having someone swear at them in front of other people, having rude comments made about their body, and spamming on Facebook. These experiences were described as upsetting, confusing, and intimidating, something that they did not like. The second point of interest was that the girls did not attribute these behaviours to bullying and cyberbullying. Considering that the definition for cyberbullying included hostile behaviour through the internet to cause harm (ACMA, 2015a), the accounts above suggested that some of them were experiencing online difficulties of this
nature. However, these girls did not construct their experiences as bullying or cyberbullying. This tendency was similar to the girls’ accounts concerned with taking and posting inappropriate photos. The girls did not describe this practice as sexting. This trend raised theoretical questions about why the girls did not associate other girls’ poor conduct as cyberbullying and sexting. While this avenue of questioning was not pursued at the time, there has been some evidence to suggest that inconsistent definitions for cyberbullying and sexting have seriously limited how these practices are understood by young people (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Livingstone & Haddon, 2009; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015; Sourander et al., 2010). The analyses points to the need for further investigation of young teen girls’ experience and understanding of these particular issues.

It was clear that relationships with other girls had significant impact on the girls’ everyday experience and that the character of these relationships was based on particular expectations, obligations, and rules of conduct for other girls. Other girls behaved badly and were obsessed with boys and gossip. Their conduct had potential to be hurtful and their practices appeared to be unpredictable. “Girls are just mean to each other” (J4-C5). While the girls did not construct other girls’ poor conduct as cyberbullying and sexting, they readily described their actions as mean. Mean behaviour included gossiping, telling secrets, and sending rude messages and pictures. These attributes and expectations appeared to define, shape, and regulate the ways in which the girls negotiated interactions with other girls. In the main, the expectation that other girls would be unkind, gossip, and behave inappropriately operated to strengthen the insulation of the boundary between girls that were friends and girls that were not friends. In other words, these boundaries appeared to be rigid and strictly regulated.

**Challenges and Difficulties**

The previous section of this chapter discussed how the girls’ described, differentiated, and categorised people. The girls’ accounts highlighted the significance of friends and other girls, and demonstrated that the expectations, routines, and rules of conduct for each group moderated and influenced the relative smoothness of the girls’ everyday encounters. While most of the girls claimed that their everyday interactions with friends and peers were mainly positive, several girls talked about how these relationships had potential to be somewhat challenging and sometimes difficult. These aspects of their experience are discussed in this section of the chapter.
Everyday Encounters

Few girls claimed that they experienced online problems with friends but those that did explained that they tried to work things out face-to-face. “I would not block a person that I know. I try to work it out with [them] face-to-face if they’re mean to me. I would ask them face-to-face why they said that” (S72-B35). Several other girls agreed that face-to-face discussions were important because computer or phone messages could be misunderstood. One girl explained, “I don’t think friends go online with the intention to hurt anyone but sometimes [they] say things [that are] taken the wrong way” (S75-B19). These girls considered Facebook a poor context for “deal[ing] with tough situations” but they conceded that “girls [were] more likely to say things on Facebook that they wouldn’t say in person” (S75-B3). While the girls described some of these situations as hurtful, they explained that it was best to “try and work it out” (S72-B11) and “let friends know how you feel” (J23-C7) instead of blocking them. As one girl explained, “a lot of people use [online communication] to deal with tough situations but it shouldn’t be used that way especially with friends” (S75-A5).

A few girls said that they would block a friend if interactions became difficult. “When friends are mean to me I usually block them because I don’t want to be reminded of what issue has happened between us” (S72-B3). Some girls claimed that they used more confronting strategies when friends were mean. One girl wrote, “I would tell a mean one off” (J2-C14). Another girl said, “I definitely [would] stand up for myself” and “I would tell her to shut up!” (GA2, G2-LC). Two girls said that when friends were mean, they got “very angry” and that they were likely to “swear” at the person (GA2, G3 & G1-LC). The kitchen exchange in Video One generated a great deal of conversation in The Group Activity about how friends should interact with each other. The girls in Group Activity were particularly vocal about this scene.

Abbreviation codes used in the following excerpt are: G1, G2, G3, and G4 = Girl One, Girl Two, Girl Three, and Girl Four, R = Researcher, and LC = Live Chat.

G4-LC: (whispers “bitch” under her breath).
G1-LC: Holy cat that was…(whines like an angry cat).
G4-LC: That one is being a biotch … biatch.
G2-LC: She’s a cow…god…she shouldn’t of said that
R-LC: Can I ask you a couple of questions about the scene?
G3-LC: She was so mean
G2-LC: She was like…oh my god…like you do not do that to someone
G4-LC: Saying that to someone is like…that’s really rude to say that to someone
G1-LC: Yah!

The girls’ reaction to the video clip encounter was immediate. Even when the Researcher attempted to redirect the flow of the conversation, the girls continued to talk about the inappropriate conduct of the girl in the video. They did not hesitate to assign particular attributes to this girl demeanour such as bitch, cow, and mean. One girl whines like a cat
suggesting catty behaviour while another girl replies with variations on the word bitch. Positioning the girl as rude was confirmed by Girl 1 (“Yah!”). The girls’ claims of impropriety lodged them together and, at least for the moment, they became unified by their acts of shared communication (Goffman, 1981). Attribute by attribute these girls constructed and regulated the boundary between themselves as nice girls and those girls who broke the rules (“like you don’t do that to someone”). No one offered a different version. This performance was critical to understanding how attributes associated with good and bad demeanour and feminine subject positions are taken up through everyday interaction to organise and fabricate encounters that govern social boundaries between groups of people. The moment-by-moment interactions of girls fabricated joint or partially shared assumptions about what it was that was going on (Goffman, 1986). The analyses pointed to this interactivity as crucial to understanding how teen girls manufactured and regulated friendship boundaries.

**Meanness**

Over two-thirds of the girls claimed that they blocked and reported other girls that were mean. “I block girls who are sending me rude pictures or messages or who haven’t been very nice to me” (S72-A12). In Journal accounts, almost all of the girls indicated that when other girls were mean, the situation was best managed with help from parents and other adults. One girl provided this advice:

> I think if girls speak to each other like this you should tell a helpful adult or your parents and then they could talk to the offender’s parents about this, if it still carries on then you could talk to the school’s headmaster or involve the police. (J5-C16)

A small group of girls opted for more rigid measures. One girl wrote, “they should be expelled from their school so they can never go near the victim or meet her friends again as they are probably working with each other like a group effort” (J5-C1). Getting “kicked offline” (J5-C11) and “banned from the internet” (J5-C14) were also options suggested by two other girls. One of these girls expanded, “I think they should be locked up in jail, I mean murderers do and lots of people commit suicide because gossip is spread about them” (J11-C14). Another girl added, “it could deeply affect the victim and possibly lead to suicide if nothing was resolved” (J5-C19).

The girls’ accounts identified several rules and routines for dealing with mean girls. These practices ranged from following cybersafety recommendations such as blocking and reporting to more severe measures such as putting internet bans in place, contacting the police, and locking the offender up in jail. Noticeably, these accounts positioned other girls as “offenders” and their conduct as criminal. In positioning meanness as criminal behaviour, the girls were able to construct representations of other girls that were associated with serious consequences such as
suicide, even murder. The whole notion that other girls operated in groups seemed to reinforce the idea that mean girls were well placed to “deeply affect” unprotected girls and that girls needed to be on the look-out for the poor conduct and mean behaviour of other girls.

The girls’ accounts of the “very mean and very secretive online behaviour” (S75-C7) of other girls appeared to directly influence the ways in which they constructed and regulated their interactions and online participation with girls who were not their friends. The intensity of some girls’ accounts (e.g., if nothing gets done victims will commit suicide) suggested that discourses of safety, notions of assertive femininity, and normative portrayals of girls as either mean or nice were competing voices that influenced boundary regulation between in-group and out-of-group girls. Moreover, the ways in which the girls described managing and regulating other girls’ mean conduct suggested that meanness constituted a significant and powerful structure in how the girls navigated online contexts with peers and close friends. Although some girls resisted the idea of meanness (“I think most girls my age behave good online” [S75-A25]), more of them seemed to struggle with the regulatory voices that constructed them as victims to “the grubby, gossipy business” (Goffman, 1959, p. 133) of other girls’ online behaviour.

**Regulation and Gendered Discourses**

The girls’ portrayal of other girls was not fixed on meanness. This point was emphasised by the girls’ response to a series of Emoticon Illustrations presented in The Survey (see Appendix E). In The Survey, the girls were asked to describe what online behaviour was represented by twenty different Emoticons. The girls’ text accounts for each Emoticon were condensed into a word cloud using Wordle (www.wordle.net, 2013). A word cloud is a computer-generated text layout that represents the most frequently appearing text in degrees of prominence. The aim was to create a strong visual representation of the girls’ interpretation of the Emoticon Illustrations. Ten of the word clouds are summarised in Table 7.1. These ten Emoticons were selected because they generated the highest level of text response from the girls. The word cloud for each Emoticon is presented with examples of the girls’ text accounts.
Table 7.1  
A summary of the girls’ response to 10 Emoticon Illustrations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emoticon Illustration</th>
<th>Word Cloud</th>
<th>Full Text Extracts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>![Emoticon 1]</td>
<td>Makes everything about themselves (S73a-A17). Popular, trying to be the best (S73a-D4). Being a show-off online (S73a-B11). Daring and not afraid to type up anything (S73a-B26).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>![Emoticon 2]</td>
<td>Is always behaving and never getting into trouble (S73k-A15). Goody-goody likes to be the best behaviour wise (S73k-B11). Always obeying the rules of social sites etc. (S73k-B10). Being internet safe and ignoring bribes e.g., YOU HAVE WON (S73k-B19).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>![Emoticon 3]</td>
<td>Brags about the things she gets (S73b-A46). Rich, gets what they want (S73b-D4). Has everything, has every sort of social networking account (S73b-A5). A person who constantly buys products off the internet (S73b-B30).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>![Emoticon 4]</td>
<td>Very smart &amp; focuses on work (S73d-A43). Smart likes to study and enjoys her work (S73d-B27). Reads everyone’s accounts &amp; comments on everything (S73d-A5). Pretending to read but actually on Facebook (S73d-A13).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>![Emoticon 5]</td>
<td>Spreading rumours/gossip or trusting someone with your secrets (S73g-B17). Tells rude secrets &amp; spreads rumours (S73g-A5). Using online services to gossip (S73g-B11). Using social networking to gossip/tell secrets (S73g-B27).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>![Emoticon 6]</td>
<td>Playing jokes behind back (S73i-A8). Bullying or hurting someone (S73i-B6). Laughs at other people for stuff that they post (S73i-A4). Using online services to be annoying or provoke someone into getting angry (S73i-B8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>![Emoticon 7]</td>
<td>Trying to get away with things that you know are wrong (S73m-B24). Snooping &amp; secrets (S73m-A11). Using online services to be sneaky and do things you shouldn’t be (S73m-B10). Sneaking on websites (S73m-B20).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The girls’ interpretations drew attention to how they constructed teen girls’ online interactions through gendered discourses concerned with i) different feminine subject positions such as popular girls, drama queens, divas, goody-two-shoes, and so forth; (ii) categories of competent and appropriate gendered online interactions (e.g., “always behaving and never getting in trouble” [S73k-A15]); and iii) risky gendered interactions (e.g., “daring and not afraid to type up anything” [S73a-B26]). The ways in which these aspects of gendered discourses framed the girls’ interpretations of the Emoticon illustrations pointed to the social rules, routines, and interactions rituals that operated to regulate and control their social boundaries with other girls. Examples of how the girls accounted for and constructed their interactions through the three components of gendered discourses are discussed next.

Many of the girls’ interpretations of Emoticon One constructed “popular” girls as show-offs, flirty, and glamorous. They were described as daring. They were positioned as drama queens. Accounts of popular girls were often linked to inappropriate and risky online behaviours such as online bullying and attention-seeking from boys. One girl explained further,

...eek, well, personally I think some girls are kind of stuck up and try to be cool online. They usually try to make things work for other girls – especially with guys and it kind of annoys me. I also think that girls my age are a bit more outgoing and kind of think they can do anything they want. They don’t show inappropriate things but are...mmm, a bit able to say anything type. People like me just look and stare then pass on but others can be different. (S75-B1)

This excerpt highlighted how girls’ talk reproduced different types of feminine subject positions and how, through this talk, they were able to marginalise, exclude, or silence different groups of
girls (Singh, 1995b). In this way, the girls regulated and shaped their own position in different groups. In the example above, the girl constructed popular girls as annoying and kind of stuck up. They tried to be cool, they were more likely to type up anything, and they behaved in ways that encouraged risky gendered interactions. Through this account, she constructed herself as a not-popular girl. This positioning allowed her to claim an identity that she constructed as a competent and appropriate online user. Indirectly, she appeared to marginalise herself although this action seemed to be a strategy for governing her own in-group membership.

Similar patterns of identification and interpretation emerged when the girls responded to other Emoticon Illustrations presented in The Survey. Emoticon 2 was described using words such as “nice”, “good”, and “innocent”. Nice girls “followed the rules”, “liked to be the best behaviour wise”, and were constructed as a “goody-goody” or a “goody-two-shoes”. Nice girls behaved on SNSSs and were internet safe. Nice girls did not display risky feminine behaviours. Emoticon 3 was interpreted as a “shopaholic”, someone who had everything, they were well off, more inclined to brag, spoilt and constantly shop online. Attributes of bragging and conspicuous consumption suggested a certain level of inappropriate feminine conduct. Emoticon 4 was described as a “studer”. A studier was either a nerdy bookworm that focused on and enjoyed schoolwork or a person who pretended to be studying but was actually reading everyone’s online posts. Being very smart was positioned as hardworking and focused. Pretending to read was associated with being on Facebook instead of studying. Emoticons 5, 6, 7, and 8 were seldom positioned with positive attributes. More often these images were associated with inappropriate and risky conduct such as gossiping, telling secrets, and being annoying, sneaky, and bossy. In online contexts, this risky conduct was associated with snooping around and doing things you shouldn’t do such as bullying or hurting someone’s feelings. Emoticons 9 and 10 generated accounts concerned with interactions and conduct for relationships. The girls’ accounts of Emoticon 9 highlighted important expectations for intimacy and sharing with friends while Emoticon 10 generated attributes and interactions related to being in love and having a “crush” or boyfriend.

The accounts discussed above represented the main ways that the girls constructed and interpreted the Emoticons. At the same time, several of the Emoticon Illustrations drew mixed response from the girls. For example, Emoticon 1 was constructed as “showing-off” but also as being “fashionable” and “glamourous”. Emoticon 4 generated comments about being “smart” and working hard as well as being a “nerd” and a “bookworm” while Emoticon 6 was associated with bullying and being mean as well as joking around and laughing. Explanation for some of these discrepancies was discussed in Chapter 4. Possible reasons included differences in teen-adult views and definitions for what the Emoticons illustrated and the possibility of in-group sharing. However, the differences noted above do not appear to be related to misinterpretation. 
of the illustration but rather that the girls’ construction of subject feminine positions and the expectations and rules of conduct for those particular positions differed. These variations were not accounted for at the time. However, given that the girls attended four different schools, it seemed likely that their experience at school and in the home varied significantly and that these everyday interactions influenced the ways in which they talked about the rituals, routines, and rules of conduct for teen girls. This aspect of the girls’ daily lives was not investigated in this study. Nevertheless, sociocultural background could explain some of these differences and is recommended as an avenue for further investigation.

For the most part, the girls in this study talked about, interpreted, and located meaning in each of the Emoticon Illustrations. While the girls’ interpretations varied, almost all of their accounts were positioned within the cultural assumptions and established expectations for different feminine subject positions. The girls generated accounts that categorised the Emoticon Illustrations along continuums of good and bad conduct and appropriate and inappropriate gendered interaction. Through their interpretations, the girls highlighted the ways in which they positioned and categorised other girls through gendered discourses. Moreover, the consistency with which the girls interpreted the Emoticon Illustrations through subject positions and categories of competent and risky behaviour demonstrated that almost all of them had the capacity to appropriate the rituals, routines, and rules of conduct to account for other girls’ practices, actions, and interactions. In other words, these discourses appeared to provide the girls with a set of devices for regulating the power relations and the strength of the boundary between in-group and out-of-group girls in online contexts.

This section of the chapter has highlighted how the girls acknowledged and accounted for the differences between various social groups in online contexts. These differences were important because they predicted how the girls constructed and regulated social boundaries as part of their online practice. The attributes assigned to each group appeared to generate particular sets of online practices, routines, expectations, and rituals for regulating the strength of the boundary between different groups of people. The girls’ accounts focused primarily on how they regulated the boundaries between in-group and out-of-group friends. In the main, these boundaries were regulated or governed through micro-interactions associated with the attributes of feminine subject positions, categories for appropriate and inappropriate online conduct, and risky gendered interactions. Through these interactions, the girls constructed strongly insulated boundaries between in-group and out-of-group friends. Governing this boundary seemed to raise concerns as discussed earlier in this chapter. However, what seemed to be more challenging for some of the girls was when a “best friend” broke the rules of conduct for in-group membership.
In-Group Differences

The girls’ identification with a social group, that is, the degree to which they shared similar expectations, routines, rituals and rules of conduct to the group, appeared to determine the extent to which they regulated their participation and coordinated exchanges to manage challenges and prevent difficulties. The more similar or alike the girls were to a group of girls, the more likely their interactions were smooth and cooperative. Clear identification and engagement with group routines and rituals allowed the girls to co-participate with few difficulties. The girls’ accounts gave the impression that they worked hard to coordinate their routines and rituals to maintain or improve communication pathways with in-group members. Some of the girls appeared to be willing enough to consider other possibilities for difficulties that arose between friends. For example, a few of the girls suggested that when problems arose, they would talk it out with friends and ask them why they said what they did. These girls understood that misunderstandings could happen in online contexts. In the main, boundary activity between in-group friends aligned to the boundary negotiation processes described by Akkerman and Bakker (2011) as: (i) identification; (ii) coordination; (iii) reflection; and (iv) transformation. As explained in Chapter Three, the scholars described identification as the construction and reconstruction of boundaries through mutual acknowledgment and recognition of group attributes. Coordination involved developing group specific routines and rituals for practice, action, and interaction. Reflection involved taking up perspectives that led to a change of practice or mutual understanding. Transformation was the act of regaining continuity in a situation where challenges or difference threatened boundary negotiation. Encountering and contesting perspectives, identities, and practices to re-establish continuity were processes consistent with transformation processes. As pointed out in the previous section of this chapter, the girls appeared less inclined to transform boundary negotiation when challenges or difficulties arose with out-of-group friends. In this case, the girls seemed more inclined to strengthen the boundary through us and them perspectives linked to gendered discourses and feminine subject positions. This process seemed to insulate the boundary between groups of girls sufficiently to minimise overt problems although the girls’ accounts suggested that troubles between groups of girls were more likely to occur in online contexts. Some of the girls suggested that the lack of personal presence in online contexts provided girls with the opportunity to be tougher.

It wasn’t clear if the girls were able to re-establish relationships with out-of-group girls when troubles emerged. They did not share accounts of these types of encounters. However, a few of the girls talked about problems that they had had with best friends. One girl shared this story:

My best friend would go out with a guy and then dump him after getting some “action”. I would then come to school the next day and she’d have a new boyfriend or
occasionally she would have a new one by the end of the day. Also, not exactly related to the conversation I once had a girl steal my boyfriend and that aggravated me to the point of tears. I really did feel like saying those sorts of things to her face and in front of her mum considering she was my bestfriend. (J3-C19)

In this excerpt, the Year 8 girl talked about her “best friend’s” inappropriate behaviour with boys. Behaving inappropriately with boys included getting some “action” and then dumping the boy to take up with another one. Describing the best friend’s cycle of boyfriends over short periods of time gave the impression that her conduct was inappropriate and that she was somewhat loose. This girl does not use the terms slut or whore but her account suggested this positioning and hinted at her disapproval. She went on to describe the conduct of another best friend. Again, the story moved to talk about boys and, in this case, boyfriend stealing. She explained that the boyfriend stealing episode had aggravated her to the point of tears and, therefore, she wanted to say all sorts of things to her best friend’s face, and in front of her mum too. Her account positioned boyfriend stealing was well outside expectations for best friend conduct. While it was not clear if this girl actually confronted either of the two best friends, her account suggested that she was angry, disappointed, and hurt. By ascribing the two girls with not nice, loose girl attributes, she seemed to account for and recover from her own temporary slip to mean girl. In addition, positioning the other two girls as not very nice allowed her to manage impressions, regain a positive face, and avoid embarrassment.

This excerpt highlighted how “best friend” talk reproduced particular expectations, rituals, and rules of conduct for in-group interactions. The account suggested that when in-group members displayed attributes or took up actions that seriously threaten the social face of other members, the girls were less inclined to negotiate differences using collaborative and transforming practices. Instead, the boundaries were renegotiated and, in this case, regulated through feminine subject positions to categorically exclude the rule-breaking best friend from the in-group. This practice differed from earlier examples, where friends were sometimes categorised as mean and temporarily excluded from the group. But, given that the girls’ actions were taken as a “slight gaffe” (Goffman, 1967, p. 27) in poise and not a serious threat to face, other positive attributes allowed the girls to move back into the friendship category. However, in the excerpt above, the threat to face could not be overlooked, especially from a “best friend”. The recount from the Year 8 girl suggested that attributes attached to peers such as best friend were powerful indicators of the degree to which the ritual order was reinstated. In this example, strategies for closing off future interaction and saving face included using negative-attribute tactics.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on how the girls in this study accounted for the ways in which they navigated online boundaries, and how they articulated the challenges and difficulties that they
faced with peers and close friends in online contexts. Throughout this chapter and in the preceding analyses chapters, the girls’ stories and accounts about their everyday experiences and online interactions with peers and close friends were presented, organised, interpreted through the lens of performance. Through this lens the reader was privy to a co-constructed turn-by-turn account (Danby, 2009) of the everyday interactions of the girls and the Researcher. The interaction produced a series of back and forth turns (Goffman, 1959, 1967; Mallan et al., 2013) that generated and produced an interactional order. The patterns and boundaries of social interaction inherent to this process offered a means for reconstituting everyday activity and social interaction. Individual perspectives and diverse standpoints shaped the events and the stream of ongoing activity appeared to be typically representative of social life. Therefore, the girls’ accounts and their research interactions were taken as reasonable example of the ways in which they navigated and regulated social boundaries between peers and close friends in online contexts.

Many of the girls’ accounts presented in Chapters Five and Six highlighted the situatedness of their practice and the agency of their actions. However, in this chapter, when the girls talked about challenging and difficult interactions, attention was drawn to the ways in which their local interactions were linked to and regulated through dominant discourses. In particular, the analyses highlighted how the obligations and expectation of gendered discourses concerned with feminine subject positions, categories of appropriate and inappropriate interactions, and feminine risky practice regulated and governed their interactional practice with peers and close friends. In this case, the girls’ accounts showed how they moderated their interactional practice based on assumed attributes and rules of conduct assigned to different groups of girls. Attributes assigned to other girls became critical signifiers of how the girls navigated boundaries between peers and close friends. Although close friends were bounded by the same rules that governed other girls, there was some latitude for error and small mistakes in judgement were tolerated. In other words, if the friend slipped up, she might be temporarily assigned negative attributes but, by way of her friendship status, she was able to move back into the group. Out-of-group girls did not appear to have the luxury of salvaging face and re-positioning themselves in this way. At the same time, the girls’ accounts suggested that practices used for regulating group status were not applied evenly or consistently across individuals. This disparity was most noticeable when threats to face could not be overlooked. When loss of face was imminent and embarrassment likely, the girls renegotiated boundaries and strengthen governance by producing interactions and performances shaped by gendered discourses, feminine subject positions, and categories for inappropriate interaction. Moreover, the analyses pointed to the ways in which the girls governed and regulated friendship boundaries by calling on and positioning other girls through teen girl age-related attributes such as being obsessed with boys, gossip, and their appearance.
In the main, the girls’ accounts demonstrated that their boundary activity and interactions between different social groups aligned to both cybersafety protocols and the boundary negotiation processes described by Akkerman and Bakker (2011). However, the analyses pointed to the important link between impression management practice, fabricating interactions to save face, and the influence of dominant discourses on the local interaction patterns of the girls. Efforts to manage these three components of social interaction appeared to play a crucial role in how the girls mediated their own experience and managed boundary negotiations. The girls’ accounts and their interactions in The Group Activity suggested that their capacity to manage this interactivity influenced the ways in which they met the challenges and difficulties experienced in online contexts. How the girls in this study managed and shaped their everyday interactions with other girls through gendered discourses, feminine subject positions, and teen girl age-related attributes was important to understanding the challenges and difficulties that they experienced. Goffman (1983) supported this view. He pointed out that interactional regulations and expectations

[were] hardly likely to be generated [in] the moment….It [was] plain that each participant enter[ed] a social situation carrying an already established biography of prior dealings with other participants – or at least participants of their kind; and enter[ed] also with a vast array of cultural assumptions presumed to be shared. We [can] not disattend strangers in our presence unless their appearance and manner implie[s] a benign intent, a course of action that [is] identifiable and unthreatening, and such readings can only be made on the basis of prior experience and cultural lore. (Goffman, 1983, p. 4)

While the analyses suggested that the girls’ interactional performance relied heavily on the interactional regulations and expectations they had for other girls, in part, this reliance seemed to account for some of the challenges and difficulties that they experienced with peers and close friends. There was a sense that their capacity to navigate social boundaries and negotiate problems could be better developed by an interactional approach that questioned the expectations and rules of conduct that they used to regulate their interactions with others. Chapter Eight concludes the thesis presentation with a discussion of the project analyses and implications, reflections concerned with the study’s limitations, and suggestions for future research.
Chapter Eight
Discussion and Conclusions

Chapter Eight reviews the overall findings of the thesis study. In this chapter, the research questions are reconsidered, the conduct of the study is discussed, and the understandings concerned with teen girls’ online participation in networked culture are shared. Project implications are presented and reflections concerned with the study’s limitations are shared. In the last section of this chapter, suggestions for future research are offered.

This study was framed in the broad context of networked culture and the changing social environment associated with the Web 2.0 phenomenon. In general terms, the study investigated the online participation of Australian teen girls aged 13 years of age. At a specific level, the study investigated the ways in which teen girls managed and navigated their online experience with peers and close friends. From this focus, three research questions critical to understanding teen girls’ online participation emerged.

- What practices and strategies do teen girls use in online contexts to navigate their everyday experience with peers and close friends?
- How are teen girls’ online experiences integrated into their everyday interactions with peers and close friends, and how do these interactions constitute their social identity?
- What challenges and difficulties do the girls experience, and how do they manage and negotiate these situations?

The study was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved an online survey and the second stage involved an online group activity and a reflective online journal. The primary focus of the research design was to make visible the online experiences of the girls in an ethically sound, descriptive, and pragmatic manner. For this purpose, a number of familiar mediums were incorporated into the research design to provide the girls with opportunities to expand on personal responses in ways relevant to them. Findings from data analyses were presented in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. A discussion of the findings is presented next.

Discussion of Analyses

This project came to fruition at a time when important social and technological changes were taking place. Two of these changes involved the rapid expansion of Web 2.0 applications and the emergence of new technologies with mobile broadband. Both of these changes increased many young people’s access to the internet. One of the more notable changes was the increased social interactivity provided by social media services, in particular, Facebook. This service was quickly becoming the preferred social media tool for young people. However, at-risk discourses
and media reports were linking Facebook to more extreme behaviours such as cyberbullying and sexting. Online safety agendas were being driven by these dialogues. At the forefront of cybersafety education sat strong policy for online practice and a robust disciplinary framework for inappropriate online behaviours. Adult views about the benefits of the internet were underscored by worries about young people’s safety and wellbeing. Young people’s engagement with social media was principal to these concerns. These anxieties were shaping both public and educational conversations and, as such, research agendas were pressing for further empirical work on the prevalence and consequences of challenging online behaviours. Moreover, gender-specific risks had been identified, and young teen girls aged 12 to 14 years were described as the most likely to experience difficulties. The difference between girls’ and boys’ online practice was offered as one justification for the challenges that girls faced in online contexts. Likewise, the regulatory influence of gendered discourses and differentiated feminine identities were offered as possible explanations for some of the online problems girls encountered. The sociocultural context described above was explored in Chapter One and expanded in Chapter Two. At that time, empirical investigations concerned with the everyday experiences and online interactions of teen girls with peers and close friends had not been investigated in detail. Situated practices and regulatory interactions were considered to be pivotal markers of everyday experience and identity construction. These aspects of teen girls’ online participation were considered to be crucial mechanisms for understanding their online experience.

**Teen Girls’ Online Practices and Strategies**

One of the central questions of the thesis asked: what practices and strategies do teen girls use in online contexts to navigate everyday experience with peers and close friends? The analyses showed that the girls, like other teens their age, were well-connected with peers and close friends. For most, new technologies and Web 2.0 applications extended their everyday experience well beyond the schoolyard. This communicative flexibility was valued by almost all of the girls and most of them demonstrated a strong desire to stay connected with Facebook. Sharing information and connecting with friends through online networks was the norm. The girls who did not engage with friends through social media were the minority. The girls enjoyed online multitasking which included doing homework, researching projects, chatting, messaging friends, playing games, and listening to music. In comparison to young people in other countries, this group of girls had a comparatively high level of access to mobile phones and internet services. As reported in Chapter Two, the girls in this study were interested in the social aspects of online participation. Several of the girls suggested that teen girls were more interested in chatting, messaging, and networking than same-age boys. On the whole, the girls reported an everyday online experience that was participatory, well-developed, and comparable to other young people in the United States and Europe.
Most of the girls stated compliance to cybersafety recommendations. They were adamant about protecting their privacy and personal identity from outsiders. These findings were not new as most young people worldwide report an awareness of and diligence to cybersafety protocols (McAfee, 2010; Livingstone et al., 2011). The analyses suggested that discourses concerned with stranger-danger were, to some extent, effective in preventing the girls from engaging with unknown people. Nevertheless, the girls did not report a single set of online safety practices. Instead, they described a host of different strategies that they applied to various social settings and groups of people.

Regardless of the level of online experience reported (i.e., how much freedom they had to engage online with others), most of the girls claimed that they used different practices at different times for different people. However, some of the girls described a broader cross-section of practices than others and these girls appeared to be somewhat more able to navigate in and out of different online contexts and assume or adopt different online personas more readily. For example, these girls were more likely to communicate with others using a range of online services such as Facebooking, texting, messaging, posting, and face-to-face interaction and described more strategies for adapting and managing their identity (e.g., creating code names, using secret questions, managing personal images, and so forth). These girls appeared to have higher levels of online freedom and showed a tendency towards a more relaxed style of risk management. At the same time, some of the girls described interactions limited to a smaller set of contexts such as text messaging and face-to-face interaction. Their ability to navigate in and out of various online contexts and to adapt their identity for successful negotiation appeared to be restricted to a smaller set of practices (e.g., keeping their page private and blocking people), greater attention to online safety, and heightened concerns about personal privacy. Differences between girls’ patterns of internet interaction highlight two significant points. First, limiting online participation appears to keep teen girls safe but it also seems to inhibit their freedom to explore and develop the social skills needed to interact with confidence in online contexts. Second, young teen girls have different types of experiences in online contexts and, therefore, cybersafety guidelines might better service teen girls by offering a diverse set of options to address the interactional practices of different groups of girls. The point of policy is to address the majority. However, the research analyses suggest that the interpretation of cybersafety policy by mid-range policy actors such as curriculum writers, school leaders, and teachers (Singh, Thomas, & Harris, 2013) requires a translation that explicates and elaborates on the everyday interactions and online practice of young teen girls.

Pressure to conform to cybersafety recommendations became particularly noticeable when the girls discussed their engagement with friends in SNSs such as Facebook. The girls identified the high visibility and the socially dense nature of SNSs as important platforms for gaining
acceptance with friends and shaping their social identity but equally dangerous for contact problems and privacy risks. This tension appeared to push the girls to take-up two sets of actions, a general set of online safety practices and a specific set of practices for communicating with friends. Transitions between these two positions were most conspicuous in the ways the girls handled risk management. Most of the girls modified safety guidelines substantially to be more inclusive with friends. The girls did not appear to consider these adaptations to be in breach of cybersafety guidelines. Instead, these actions were considered to be an important part of being a good friend. Openly sharing content, images and experiences, even passwords, was common amongst friends. This finding is crucial to understanding the types of risks that teen girls face in online contexts. Research studies reported in Chapter Two showed that girls’ propensity for over-sharing in face-to-face situations was problematic and that this tendency made them more vulnerable to interpersonal conflict and indirect aggression (Marwick, 2012).

Given the high visibility and potential for constant surveillance in SNSs, teen girls’ friendship practices suggest that they might be at greater risk of online problems from close friends and peers than contact risks from unknown people and online predators. While risky content, privacy risks, and contact risks from unknowns (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007) require constant vigilance, the girls’ online friendship practices suggested that cybersafety education might be extended with skills and understandings concerned with girls’ relationship building practices, friendship expectations, and impression management style. In other words, policy actors responsible for implementing cybersafety policy at the mid-range level (e.g., the school) need to take into account the differences between girls’ and boys’ online practices and the types of risk they face in online contexts.

The analyses suggested that the girls’ online friendship practice was more concerned with impression management and saving and keeping face than with cybersafety discourses. The girls’ encryption and coding practices highlighted this point. The girls encoded online messages to friends using commonly understood symbols and abbreviated words (e.g., <3 means love). The messages were easy to interpret. The ease of interpretation suggested that encryption practices did not necessarily function as concealment practices. Instead, these messages appeared to be a means for privileging insiders with pertinent information while managing outsider impressions. Even though the girls’ friendship practices had some similarities to cybersafety recommendations (e.g., protecting privacy and controlling online content), the girls’ online practice seemed more aligned to managing personal impressions than protecting personal safety. Striking a balance between online safety protocols and teen girls’ friendship practice requires a closer examination of the ways in which teen girls’ save and keep face and manage impressions in online contexts.
The study established that teen girls regularly engaged with recommended cybersafety policy practices such as protecting privacy and personal identity but that these actions were often modified to improve the flow of communication between peers and close friends. In other words, the girls talked about the importance of not sharing passwords and personal information but when engaging with friends, personal details were often shared. While the girls acknowledged the need to stay safe, they also demonstrated the need for intimate sharing and interpersonal harmony in friendship circles. The passion and experience of friendship was clearly important to them. For this purpose, they engaged in a series of online actions that did not always correspond to adult-defined safe practice. The practices and experiences claimed by the girls emphasised how policy discourses concerned with cybersafety are often written in a generic way and, therefore, do not take into account the specifics needs of young teens. Consequently, it is important for policy translators such as education department advisors, regional directors, and school principals to take account of the specifics of teen girls’ everyday practices (Singh et al., 2013). While it is clear that cybersafety policy covers a wide range of online users, the analyses suggest that young teens, especially girls, are likely to be a vulnerable group with specific needs. Their specific needs should be taken into account in statements about cybersafety and recommendations for online practice. Young people can be significant contributors to the planning and development of programs and protocols aimed to ensure their safety and wellbeing (ACMA, 2012) and therefore, it seems appropriate to engage teen girls in discussions about cybersafety and online friendship practices. This process should take place at different stages of policy development such as formulation, dissemination, and enactment (Singh et al., 2013).

**Teen Girls’ Online Experience and Everyday Interaction**

A second question that was central to the thesis asked: how are the girls’ online experiences integrated into their everyday interactions with peers and close friends, and how do these interactions constitute their social identity? The analyses showed that the girls constructed social boundaries around groups of people based on the degree to which they knew the person in real life. By describing, differentiating, and categorising people in online contexts according to real world experience, the girls demonstrated that their online involvement was fully integrated with their daily experience and face-to-face interaction. The better known the person was in real life, the more likely the girls were to share and exchange experiences and images. Little if any information was shared with unknown people. In contrast, information was willingly shared with people that they knew well. Experiences and images shared with known people were derived from daily encounters both online and face-to-face. The scenarios that played-out in one space often washed over into another. This outcome was not unexpected, however, it does point to the importance of investigating girls’ online participation in tandem with their face-to-face experience.
As previously discussed, the importance of friendship dominated the girls’ accounts. The girls’ accounts demonstrated that their everyday participation, both online and face-to-face, was underpinned by friendship expectations. Friendship experience was intricately linked to the girls’ sense of happiness and contentment, especially at school. The girls reported many moments that highlighted the value of friendship and they acknowledged how the dynamics of friendship were produced and reproduced through online and offline experience. The analyses showed that the girls valued these connections. Moreover, the expectations, routines, and rituals of friendship seemed to be powerfully linked to the girls’ experience with others, especially other girls.

The analyses demonstrated that coexisting and potentially competing expectations, routines, and rituals of other people had capacity to infringe on the girls’ everyday experience. These pressures emerged from other relationships parallel to friendship and had significant influence on the girls’ practices, actions, and interactions. The most significant social group outside of friends was “other girls”. The practices, actions, and interaction of other girls marked the difference between girls that were friends and girls that were not friends. This distinction was significant because it predicted how the girls negotiated and regulated their online interaction and face-to-face experience with other girls. In particular, it highlighted how girl-to-girl online interactions and surveillance practices (i.e., girls watching other girls) were integrated with gendered discourses and differentiated identities related to coolness, popularity, and personal appearance. In other words, gendered discourses around teen femininities regulated the practices of the girls. Moreover, the research study highlighted how gendered discourses worked to strongly insulate social boundaries between groups of girls. By the girls’ own admission, discourses about gender (e.g., good girl, bad girls, and so forth) were powerful constraints related to the challenges and difficulties they experienced in online contexts. The scale of this study could not do justice to the breadth and depth of this phenomenon, however, the study did offer a glimpse into the ways in which these discourses constituted the girls’ online social identities. It was not said the girls adopted a unified identity. Rather, the girls talked about different feminine subject positions, how they positioned themselves within these positions, and how their friends were positioned at various times, shifting from mean girl to bitchy girl to good girl and so forth.

**Constituting Social Identity**

Goffman’s (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986) theoretical concepts offered a fine-grained lens for considering how teen girls’ constituted their social identity through online interaction and everyday experience. The analysis was important because it demonstrated how the girls purposefully selected practices and strategies to fabricate encounters and generate identities that were associated with particular characters. The most sought after character was the good girl.
someone who was responsible and nice. The identity to avoid was the mean girl. These identities were guided by socially prescribed attributes and the girls were able to clearly articulate these versions of girlhood. This process was not accidental. Instead it served to demonstrate how the girls constructed a common experience story that both reinforced views constructed by peers and friends as well as contested and regulated versions of identity displayed in other social domains. In the main, good girl-mean girl identities coincided with discourses concerned with the rules of conduct for female interaction and were used by the girls to monitor and regulate friendship boundaries and social interactions. These effects were not dissimilar to scholarship reported in Chapter Two that identified contradictory discourses of femininity as regulators of teen girls’ online participation. For example, scholars such as Carrington (2009), Jackson and Vares (2011), and Ringrose et al. (2012) described how identities and self-narratives were articulated through the daily construction of interactions and texts in online contexts. These researchers noted how these interactions and texts worked to reproduce and make explicit the macro-level narratives of gendered discourses and feminine subject positions. Largely, the thesis study reinforced the notion that identities are constructed and reconstructed, moment by moment, through the routines and rituals of everyday interaction and that gendered discourses impact on the identity construction, daily experiences, and online participation of young teen girls.

Fabrication was the term used by Goffman (1986) to describe the efforts individuals made to regulate, control, and manage interactional encounters to maintain face. Goffman loosely defined the obligations, expectations, and rules of conduct for individual action as selective membranes or barriers to perception and social interaction. He explained that saving face (i.e., maintaining a positive image through socially approved attributes) was conditioned by these circumstances and that any interactional performance was fabricated to maintain an acceptable self and to avoid embarrassment. Possibilities for creative action and identity formation in online contexts pointed to the important notion of fabrication for teen girls. In other words, the girls’ performance of identity appeared to be intentionally designed to manage and protect their social face. The analyses showed that fabricating a suitable identity to save face was challenging. The “effective doing” (Goffman, 1986, p. 23) on one’s own behalf was continuously conditioned by the routines, rituals, and rules of conduct for the domain as well as the participatory efforts of others. The veracity of fabrication was complicated by the multiple points of interaction, collaboration, and regulation that flowed between the girls’ everyday experience with peers and close friends and the networked interface of online and offline worlds. Notably, this level of participation provided the girls with a means to engage with the cultural lore of networked times but it also increased the girls’ worries about embarrassment.
Worries about embarrassment reinforced the need to save face. Although presenting with good character was deemed an appropriate process for circumventing embarrassment, it was clear that the good girl character was not always effective. Instead, many of the girls described how the rules of conduct were shifted and impressions fabricated to save face. That is, in the heat of the moment, protective identities were fabricated to circumvent, conceal, or camouflage intentions or to contradict a negative personal impression. A good girl identity was quickly whitewashed and the boundaries and rules of politeness overturned to avoid embarrassment. Intentional efforts to save face found some of the good girls taking up actions that could be described as mean. Certainly, the girls in this study described the intentional efforts of other girls to save face as mean, rude, and horrible. How the girls read or interpreted the action of other girls was critical to understanding how they negotiated and managed their online participation and everyday experience with peers and close friends. First, the ways in which these efforts were viewed by the girls themselves appeared to be linked to in-group and out-group differentiations. For example, if the girl was a friend her actions were not routinely read as mean. Instead, actions were interpreted as misunderstandings and, therefore, challenges were circumvented. In contrast, if the same action was taken up by other girls, it was routinely read as mean, bitchy, or catty. Meanness appeared to be an automatic attribute of other girls who were not following the rules of conduct appropriate to their social position. These interactions highlighted how the face-saving practices of impression management and the routines and rituals of gendered conduct were simultaneously situated in local and online practice. This complexity pointed to the second issue at hand, that is, the assumed relationship between other girls and meanness. The girls reported that other girls were mean and even meaner in online contexts. Possibilities for action and identity construction seemed overtly constrained by this view and meanness emerged as a strongly insulated boundary that set the girls up for disciplinary action from others.

In some ways, these analyses suggested that the positions or identities available to teen girls were limited and that the cultural and political power of discourses, especially gendered discourses, dominated their everyday experience and online participation. In part, the outcomes of the study supported this view. On the other hand, the girls also demonstrated that they had their own individual forms of participation and non-participation, and that teen girls operated in parallel contexts of joint group membership and situated autonomy. The girls demonstrated their joint membership through co-construction of social boundaries (e.g., who’s in and who’s out) and their autonomy through the divergent ways in which they contributed to online participation. The girls demonstrated that their everyday experience was underpinned by the self-work needed to maintain and manage an appropriate social identity in a complicated and highly visible networked culture. The notion that teen girls are routinely mean emerged as a collective identity that was powerful and controlling. This trend was important because it
showed that teen girls’ everyday interaction and online participation was intricately bound to identity performance and that their identity performance was intricately bound to dominant discourses and feminine subjective positions. The complexities of managing gendered binaries such as good and mean girl discourses drew attention to the challenges and difficulties that the girls experienced in their day-to-day negotiation of online participation.

**Teen Girls’ Challenges and Difficulties**

The final research question asked: what challenges and difficulties do the girls experience, and how do they manage and negotiate these situations? Empirical work described in Chapters One and Two suggested that teen girls, especially girls aged 12 to 14 years, were more likely than their male counterparts to experience online problems such as cyberbullying and sexting. Reports on cyberbullying have been produced through large scale surveys where cyberbullying was defined as deliberate attempts to harm someone through the internet, email, or mobile phone (ACMA, 2015a). Empirical work concerned with sexting (i.e., sharing nude selfies and other sexually explicit artefacts) has generated data using survey instruments. In this study, 130 girls completed an online survey. While none of the questions in the survey focused specifically on bullying, the girls were asked questions about their online experiences. In follow up group discussions, the girls were asked questions about friendship interactions and how gossip, rumours, and untruths travel through communication devices such as mobile phones. Most of the girls in this study did not explicitly report experiencing difficulties with cyberbullying and sexting. Only one girl explicitly described being bullied online. On the other hand, many of the girls made general claims about misunderstandings between friends, encounters with mean girls, and several girls described other friends’ problems with other girls as not very nice. It was not possible to determine why behaviours that appeared to be bullying by adult definition were not described in this way by the girls. This line of questioning was not pursued in the study but further investigation is recommended. Better understanding of how the girls position themselves in times of trouble would assist with the development of cybersafety policy.

An analysis of the girls’ boundary negotiation practices suggested that the challenges and difficulties that they had with friends and other girls were linked to: i) their capacity for managing impressions; ii) their ability to save face; and iii) the ways in which they thought about and interpreted others interactions in relation to the obligations and expectations of gendered discourses. Analyses of the girls’ accounts and interactions highlighted how they constructed and maintained their everyday interactions with other girls through these processes. First, by ascribing different attributes to various online social groups, the girls demonstrated the ability to identify and develop routines and rituals for practice, action, and interaction with other people. Smooth engagement depended on the girls’ ability to read the scene correctly, take up appropriate roles and actions, and to manage impressions effectively. The girls’ accounts
showed that the visible and overlapping character of online participation (e.g., Facebook profiling, microblogging, text messaging, etc.) required them to regulate several simultaneous social contexts all at once. Participation across multiple contexts seemed to complicate the girls’ impression management practice. For example, staging a safe girl for parents, a compassionate girl for close friends, and a friendly but private girl for peers required the girls to take up a series of concurrent performances with differing impression management demands. The girls’ online practices suggested that they were astutely aware of the need to manage their identity under these conditions. However, misjudging or misreading the encounter had potential for tensions to emerge and minor troubles to arise. The degree to which these troubles became challenging, even difficult, depended on how the interaction was interpreted by others, who lost or saved face, and who took action to smooth-out the encounter. Misinterpretation, misunderstandings, out-of-turn exchanges, over-talking, intentional efforts to shift positive impressions and loss of face (i.e., embarrassment) had potential to disrupt everyday encounters. The girls explained that they were able to resolve most of these challenges, but sometimes someone was left a bit disgruntled and tensions lingered. A typical example of a challenging encounter was described in Chapter 6. In the Group Four Activity, Girl 4 made deliberate moves to challenge the mobile phone ownership of Girl 3. The back and forth exchange between the two girls highlighted the complex work of managing impressions and appropriating the rules of conduct to maintain personal standing. The situation was not completely resolved but the girls managed to, at least temporarily, reach an agreement on whose impressions would be honoured. There was some evidence that lingering tensions existed (e.g., Girl 3 disengaged from the activity for several minutes) but the performance ended and the challenge appeared to be terminated. Goffman (1986) described these encounters as “ordinary troubles” (p.300). Ordinary troubles such as the one described above appeared to be reasonably common. That is, several girls described similar encounters in their daily interactions with peers and close friends.

The extent to which challenging moments developed into insurmountable difficulties appeared to be linked to the girls’ ability to circumvent the pressure of embarrassment, maintain impressions, save or keep face, manipulate the rituals and rules of conduct, and adhere to the positive attributes of good demeanour. The analyses suggested that collaborative attempts to circumvent embarrassment and uphold positive impressions and good demeanour worked to neutralise troubling experiences with close friends. Similarly, the attributes that the girls assigned to others defined, shaped, and regulated the ways in which challenges and difficulties were constructed and negotiated. Positive attributes such as loyalty, trustworthiness, thoughtfulness, kindness, and so forth were associated with good character and positive demeanour. In times of trouble, good character (i.e., a nice girl identity) positioned girls to reclaim socially desirable roles in their friendship group. Resolutions were smoother when social identity was associated with good character. Attributes associated with poor character
(e.g., mean, bitchy, and catty) seemed to have the opposite effect, especially when these types of attributes were assigned to out-of-group girls. In this event, breaking the rules most often ended in disruption and irreconcilable differences (e.g., name-calling, gossiping, swearing, sending rude pictures, and mean messages). By attaching particular attributes and identities to friends and other girls, the girls appropriated and manipulated the rituals and rules of interactional conduct and shaped and reshaped expressions of demeanour (e.g., identity positions) to manage and negotiate challenges and difficulties. Goffman referred to this process as impression management. Girls that were not friends appeared to approach impression management in a more defensive - protective manner (e.g., intentional efforts to improve personal situation combined with intentional efforts to misrepresent others) than they did with friends. This style of interaction seemed to limit opportunities for resolution. Largely, the analyses demonstrated that collaborative attempts to circumvent embarrassment and maintain and/or uphold positive impressions worked to neutralise ordinary troubles faced in everyday interaction. Resisting attempts to smooth out impressions was more likely to end up in conflict. As a way of thinking, efforts to clarify impressions, talk out misunderstandings, and explain meanings appeared to offer strategies for working through challenges and difficulties experienced in online contexts.

The girls’ accounts drew attention to the ways in which they fabricated interactions and constructed their identity through gendered discourses concerned with feminine subject positions, categories of appropriate and inappropriate interaction, and risky online behaviour. Manufacturing their experience in this way appeared to support them in locating, identifying, perceiving, and labelling interactional occurrences to guide their performance. Goffman (1986) explained that this process created an organised system for social understanding and purposefully managed face and minimised opportunities for embarrassment. The girls seemed to negotiate these layers of interaction with reasonable confidence but fabricating interactions in online contexts held little latitude for error and attempts to manage impressions and navigate rules of conduct were always not ideal. Moreover, in spite of their desire to be unique individuals with honourable intentions, their performance was patently enmeshed in the participatory qualities of others (Carrington, 2009). That is, each girl’s performance was regulated by the presence of other girls, their expectations and standards for conduct. While some of the girls demonstrated reasonable skill in negotiating interactional conditions and were able to accept that misunderstandings happened, many of them seemed more inclined to manage difficulties by relying on regulatory discourses concerned with feminine subject positions and gendered expectations for interaction. In other words, when they experienced difficulties, especially with other girls, they struggled to contradict the complex rules and expectations of gendered discourses. On the whole, the girls were less likely to recognise their own behaviour as mean and were more likely to project mean behaviour onto other girls.
Thinking about the ways in which these girls constructed and positioned themselves through impression management practice, efforts to save face, and boundary negotiation processes offered valuable and well-designed formats for interpreting and exploring the challenges and difficulties that the girls encountered in face-to-face and online contexts. While most of the girls’ described performances that were not deliberately fabricated for nefarious reasons, there were several examples of social encounters that might be better managed or negotiated more effortlessly if the girls understood their own behaviour and that of others differently. The ways in which the girls constructed their everyday experience and online interactions with peers and close friends suggested that a change in interaction practice might have a significant impact on their everyday experience. An approach that helps them to adapt and improve their online practices and patterns of everyday interaction has significant value for cybersafety policy and educational practice.

Hadley (2003) observed that “girls [were] seldom given credit for their social mastery and rarely [found] themselves in a context where they [could] reflect on and use their awareness of their social world in constructive ways” (p. 379). In contrast, this study suggests that contemporary teen girls are constantly in a space where they can work on and improve the skills and abilities needed to navigate everyday experience. Networked culture provides them with a space to try-on different identities, confront and work through problems, engage with many social contexts, and question the discourses and identity positions that aim to regulate and challenge their everyday experience. These micro-interactions are the constructs of everyday experience in networked culture. Developing an effective approach for assisting young teen girls to navigate this space appears to be critical to their wellbeing and online safety.

**Concluding Statement**

Four significant themes emerged from the analyses undertaken in the thesis. First, the study established that teen girls engaged with cybersafety guidelines but that these practices were adapted for interactions with peers and close friends. For example, almost all of the girls used privacy settings but most of them modified these generic settings to improve information and image sharing with peers and close friends. Second, the study confirmed that teen girls’ online participation and day-to-day experience with peers and close friends were interrelated. This outcome suggested that efforts to understand teen girls’ online participation required a methodological approach that investigated, in tandem, teen girls’ online and face-to-face practices, actions, and interactions. Third, the girls’ online experiences and their social identities were constantly being negotiated and regulated in response to their understanding of the rules of conduct that characterised what it means to be a girl. A multitude of contradictory and conflicting discourses and differentiated feminine identities were linked to their interactions.
with other girls. These expectations and constraints appeared to account for some of the challenges and difficulties they experienced online. Fourth, the daily challenges of managing and negotiating the routines, rituals, and rules of everyday interaction appeared to be more concerning for these girls than issues related to risky online behaviours such as cyberbullying and sexting.

**Research Implications**

The core objective of the thesis was to investigate how online participation comes to matter in the everyday lives of teen girls. Review of policy documents and research studies at the starting-point of this research and personal accounts as a teacher educator and parent highlighted heightened discourses of anxiety and moral panic around young teens and their risky online behaviour. Teen girls emerged as a specific group of young people that were experiencing online problems, in particular, cyberbullying and sexting. Since then, there has been a great deal of work in the area of cybersafety and as a result, many websites and informational resources have been developed to assist educators with cybersafety education. These resources were discussed in Chapter One so they are not reiterated here. However, the specific development of cybersafety resources for teen girls continues to remain in its infancy. This gap is significant given that girls have different online practices than boys and that these differences have been linked to girls’ experience with cyberbullying and sexting (ACMA, 2008, Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, Lenhart et al., 2011, Livingstone et al., 2011). The analyses described in this study support the need for cybersafety resources explicitly for teen girls. However, dissemination of such resources requires sensitive interpretation, translation and enactment of policy discourse. Cybersafety policy writers need to interpret and translate the condensed, abstract, and legalistic language generated by policy work into statements for educators about how cybersafety practices and strategies can be enacted to protect teen girls better (Singh et al., 2013). More specifically, teachers need to be able interpret and translate the work of cybersafety policy writers into specific practices for school and classroom contexts. Teachers’ work might entail translating school practice into particular cybersafety guidelines for parents to use at home. The analyses offer two substantive implications for cybersafety policy writers, educators, and parents. These implications are discussed in this section of the chapter.

**Critical Tools for Parents and Teachers**

The literature reviewed in Chapters One and Two suggested that teen girls’ everyday experience and online participation was governed by gendered and at-risk discourses and differentiated feminine identities. These discourses shaped cybersafety protocols and regulated public perceptions of teen girls’ online behaviour. The literature also suggested that parent and
educator conversations typically reinforced the view that teen girls’ online participation was overwhelmingly problematic. The at-risk literature specifically pointed to girls’ relationships with peers and close friends as a conduit to online problems. The analyses presented in the thesis did not contradict this view. The girls’ accounts confirmed that their everyday experience and online participation was closely aligned to relationships with peers and close friends. The girls’ interpretations of their experience also reinforced the notion that different subject positions or gendered identities governed the ways in which they managed and negotiated their online practice. The normatively positive messages of good girl-bad girl identities (e.g., right-wrong and proper-improper attributes) constructed a type of disciplinary power that the girls enacted to manage everyday interactions and negotiate misunderstandings and difficulties. The concepts of impression management and fabrication (Goffman, 1959, 1986) highlighted how the obligations and expectations of gendered discourses and performance identities had become critical signifiers of the girls’ routines, rituals, and rules of conduct for everyday interaction with peers and close friends. The girls’ accounts showed that they intentionally employed particular strategies and assumed or projected certain social attributes to others to manage and regulate their identity to maintain or save face. While the girls’ strategies might not be considered good practice by adult standards, these actions represented an important part of their self-work and impression management process. Moreover, the girls’ impression management style highlighted their capacity to negotiate and regulate social boundaries.

Critical aspects of boundary negotiation were explored in Chapter Three. According to Akkerman and Bakker (2011), successful boundary negotiation requires four mechanisms (e.g., identification, coordination, reflection, and transformation) with corresponding processes (e.g., legitimating coexistence, routinisation of practices, perspective–taking, and collaboration). At a general level, the girls’ description of their interactions with peers and close friends suggested that they engaged with boundary negotiation processes. For example, the girls talked about using recommended cybersafety protocols for their online participation. This practice demonstrated the girls’ general capacity to coordinate their actions for smooth negotiation of online boundaries. At a more specific level, mutual engagement with the rituals and rules of conduct primarily ensured smooth negotiation of friendship boundaries. When problems arose between friends (e.g., a friend was rude or mean), the girls were more likely to reflect on or take into account other possible explanations for these actions (e.g., misunderstandings could happen on Facebook). If a mean girl attribute was assigned, it was most often a temporary position and the girl was able to move back into the category of friendship by way of her other attributes, practices, and interactions. These processes correspond to Akkerman and Bakker’s (2011) negotiation processes of reflection and transformation.
In contrast to in-group friends, boundary negotiations with out-of-group peers (e.g., other girls) were less likely to be smooth. The ways in which the girls described these experiences suggested that they were less forgiving and more unlikely to be cooperative, reflective, and collaborative when challenges and difficulties arose with other girls. While some of the girls offered plausible arguments for the poor behaviour of other girls (e.g., some girls were immature), in the main, the majority of the girls did not attempt to transform challenges and difficulties with other girls into mutually satisfying interactions. Instead, in times of challenge, the girls tended to rely on discourses concerned with gendered practice and identity positions. This tendency prevented the girls from working out problems in a cohesive and constructive manner which suggested these processes were important mechanisms for online boundary negotiation.

The analytic network developed for this thesis highlighted the importance of teen girls’ capacity to manage impressions, fabricate encounters to save face, and navigate the social boundaries constructed and regulated through gendered and at-risk discourses and identity positions. At the same time, the girls’ accounts suggested that their capacity to negotiate social boundaries, to manage impressions, and to reflect on the persistent discontinuities of gendered discourses and identity positions could benefit from a deeper understanding of these processes. The analytic tools developed for this thesis (i.e., impression management, fabrication, and boundary negotiation) might be useful devices for enabling teen girls to understand these processes better. A reflective device developed from the analytic network could be taught or used effectively by parents and classroom teachers to help young teen girls develop more effective practices for interacting with peers and close friends in online contexts. Other cybersafety practices and strategies have been recommended (see, for example, Chapter One). In addition to these cybersafety protocols, the thesis is offering the analytic devices of impression management, fabrication (Goffman, 1959, 1967, 1970, 1986), identity construction, and boundary negotiation (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Singh 1995b; Singh et al., 2015) as critical tools for parents and teachers in assisting young teen girls to navigate networked culture.

**Supported Autonomy**

Almost all of the girls indicated that they were aware of and engaged with cybersafety practice. They claimed that these practices kept them safe. But above all, the girls were adamant about their privacy, especially with friends. Privacy breaches were keenly discouraged. The girls’ intense desire for privacy suggested that adult supervision and monitoring was unwelcome, at least for some of them. For the most part, this assumption appeared to be reasonably correct. However, parallel to the girls’ strong desire for privacy, many of them claimed the need of adult support when online interactions became difficult. In Chapter Five and Seven, the girls’ accounts highlighted their reliance on and hope for adult intervention during troubling times. In
Chapter Six, a similar pattern emerged when the girls were left unattended in the virtual classroom. At least one of the girls appeared worried and when a teacher chastised one group of the girls, they sought support from the Researcher. Mobile phone contact with parents was described by many girls as very important, especially in the event of an emergency. When questioned specifically about whom they would ask for help with online problems, more than half of the girls reported telling parents over friends. Seeking assistance from adults emerged as an important strategy for dealing with challenging and difficult situations. Largely, the analyses suggested that, regardless of their need for autonomy with friends, most of the girls wanted a certain amount of assistance from parents, especially when troubles with other girls escalated. However, an overwhelming number of the girls claimed their parents trusted them to do the right thing online and hinted that parents were less assertive in monitoring online access than recommended by cybersafety policy (e.g., over half did not turn off their mobile phone at night and a similar number kept their laptop in their bedroom).

Explanations for parent monitoring and regulation were not investigated in the thesis study. However, the ACMA (2011) reported that the role of parents in cybersafety education and regulation changed over time. As children got older, parents were less involved in the day-to-day management of their child’s online participation. Given that autonomy with friends dominated the girls’ accounts, it is possible that their need for privacy influenced parents’ style of monitoring. Nevertheless, the girls in this study reinforced the need for parent/adult assistance. The dual need for independence and support suggested that these girls required some level of active adult involvement in their everyday interactions and online participation. The analytic devices described in the previous section of this chapter offer parents tools for building teen girls’ capacity for successful autonomy in networked culture. Finding the balance between being supportive and allowing for autonomy is not straightforward. However, improving teen girls’ understanding of everyday interaction (i.e., impression management, fabrication, and boundary negotiation) through appropriate levels of adult supervision is recommended as an important preventive approach for helping young teen girls to navigate online contexts.

**Thesis Contributions**

The previous sections of this chapter have outlined some of the important implications of this research. In addition, the thesis has made two significant contributions to the research field. First, the thesis has contributed an analytic device that offers tools for other researchers for investigating the social interactions and online practice of children and young people. This analytic network could also be a potentially useful tool for parents and teachers to guide teen girls to think about and reflect on their social interactions in networked culture. Second, the thesis has designed a number of research implements for co-producing data with young teens.
These instruments may also be useful to educators as they engage with young people about online practices.

**A New Analytic Device**

This study was perhaps most significant for the way that it developed an analytic device for exploring the everyday experiences of teen girls in networked culture. The complex nature of girls’ online experience was highlighted in Chapters One and Two. The scholarship showed that girls’ and boys’ online practices differed and that in part, these differences could be attributed to obligations, expectations, and rules of conduct constituted in gendered discourses. The review implied that teen girls enacted their online performance within the constraints of online platforms and dominant gendered discourses. However, the relationship between teen girls’ online interactions, gendered discourses, and impression management had not been previously explored. Moreover, despite younger teen girls being identified as more likely to experience online difficulties, they were not well represented in the research literature. The literature cultivated the need for better understandings about teen girls’ online experience, especially how they constituted their identity through their online participation with peers and close friends. Theoretical resources for investigating everyday interactions were missing from the literature and, therefore, the theoretical framework and the analytic device developed for the thesis are significant.

This study developed and tested a theoretical framework for exploring teen girls’ online participation. Theoretical resources were drawn from the work of Goffman (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986), Akkerman and Bakker (2011), and Singh et al. (2013). These resources have been used in other studies concerned with everyday interaction. However, they have not been used to investigate young teen girls’ interactions in online contexts and were offered as a way of bringing together the micro-interactions of everyday experience and online participation. While the perspective was one mainly concerned with situated practice (i.e., everyday experience), the boundary scholarship offered resources for linking together the ways in which the girls’ experienced online participation and constructed their social identity. The framework was particularly effective in highlighting the critical influence of dominant discourses and identity positioning on teen girls’ everyday practice.

In Chapter One, three questions critical to understanding teen girls online participation were raised. These questions highlighted the significance of online participation as an everyday experience of networked culture, social interaction as performance and fabrication, and management of online interactions as boundary negotiation and regulation. These theoretical constructs framed the development of an analytic network and set of devices for generating data and analysing the girls’ accounts and interactions. This network operated both inductively and
deductively to bring together the assumptions, ideas, and proposals concerned with teen girls’ online practice described in Chapters One and Two. The work of Asvoll (2014) informed the development of this network and ensured data generation and analyses were systematic and thorough. Teen girls’ everyday experience and online participation is not orderly and only partially accountable through the co-generation of research interactions. However, general and specific representation of the girls’ experience were assisted and visualised through the analytical devices used for this study (see Table 4.11). These devices interfaced with the phenomenon, assumptions, and ideas reported in the literature and enabled the systematic development of data generating instruments. Given the nascent nature of the research field, this interactivity was valued for the ways in which it offered a systematic process for establishing the rules of investigation and providing tools for reading the complex sets of data.

The theoretical framework demonstrated the important link between macro and micro discourses. By drawing on the work of Goffman (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986), the framework offered a close-up inspection of the girls’ impression management practice and demonstrated the significance of identity construction in online contexts. This view deliberately moved away from themes underpinned by technological determinism to emphasise the agential aspects of online participation. The framework was valued for the insight it offered into the micro-moments of the girls’ everyday participation. Through this lens, the intricacies, challenges, and difficulties of everyday interaction were demonstrated. Goffman’s (1986) notion of frame analysis (i.e., analysing frames of real activity or depictions of experiences) offered an important device for understanding the intimacy and importance of close friendship in teen girls’ lives. The lack of scholarship attending to the everyday interactions of teens, especially young teen girls, suggests that concerted efforts need to be made so that their voice of experience can be heard. Goffman’s (1959, 1967, 1970, 1986) work highlighted the importance of the interaction order as a unit of analysis and, thereby, offered an established way of hearing the girls’ voices. The boundary work of Akkerman and Bakker (2011) offered a set of processes for considering how teen girls’ negotiated social boundaries in online contexts and the Bernsteinian perspective on power relations (Singh et al., 2013) provided a valuable resource for investigating how the girls regulated and governed boundary work in online contexts.

**A New Methodological Approach**

The methodological approach specifically developed for the thesis provided a rich research environment that consciously aimed to engage the girls and capture their own depictions of their everyday experience and online participation. An attentive and ethical manner underpinned strict attention to governing protocols. The protective and regulatory conduct of the research was enhanced through the application of a modified version of Koocher’s (2002) CABLES model for risk assessment (see Table 4.2). These risk-prevention strategies were effective tools
for reducing affective, biological, and sociocultural risk. A similar set of strategies might prove effective for other research projects bound by strict regulation and governance (e.g., young participants) and/or sensitive research topics (e.g. interpersonal relationships and problem behaviour such as bullying).

Documenting young people’s personal experience, especially under research conditions, poses a number of challenges. Two main concerns were identified: recruitment processes (Sieber, 1993) and young people’s active participation (Bassett et al., 2008). Drawing on the work of several scholars who have worked extensively with young people (Barter & Renold, 2000; Danby et al., 2011; Hazel, 1995; Mallan et al., 2013; Punch, 2002; Sieber, 1993), a series of techniques and innovative data generation instruments were developed. The visual mediums, especially the video clips, provided an excellent artefact for eliciting elaborated conversations (Danby et al., 2011) and the online group activity provided an opportunity to resource informal everyday interactions between the girls. These opportunities are seldom captured in face-to-face interviews and focus group sessions with young people. The most effective aspect of this methodology was the process of scaffolding and progressing participation across various data generation points while simultaneously increasing the depth and the intensity of the questioning (Barter & Renold, 2000; Danby et al., 2011; Hazel, 1995; Mallan et al., 2013; Punch, 2002). The process allowed the girls to become comfortable with the research environment, the researcher, and the other participants while providing research time to interpret and construct follow-up questions and activities. The full effect of this strategy was realised with 16 girls from School C. These girls were asked to articulate their perceptions about complex ideas and personal topics under research conditions. The data collected from these girls was rich, and most of them claimed they enjoyed taking part in the research. These results suggested that the strategies were effective in encouraging the girls to share their ideas and experiences and therefore, these techniques are offered as useful tools for educational research, especially research that investigates complex and personal topics of young people.

Instead of emphasising extreme behaviours such as cyberbullying and sexting, this study approached the investigation of teen girls’ online participation with peers and close friends through the lens of everyday practice. These moments emerged as important points to gain insight from and to make sense of the complex world of teen girls’ participation in networked culture. Interrogating everyday events of teen girls’ online participation demonstrated that the everydayness of life has potential to be very telling about the nature and construction of young people’s social identity. Beyond the scope of online participation, this exploration has highlighted how normative practices and discursive positioning imbued in face-to-face interaction impact on and become intertwined with teen girls’ online participation. The new methodological approach taken here has supported and facilitated this examination.
The Thesis Limitations

This thesis has offered a detailed exploration of teen girls’ online participation with peers and close friends. Four major conclusions have been presented and implications and contributions to the field have been suggested. However, this research has been limited in a number of ways. From the outset, the challenge of working with teen girls was noted. In particular, it was found that a transparent recruitment approach (Sieber, 1993; Danby et al., 2011) was needed to encourage their participation. While a trusting and respectful relationship with each school emerged, participation numbers remained relatively meagre and accounts shared by some of the girls were brief and non-descriptive. This response style was challenging and somewhat limiting in the early stages of research. On the other hand, a small group of 16 girls contributed to the more exploratory components of the study. These girls’ accounts were comprehensive and provided rich content for analysis. However, participation levels have had some limiting effect on the interpretative power of the analyses and, without doubt, more in-depth research is needed. For this reason, the girls’ accounts and interactions are offered as reasonable although tentative possibilities for their everyday experience and participation in online contexts.

Risk management was particularly challenging and resulted in lengthy delays. Much of this difficulty emerged from second level gatekeepers. In Australia, educational research is managed by two levels of research ethics review, one being the school and the other, the State education department. While the schools were keen to participate in the project, approving, disseminating, and collecting consent forms was time-consuming and substantial delays were experienced. At the same time, significant delays were encountered at the department level. Part of this delay was the typical ‘busy-ness’ of governing bodies. On the other hand, there was a great deal of political angst in education quarters concerned with cyberbullying. This issue made for strict monitoring of ethical process and any research requests concerned with investigating young people’s online participation were being analysed with meticulous care. As a consequence, components of this study required redevelopment before education department approval was granted. Resubmission processes were slow. These issues have had an impact on the overall project in terms of what was doable and when.

When Goffman (1959) articulated human interaction as performance, he was concerned with face-to-face interaction of adults. This study attempted to extrapolate his ideas concerned with adult interaction to teen girls’ online participation. While the online context of networked culture was a completely different environment to adult face-to-face interaction, his theoretical concepts of impression management, fabrication, and the interaction order offered a significant process for investigating the micro-dynamics of teen girls’ online participation. The approach successfully captured a detailed account of the girls’ descriptions of their experience and
allowed for observation of their interactions in a thoughtful manner. The intention was not to recreate the girls’ online interactions in situ but rather to explore their impression management processes and the ways in which they fabricated their social identity. The Goffman approach facilitated this work. However, because this approach has not been applied to other studies concerned with teen girls’ online participation, there can be no assumption about the generalisability of study outcomes to girls in different age groups and to girls in other countries. The thesis theorisation is limited in this regard and requires further investigation and application. At the same time, this theorisation does offer an important starting-point for investigating teen girls’ online participation in different age groups and other geographical locations.

This empirical process opened up new lines of social enquiry by bringing together theoretical concepts previously unrelated in research concerned with young teen girls’ online participation. The analyses demonstrated that empirical events concerned with networked culture could be examined through existing frameworks, especially when theoretical resources were purposefully selected and synthesised into a research specific analytic network. At the same time, the analyses highlighted the need for further development of these theoretical resources so that young teen girls’ online practices, actions, and interactions could be examined in more detail. In particular, interactions related to affective domains concerned with embarrassment appeared to be significant. Developing an approach concerned with the affective domain might help to extend the depth and richness of the theoretical framework.

The very concept of research as performance highlighted the probability that at least some of the girls were doing impression management for the project (i.e., fabricating a research identity). The ambiguity of working with a researcher – an adult, somewhat a stranger, one who was more closely aligned to a mother and a teacher rather than a close friend – suggested invitation to resist or play at being a teen. Certainly, the research environment invited different identity performances. While these performances were fabricated for the research, they demonstrated the girls’ capacity to manage impressions, navigate boundaries, and fabricate an identity. The girls’ participation in the research was valued for these reasons. The effect of an adult researcher on the authenticity of their performance was difficult to monitor and, therefore, questions might be raised about the veracity of the data to represent teen girls’ real world experience with peers and close friends. This line of questioning suggests methodological limitations. However, the intent was not to reproduce the girls’ online activity with peers and close friends. The process aimed to capture, at least in part, the girls’ impression management practice, they ways in which they fabricated or constituted their social identity in online contexts, and how they negotiated the challenges and difficulties they experienced through these interactions. The methodological approach was effective in this regard. On the other hand, the reader is reminded that the
methodological approach is limited by the nascent nature of the work and, therefore, care must be taken when drawing conclusions to apply elsewhere.

Family concerns experienced by the Researcher, herself a parent of a teen girl, affected the fieldwork progress. While these matters were unavoidable, there were several consecutive months of inactivity. The net outcome was a project that progressed over an unexpected and lengthy period of time. This timeline has limited, to some extent, the power of the data to speak to the online experiences of present Australian Year 8 girls. Certainly, technological advancements have outpaced the study’s progress. In this way, the study has highlighted the need for fast-paced research in a field of ongoing and rapid transformation. At the same time, the thesis offers a unique chronological snapshot of the practices, actions, and interactions taken up by the girls as they ventured into the unsupervised context of networked culture. In time, this thesis might become a small piece of history, a time and place chronicle of young Australian teen girls’ everyday experiences with peers and close friends.

**Directions for the Future**

This study has provided a valuable approach for understanding the experiences of teen girls in networked culture. While it is hard to predict the ways of being that will belong to the future, over the short life of this project, it was telling how the girls articulated a world that was neither online or offline but rather a complex and layered social experience of impression management, identity construction, and boundary negotiation. In this way, the girls’ practices, actions, and interactions are valuable tools for (re)considering the future.

The starting-point for this study was at a time when the routines and rules for social interaction were shifting. New technologies and Web 2.0 applications were changing interactional patterns, and young people were becoming actively engaged with these forms of communication. At-risk discourses concerned with cyberbullying and sexting were being associated with teen girls’ online practice, especially younger teen girls aged 12 to 14 years. Parents were anxious about teen girls’ online wellbeing and educators were questioning their role in cybersafety education. The need for research in the field was undisputed and the push for innovative investigation was paramount to this development. This research has taken up that challenge and, as a consequence, has highlighted a number of possible directions for future research. Seven research directions are put forward.

1. The Goffman and boundary negotiation devices discussed in this chapter could be developed into more specific tools for parents and teachers and offered as a pilot program for assisting young teen girls to navigate networked culture. A case study
series would allow the devices to be tested, adaptations to be made, and modifications to be considered.

2. Similar studies could adapt the research practices employed in the thesis to build and extend their usefulness for research work concerned with young people and/or sensitive topics. A larger number of studies would allow comparisons to be made, adaptations to be fine-tuned, and practices to become more explicit.

3. Longitudinal studies could be developed. A longitudinal approach would provide a baseline of data about typicalness of girls’ online practices and everyday experiences at different ages. Longitudinal studies would have particular value for informing cybersafety policy and practice, parent support roles, teacher practice and classroom management, and whole school procedure and practice. Analyses from longitudinal studies would have particular value for informing teacher’s professional knowledge bases about teen social identity and relationship development in networked culture.

4. Longitudinal studies concerned with boys’ everyday experiences and online participation with peers and close friends would complement findings from longitudinal girls’ research studies. The thesis study has suggested that gender differences are important for coming to understand young people’s online participation. Parallel girls’ and boys’ research studies would offer opportunity for in-depth investigation into gender differences, each study informing the other.

5. The micro-macro lens articulated for this study would benefit from further investigation. While this study highlighted the value of considering teen girls’ performance through the impression management, fabrication, and boundary negotiation, further studies could focus on how these three aspects are bridged or constrained by online platforms and unequal access to online resources such as communication devices with mobile broadband.

6. The girls in this study were from a similar geographical area but different sociocultural backgrounds. This aspect of their daily lives was not investigated in the thesis but it seems crucial to understanding more about their everyday interactions and online practice. Further studies involving a more diverse sociocultural cross section of teen girls would add a multiplicity and diversity of voice to the empirical field. A richer data base would help towards the development of explicit cybersafety protocols and teacher professional knowledges.

7. Finally, study findings revealed the significant effect of dominant discourses on teen girls’ practices, actions, and interactions, especially those related to feminine subjectivity. Feminine subjective positioning is a historical struggle that appears to continue to challenge teen girls’ everyday lives. Understandings of teen girls’ experience would benefit from continued exploration of teen girls’ and boys’ everyday participation in networked culture.
Online participation has become a routine aspect of daily life. The girls in this study have highlighted that trend and have shown how boundaries between their online and offline worlds have been blurred. Any future study must move to question this complexity and the continuous flow of independent interaction produced in these mutually dependent worlds. It will not be sufficient to ignore the interconnectivity between these domains nor is it appropriate to underestimate the routineness of everyday interaction in networked culture.
## Appendix A: Publications about Girls

An Anthology of International Publications Concerned with Teen Girls’ and Younger Women’s Social Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Thematic Trends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The secret lives of girls</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>S. Lamb</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>An exploration of girls’ sexuality and aggression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen bees &amp; wannabes</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>R. Wiseman</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Guide for helping parents to work with their teen daughters on cliques, boyfriends, &amp; gossip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social aggression among girls</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>M. Underwood</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Concerned with girls’ aggression and anger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future girl: Younger women in the 21st century</td>
<td>2004a</td>
<td>A. Harris</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Explores the subjectivities of younger women at a time of dramatic social, cultural and political transition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All about the girl: Culture, power, and identity</td>
<td>2004b</td>
<td>A. Harris (Ed.)</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Compilation of academic papers addressing the complicated world of contemporary girlhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princess bitchface syndrome</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>M. Carr-Gregg</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Parent guide on how to survive adolescent girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s happening to our girls?</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>M. Hamilton</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Explores contemporary expectations and concerns for girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princesses and pornstars: Sex, power, identity</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>E. Maguire</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Explores what it means to be a girl in the ‘apparently’ postfeminist 21st century.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wannabes, goths, and christians</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>A. Wilkins</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>An ethnographical account of three subcultures that reveals a complex tug-of-war between the demands of race, class, and gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your skirt’s too short: Sex, power, choice</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>E. Maguire</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>After many waves of feminism, where are girls at? Massive sluts or helpless dolls?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The drama years</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>H. Kilpatrick &amp; W. Joiner</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Parent guide on how to survive girlhood in the middle years of schooling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising girls</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>S. Biddulph</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Parent guide on how to help daughters grow up wise, warm, and strong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surviving girlhood: Building positive relationships, attitudes, and self-esteem to prevent teenage girl bullying</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>N. Giant &amp; R. Beddoe</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Explores relationship building and prevention for teenage girl bullying.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This anthology aims to highlight the topics and perspectives concerned with teen girls’ and young women’s social behaviour that have emerged across the literature and geographical contexts but it is not considered to be a complete list.
Dear Mrs Thompson

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the conditional approval granted to your application for ethical clearance for your project "Exploring girls' online interactions." (GU Ref No: EPS/15/10/HREC).

This is to confirm receipt of the remaining required information, assurances or amendments to this protocol.

Consequently, I reconfirm my earlier advice that you are authorised to immediately commence this research on this basis.

The standard conditions of approval attached to our previous correspondence about this protocol continue to apply.

Regards

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Appendix C: Research Protocols

Exploring Girls’ Online Interactions
Principal Information Letter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief Investigators</th>
<th>Student Investigator</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professor Parlo Singh</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dr Fiona Bryer</strong></td>
<td><a href="mailto:r.thompson@griffith.edu.au">r.thompson@griffith.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University (Mt Gravatt campus)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 3735 5834</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:f.bryer@griffith.edu.au">f.bryer@griffith.edu.au</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dear (Principal’s Name),

A study is being undertaken to explore the online interactions of girls. This research forms part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree being completed by Roberta Thompson. Professor Parlo Singh and Dr. Fiona Bryer, experienced research staff from Griffith University, are supervising this student. The objectives of this study are to improve our understanding of girls’ interactions in online communities, to identify patterns of interaction that may lead to problems, and to suggest educational strategies that will improve the interaction skills of girls in online communities. The focus of this study will be the online interactions of Year 8 girls.

This information letter is being sent to your school to request participation in this project. Your participation will involve supporting the Griffith University Research Team to pool student volunteers and to ensure that the welfare of all participating students has been addressed appropriately. Support services and community resources will be made available to girls participating in this study.

You will be asked to host an online survey in a school classroom at a time negotiated between yourself and the Griffith University Research Team. Two of the data collection phases will involve students working online from home under parental supervision (online focus group and online reflective journal). Although the school will not be directly involved in these two phases, you may need to work with the Griffith University Research Team to liaise with parents and volunteers. You may be required to provide limited technical support to volunteers who do not have computer access at home.

**Participants.** This study will investigate the online interactions of Year 8 girls at your school. The student participants will be selected on a volunteer basis. The Year 8 girls will require written parental consent. In addition, each student will be asked to sign an assent form (copy attached). Although behavioural concerns are not expected, any student issue that arises will be addressed with your support.

**Expected benefits.** The findings from this research study are expected to make a significant contribution to the education community’s knowledge about the online interactions girls. In turn, the knowledge gained will assist secondary schools in the development of social skills programs that address girls’ online behaviour. Ultimately, the aim is to improve the online interaction skills of young people and to help minimise relationship problems such as cyberbullying.

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Attention to risk. The risks associated with participation in this research are minimal. However, participation in this study may incidentally stimulate conversation about difficult situations for some girls. If a student becomes uncomfortable at any point, she will be free to withdraw without explanation. If a student and/or a parent should raise concerns about the project, they will be advised to contact yourself or a member of the Griffith University Research Team. Community services will be clearly identified for participants and a student resource kit will be provided for all Year 8 girls. Resources for other students at the school will be made available at your request.

Confidentiality. The confidentiality of your students’ responses is guaranteed. Your students will not be required to record their name. At all times, their identity will be secure. In any reports resulting from the research study, the students’ individual responses will be non-specific. However, as principal of School’s Name, you have the right to request information about a student should her wellbeing become a concern.

Voluntary participation. Participation in this study will be voluntary. If, at any time, your school and/or your student(s) choose to withdraw from the study, you/they will be free to do so, without penalty. Explanation for withdrawal from the study will not be required.

Study feedback. On study completion, an overall summary of the results will be made available at your request. If you are interested in receiving this report, please provide your email address on the consent form in the space provided.

Your questions. If you have further questions regarding participation in this study, please do not hesitate to contact Roberta Thompson or her supervisors, Professor Parlo Singh, or Dr. Fiona Bryer.

Ethical conduct. Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If potential participants have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project, they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on (07) 3735 5585, or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Privacy statement. If, during the conduct of the project, identifiable school and/or student information is collected, accessed, and/or used, this information will be considered confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without the school’s consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of the data may be used for other research purposes. However, the school’s and the students’ anonymity will be safeguarded at all times. For further information, consult the University’s Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan or telephone (07) 3735 5585.

If you are happy for your school to participate in this study, please complete the attached Principal Consent Form. A pre-paid self-addressed envelope has been enclosed. Return by Date would be appreciated. This information letter is for your reference. Please keep a copy.

Thank you.
Yours sincerely,
Roberta Thompson
Student Investigator
Griffith University, Gold Coast campus
Exploring Girls’ Online Interactions
Principal Consent Form

Chief Investigators
Professor Parlo Singh
Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School
Griffith University (Nathan campus)
07 3735 7290
ggrs-dean@griffith.edu.au

Dr Fiona Bryer
School of Education and Professional Studies,
Griffith University (Mt Gravatt campus)
07 3735 5834
f.bryer@griffith.edu.au

Student Investigator
Roberta Thompson
School of Education and Professional Studies,
Griffith University (Gold Coast campus)
PhD candidate
(07) 5552 9786
r.thompson@griffith.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided. In particular,

- I understand that School’s Name involvement in this study will include supervising participant pooling, hosting an online student survey, working with the Griffith University Research Team to liaise with parents, supporting students with limited access to technology, and overseeing student welfare concerns should they arise.
- I understand that School’s Name participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that School’s Name is free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me personally however, School’s Name participation in this research study will benefit the young people in our community;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions, I can contact the Griffith University Research Team;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on (07)3735-5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree for School’s Name to participate in the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Please Print)</th>
<th>Signature</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final report.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(If yes, please provide email address here.)
Dear Parent/Carer,

My name is Roberta Thompson. I am undertaking a research project to explore girls’ online interactions. This research forms part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree being completed by myself. Professor Parlo Singh and Dr. Fiona Bryer, experienced research staff from Griffith University, are supervising this work.

The objectives of this study are to improve our understanding of girls’ interactions online, to identify patterns of social interaction that may lead to problems, and to suggest educational strategies that will improve the interaction skills of girls in online communities.

This information letter is being sent to you for the purposes of requesting your daughter’s participation in an anonymous and confidential online questionnaire. This questionnaire will take no longer than 15 minutes to complete and will be supervised in a classroom at your daughter’s school. The questionnaire will collect information about the ways in which adolescent girls communicate with family, friends, and others in online communities. Your daughter will be asked to respond to a set of optional questions and will be asked to describe her online behaviour using Emoticon Illustrations.

Your daughter may be offered the opportunity to volunteer to participate in online focus groups and online reflective journals. In this event, you will receive an updated information letter and consent form.

The expected benefits of this research. The findings from this research study are expected to make a significant contribution to the education community’s knowledge about girls’ online interactions. In turn, the knowledge gained will assist secondary schools in the development of social skills programs that address girls’ online behaviour. Ultimately, the aim is to minimise online social problems (such as cyberbullying) and to increase students’ awareness of effective modes of communication in cyberspace.

Risks to your daughter. The risks associated with participation in this research study are minimal. However, participation in this study may incidentally stimulate conversation about difficult online and offline interactions for some girls. If your daughter becomes uncomfortable at any point, she will be free to withdraw from the project without explanation. If your daughter should raise concerns about this project, please contact myself and/or my academic supervisors via email or phone. In addition, cybersafety resources will be supplied to each participant and community services will be highlighted for student and parent information.
Your daughter’s confidentiality. The confidentiality of your daughter’s responses is guaranteed. Your daughter will not record her name on data collection materials at any time. In any reports resulting from this research, your daughter’s individual responses will be non-specific and her identity will be coded and protected by the school. In addition, your daughter’s school identity will not be identifiable (whether directly, or indirectly).

However, the principal of School’s Name, Principal’s Name, does have the right to request information if he believes that a student’s wellbeing might be at risk. Any information provided in these circumstances will be done so after consultation with the Griffith University academic supervisors and ethics advisors.

Your daughter’s participation is voluntary. Participation in this study is voluntary. If, at any time, you or your daughter wish to withdraw from the study, you are free to do so, without penalty and without explanation for your withdrawal. In addition to parent/guardian consent, your daughter will be asked to sign an assent form confirming her voluntary participation. A copy of this form has been attached to this information letter.

Feedback to you. On study completion, an overall summary of the results will be made available. If you are interested in receiving this report, please provide your email address as indicated on the consent form.

Your questions. If you have further questions regarding participation in this study, please do not hesitate to contact myself and/or one of my academic supervisors, Professor Parlo Singh, or Dr. Fiona Bryer.

Ethical conduct. Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If potential participants have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project, they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3735 5585, or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Privacy statement. If, during the conduct of the project, identifiable school and/or student information is collected, accessed, and/or used, this information will be considered confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of the data may be used for other research purposes. However, the school’s and the students’ anonymity will be safeguarded at all times. The identity of both the school and the students will be non-identifiable (whether directly, or indirectly). For further information, consult the University’s Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan or telephone (07) 3735 5585.

If you agree to the participation of your daughter in this study, please complete the attached Parent Consent Form indicating your approval. Please return the signed form to School’s Name by Date. This information letter is for your reference. Please keep a copy.

Thank you.
Yours sincerely,
Roberta Thompson
PhD Candidate, Griffith University, Gold Coast campus
By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided. In particular,

- I understand that my daughter’s involvement in this research will include participation in an online anonymous and confidential questionnaire. This questionnaire will take no longer than 15 minutes to complete and will be supervised in a classroom at my daughter’s school;
- I understand that my daughter’s participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that my daughter will be asked to sign an assent form to participate;
- I understand that my daughter is free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me personally but, my daughter’s participation in this project may have benefits for young people in our community;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions, I can contact the Griffith University Research Team;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735-5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree for my daughter to participate in this project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Please Print)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final report.  
[ ] Yes  [ ] No  
(If yes, please provide email address here.)
Girls’ Online Interactions
Student Assent Form

Please tick the box, if you agree. ☑

☐ I am happy to answer the online questionnaire and participate in the group activity and reflective journal.

☐ I understand that I will be participating in this research in a classroom at my school.

☐ I understand that the questions are not a test and will not affect my grades at school.

☐ I understand that I can stop answering the questions or participating at any time without getting into trouble.

☐ I understand that my responses are private and I should not share my research contributions with other students.

☐ I understand that I must be courteous, considerate, and respectful to the other students participating in the research.

☐ I understand that I must use the school’s computer equipment respectfully and safely.

☐ I understand that by answering the questions, I am helping to contribute important information to research.

☐ I understand that I can discuss my participation in this study and any concerns that I might have with my parent/carer.

My name is: ________________________________

My signature: ________________________________

The date is: ________________________________
Appendix D: The Survey

Exploring Teen Girls’ Online Participation: 2011

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your views are very important. You can help us to understand more about the online experiences of girls your age. There are four sections to this survey. Please read the instructions carefully. For each question, please answer the best you can. And remember, there are no right or wrong answers. This is not a test. Please do not record your name or the name of others in this survey. This way your answers will remain anonymous and confidential.

Section One: About me and my online environment.

In Section One, we ask you questions about yourself and your online environment. Please choose one option.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I have my own mobile phone.</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>My mobile phone has internet access.</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I turn off my mobile phone when I go to bed.</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>We have a family computer that everyone uses.</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I have my own computer/laptop.*</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I have internet access on my computer/laptop.</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I keep my computer/laptop in my bedroom.</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I shut down my computer/laptop every night.</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>We have family rules for the use of computers, mobile phones, and other internet-enabled devices (e.g., iPad, DS, etc.).</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>How much time do you spend on the internet each day? (A quick estimate is fine.) Please choose only one of the following:</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do not use the internet.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Less than 1 hour.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ 1 to 2 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ 2 to 3 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ 3 to 4 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ More than 4 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>At home, my family speaks a language other than English.</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

24 The Survey has been redrafted as a word document. The LimeSurvey™ print version of The Survey could not be formatted to fit the required margins for this thesis.

25 Questions with * have been conditioned so that if the participant answers No, they move to the next logical question in The Survey.
Section Two: My school community and the people around me.

In Section Two, we ask you questions about your school community and the people around you. You can make a choice from several options. Please choose the answer that suits you best.

Tell us more about your school community and the people that support you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. School is a nice place to be.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. There are people I like in most of my classes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. When I need help with problems, I go to my parent/carer first.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Others at school are friendly towards me.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. My teachers always listen to me.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17. I feel lonely at school and left out.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. My friends and I have similar interests.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I spend more time with my parent/carer than my friends.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. My parent/carer gives me helpful advice about my social life.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How likely is it that you would do these things?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely Likely</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Extremely Unlikely</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. Volunteer to help other students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Let other people decide what to do.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Behave in ways that annoy teachers and other students.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tell us how important these things are to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Quite Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Not Important at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25. My school grades.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Being in charge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28. The school rules.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Family social events.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. A mobile phone.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. The internet.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>32. A traditional telephone.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In this section, we may not have asked you about the things that are important to you. If so, please add your ideas here? For example: The most important thing about my school is … The thing I like best about my class is … etc.

33. Free-text space provided.
### Section Three: My online actions and strategies.

In Section Three, we ask you questions about the kinds of things you do online. You can make a choice from several options. Please choose the answer that suits you best.

#### Here is a list of online actions. Please tell us which of these things you do online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>I try to have the largest list of online friends in my group.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>I spend most of my online time doing homework.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>I control who sees my online messages.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>I chat to all of my friends online.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>If I have something difficult to say to a friend, I say it in an online message rather than face-to-face.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>I have never sent an online message that upset my friend(s).</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>I find it hard to control my temper online.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>I follow online safety rules.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>I share personal stories with my friends online.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>My friends and I have assumed rules for online messaging.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Here is a different list of online actions. Please tell us if these things apply to your online experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>I feel comfortable with my parent/carer reading my online messages.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>It would upset me if my friend sent our private online message to another person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>My parent/carer trusts me to make sensible decisions about my online activities.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>If a friend doesn’t answer my online message straight away, I feel disappointed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>I have experienced online problems.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>I am always proud of my online behaviour.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>I can tell if my friends have misunderstood my online message.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Here are some online strategies that young people use. How likely is it that you would use these?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Extremely Likely 1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Extremely Unlikely 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Check the subject bar and the sender details before opening online messages.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Use special icons in online messages to make sure friends understand you.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Use online privacy settings to protect yourself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Tell a parent/carer if someone was sending you cruel or unkind messages.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Withhold personal information from online friends to protect yourself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Block a friend if they were being mean to you.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
57. Turn off your mobile/computer when you need privacy.  
58. Think things through before sending online messages.  
59. Share personal stories about friends in online messages.  
60. Ask your friends for help when you have online problems.  
61. Use complete words, not abbreviations, when sending online messages to adults.  
62. Use online privacy settings to protect yourself.  

Now take a look at these things. How important are they to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Quite Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Not Important at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63. Mobile phone contact with friends.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. Online privacy.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. Social networking with friends.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66. Parent/carer rules for online devices.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67. Quick replies from friends to online messages.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68. Skyping with friends.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. The internet.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70. A traditional telephone.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71. Please tell us which of the following is your favourite way to connect with friends is. Please choose only one option.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Emailing.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ IMing in online games.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Social networking (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, etc.).</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ MSN IMing.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Talking in chatrooms.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Text messaging.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Calling on the mobile phone.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Skyping.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Calling on the landline telephone.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Face-to-face chatting.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ None of these.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Your online experiences and strategies may be unique. If so, here’s an opportunity for you to share your ideas with us. For example: I always use a code name in chatrooms to protect my identity from people I don’t really know… I always block people who are mean to me … I always use privacy settings … etc.

Free-text space provided.

Section Four: My everyday online behaviour.
In this last section, we will show you some illustrations and ask you to tell us what online behaviour you think each represents. Some of these illustrations might be harder for you to understand than others. We are very interested in what you have to say so please try to answer as best you can.

This next question has two parts, column one and column two.
73. In the first column, use a few words or short sentence to describe the online behaviour that you think each illustration represents.
74. In the second column, pick two to three illustrations that most closely resemble your everyday online behaviour and then tell us why.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustrations 1 – 20 (see Appendix E)</th>
<th>What online behaviour does each illustration represent (use a few words or a short sentence).</th>
<th>Pick two to three illustrations that most closely resemble your online behaviour and tell us why (use a few words or a short sentence).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you! You have done a great job!
Now, before you go, is there anything else you would like to say about how girls behave online? For example: I think most girls my age … Girls are more likely to … etc.
75.
(Free-text space was provided.)

This research project is being conducted by Griffith University and is not sponsored or endorsed by the community services listed here. However, if you need assistance and/or further information, these sites are a good place to start.

For further information on depression, anxiety, and related disorders, visits:
www.youthbeyondblue.com
For further information on how and where to get help, visit:
www.kidshelp.com or telephone **Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800**
For further information on how to be Cybersmart and use the internet safely, visit:
www.cybersmart.gov.au
For further information on the issues surrounding bullying, harassment and violence, visit:
www.bullyingnoway.gov.au
For further information on internet safety and how to report abuse, visit:
www.thinkuknow.org.au
Appendix E: Emoticon Illustrations

a. 
b. 
c. 
d. 
e. 
f. 
g. 
h. 
i. 
j. 
k. 
l. 
m. 
n. 
o. 
p. 
q. 
r. 
s. 
t. 
Appendix F: PowerPoint Presentation
Appendix G: The Journal

Welcome to this reflective journal. During the online group activity, we shared ideas about how girls interact online. Now it’s your turn to describe in detail what you saw and how you felt about it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The “Kitchen Scene”</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this section, we will ask you questions about the “Kitchen Scene” video clip. Please answer as best you can.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Describe in detail what you saw happening in the “Kitchen Scene”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How did you feel about this scene as it was happening?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What experiences have you had that helped you to understand this scene?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What do you think is the key issue in this scene?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What do you think should happen if girls speak to each other like this online?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you have anything else you would like to say about the “Kitchen Scene” video clip? If so, here is a space for you to write your comments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The “Easy A Scene”</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this section, we will ask you questions about the “Easy E Scene” video clip. Please answer as best you can.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Describe in detail what you saw happening in the “Easy A Scene”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How did you feel about this scene as it was happening?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What experiences have you had that helped you to understand this scene?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What do you think is the key issue in this scene?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. What do you think should happen if girls send “gossipy” online and/or text messages to other students at school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Do you have anything else you would like to say about the “Easy A Scene” video clip? If so, here is a space for you to write your comments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration One: Student sitting at a computer.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this section, we will ask you questions about the first illustration you saw. Please answer as best you can.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Describe in detail what you thought was happening in the first illustration.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How did you feel about the scene in this illustration?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

26 The Survey has been redrafted as a word document. The LimeSurvey™ print version of the survey could not be formatted to fit the margin requirements for the thesis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. What experiences have you had that helped you to understand the scene in this illustration?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. What do you think is the key issue in this illustration?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. What kinds of things do you think Year 8 girls should be doing online?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Do you have anything else you would like to say about the first illustration? If so, here is a space for you to write your comments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Illustration Two: Student on mobile phone after school.**
In this section, we will ask you questions about the second illustration you saw. Please answer as best you can.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. Describe in detail what you thought was happening in the second illustration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. How did you feel about the scene in this illustration?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. What experiences have you had that helped you to understand the scene in this illustration?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. What do you think is the key issue in this illustration?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. How do you think Year 8 girls should handle online and mobile phone troubles?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Do you have anything else you would like to say about the second illustration? If so, here is a space for you to write your comments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The online group activity.**
In this section, we will ask you questions about the online group activity that you participated in with other Year 8 girls from your school. Please answer as best you can.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25. What did you like about participating in the online group activity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Was there anything you didn’t like about the online group activity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. You have completed three tasks for this research project – an online survey, an online group activity, and an online reflective journal. Which one did you enjoy the most? Please tell us why.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Do you have anything else you would like to say about the online group activity? If so, here is a space for you to write your comments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix H: Data Mapping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instant Messaging</th>
<th>Live Chat</th>
<th>Interactive Whiteboard</th>
<th>Field Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:08 (time lapse in minutes and seconds)</td>
<td>R: Suddenly the fire alarm goes off. Which of these things would you take with you?</td>
<td>![Interactive Whiteboard Image]</td>
<td>R: Girls are becoming quieter &amp; appeared to be settling into the session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:22</td>
<td>R: Now, I want you to answer the questions on this slide.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:23</td>
<td>GI: The phone the phone.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:26</td>
<td>G1: Mobile to call my parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3: i would use the phone to go on facebook lol</td>
<td>G1: Okay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:35</td>
<td>G2: I would take my mobile phone so I can call my mum/dad in case I need them to get me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:45</td>
<td>G3: FACEBOOK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:49</td>
<td>G5: Mobile to call my parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:57</td>
<td>G1: mobile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:57</td>
<td>G5: and facebook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations codes are as follows:
- R = Researcher
- G1, 2, 3, and 5 = Girl One, Two, Three and Five
References


Cross, D., Li, Q., Smith, P. K., & Monks, H. (2012). Understanding and preventing cyberbullying: Where have we been and where should we be going? In Q. Li, D. Cross & P. K. Smith (Eds.), Cyberbullying in the global playground: Research from international perspectives (pp. 287-305). West Sussex, UK: Blackwell Publishing.


Websites

Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
www.acara.edu.au/default.asp

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers

Cybersmart
www.cybersmart.gov.au

Department of Education, Training and the Arts (Education Queensland)
www.deta.qld.gov.au

KidsHelpLine
www.kidshelp.com

Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (MySchool)
www.myschool.edu.au

ThinkUKnow
www.thinkuknow.org.au

Worlde
www.wordle.net

YouthBeyoneBlue
www.youthbeyondblue.com