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Social media: digital content creation and sharing. A study of adults.

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A study of adults

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Abstract

In the first few years of the 21st century, access to and use of Web 2.0 digital technologies by everyday, non-professional web users increased considerably in the UK. Today anyone of any age with access to a computer, digital tools and an internet connection can engage in social media dialogues as creators and publishers of digital content. This practice is no longer the preserve of the professional. Many academics and media commentators see this as a significant shift from the way individuals traditionally receive and 'passively' consume media to a position where they are more actively, responsively and inclusively engaged.

In the last fifteen years much research has been concerned with the online actives of children and young people. Several web commentators have written with enthusiasm of the 'net generation' and 'digital natives'. However, little research has been conducted into the digital and online engagement of adult web users. This study investigates how adults aged 18-28, 40-50 and +65 create, publish and share content online. Content creation, in the context of this project, is defined as an arrangement of visual and/or audio material that requires some element of composition or editing.

Through the use of qualitative interviews this research provides an insight into the practices of these three age ranges of adults who use digital technology and the internet to create and share their content. The study addresses how they use content sharing to communicate online and their motivations for engaging in these practices. Issues of this kind are of importance for individuals' self-expression and participation in an increasingly digitalised world. The research found that participants from all age groups often used both digital and analogue technologies side-by-side and this helped, rather than hindered, their ability to create and share content. Several participants, particularly the over-65s, revealed that digital technologies were enablers that unlocked suppressed behaviour and creative desires. Artistic self-expression, personal achievement, affiliation to others and receiving recognition and feedback were all given as motivational reasons for creating and sharing content across the age spectrum. The research findings offer an alternative to the over-simplistic and sometimes polemical perception that the so-called 'digital generation' are more digitally adept and literate than older internet users.

Acknowledgements

Author's declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

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Riley, T. (2013), 'Self-initiated (re)education of digital technology in retired content creators', Northern Lights 11, pp. 51–69, doi: 10.1386/nl.11.51_1

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The evolution of this research project originated many years ago and was conceived during two different periods of my life. The first began imperceptibly in the early 1980s at the start of a career as a graphic and moving image designer. While working in the graphic design department of a broadcast television station, I was given my first experience of digital technology in the form of a computer graphics workstation, the Quantel Paintbox. It was here I began a 30-year on-going association with digital technology and digital content creation.

The 'Paintbox' was designed and manufactured by the UK-based technology company, Quantel. It was a highly specialised tool developed for professional designers working in broadcast television, video production and motion picture industries. In the early 1980s it was considered to have a 'revolutionary effect' (Pank, 2011) on the creation of broadcast television video and graphics. Prior to the release of the Paintbox in 1981, the UK remained, as with the rest of the world, a place where media content was almost exclusively created in the analogue domain. Television programmes were created using analogue cameras that recorded to analogue videotape. As I know from personal experience, television graphics were made using traditional materials, such as paper, pens, stencils and glue, before they were used as caption cards in front of cameras and recorded into a television programme, either via a video edit suite or transmitted directly live on-air. Broadcast news maps were crafted by hand using coloured cardboard and dry transferable 'rubdown' lettering. They were often constructed with moving parts that were manually 'operated' in front of camera.

One of the disadvantages of recording to analogue tape was that each time a copy or transfer was made the quality of the recording degenerated, in what was known as 'generation loss'. This was particularly relevant when producing graphics, as many

processes and sequences relied on adding 'layers' of images and typography using overlay 'masks' recorded to videotape. Each time a new 'layer' was added and re-recorded to analogue tape, the quality degraded by another 'generation'. The process of creating graphics, therefore, needed to provide more than a conceptual idea capable of answering a client brief, but also an idea that ensured the final technical quality of images and pictures were maintained. This was often a lengthy process that occasionally required a technological workaround to ensure that the least 'generation loss' occurred.

As the Quantel Paintbox was introduced to a greater number of television graphics departments and production facility houses so did the working practices of the graphic designers. This had an impact on the whole of the production process. The effect was that graphics could be produced quicker, to a higher technical quality and in greater volume. This was beneficial to programme producers who were able to commission more sophisticated graphic sequences and deliver them in a shorter space of time. The digital environment eliminated the problem of 'generation loss' by creating exact copies without deterioration of picture quality (see Negroponte, 1996). Therefore, graphics could, potentially, have an infinite amount of 'layers'.

As the growth in digital content production proliferated in the broadcast and print industries (through desktop publishing) during the late 1980s and early 1990s, access to this form of digital technology remained extremely limited for the vast majority of non-professional individuals. The reason for this was three-fold. Firstly, the cost of buying digital technology, such as the Quantel Paintbox (and much digital technology), was out of reach to all but the larger media companies. Secondly, hardware and software were often integrated on these early digital systems. The considerable size of the mainframe computer meant that access was restricted by location to the companies that owned and housed them (see Fig 1.1). Thirdly, the result of location-restricted technology dictated that acquiring the necessary skills to use the computer system had to be completed onsite, often in 'downtime'. This required broadcast companies or post-production facility houses to invest time and money in training before people gained the necessary skills for professional productivity. Therefore, creating content digitally remained a relatively exclusive professional practice. However, this was about to change.

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Fig. 1.1 The Quantel Paintbox

Fig. 1.1 shows the now defunct Quantel Paintbox exhibited at the Barbican Centre's Digital Revolution exhibition in London (2014). The picture shows the computer hardware on the left (with front panel opened showing circuit boards at the bottom and disc drive at the top) and in the centre TV monitor (top) and graphics tablet (bottom) and to the right a keyboard and mouse (a stylus pen attached to a cord was also used with the palette in the original version but not on show here).

1.1.1 The rise of affordable personal computers and ownership

During the late 1980s and early 1990s there was a slow but steady rise in the ownership of personal computers. However, software programs were still relatively basic and limited in capability and functionality. Consequently, personal computers were used primarily for tasks such as word processing and creating spreadsheets, although many people also used them for leisure pursuits, such as digital game playing. During the late 1990s the speed of ownership in the UK grew exponentially. This was qualified by an Office for National Statistics report that found home computer ownership in the UK increased from 29% of the population in 1998 to 70% by 2007 (2009:86).

1.1.2 Development of affordable, free and open source software

In the early to mid-1990s, several proprietary, free and open source graphics editing programs were released, the most popular being the proprietary Adobe Photoshop. The early iterations of these software packages were still very basic. Nonetheless, this was the first time relatively affordable, low cost and, in some cases, free programs were available to non-professionals for personal computers.. Graphics editing programs, such as Photoshop, lowered the barrier to entry by affording everyday computer users the opportunity to experiment with pictures, photographs and fonts in a digital format. As a consequence, new users were liberated from a lack of access to location-restricted, software-integrated hardware systems, as this type of software could be installed on a computer from a portable drive or disc in a location of their choosing. Access to the software on their home computer also meant that they could learn how to use it in their own time and at their own speed.

By the mid 1990s Adobe Photoshop, from a creative industry standpoint, had started to become a serious rival to Quantel's Video and its recently launched print-orientated Graphic Paintbox. Given its considerably lower cost and platform independence, Photoshop undoubtedly had a distinct advantage over Quantel's expensive integrated hardware and software system. In 1996, however, Quantel sued Adobe for using digital paintbrush effects, claiming it infringed a patent that it had been awarded in 1980. In court, Quantel argued that the brush technique it patented was a way of producing fine art, which other computer graphic paint systems could not. However, reference to computer art previously created by Alvy Ray Smith, computer graphics pioneer and co-founder of Pixar, led to the patent being judged invalid by the court, and Quantel lost the lawsuit in 1997 (Phillips, 1998:54). This inevitably marked the rise of Photoshop and the decline of Quantel's digital editing systems. The impact of this event on the broadcast industry is difficult to fully quantify due to many contributing factors. However, it did herald an era of multi-functional software packages that brought even greater technical flexibility and creativity to television graphics production than those introduced by the Quantel Paintbox in the early 1980s.

During the remainder of the 1990s, a plethora of free and relatively low-cost content creation software were released that supported video editing, moving and static

graphics compositing along with web authoring and design tools for personal computers. This provided a greater choice of digital resources to the everyday computer user, which increased their ability to create different types of media content digitally. Individuals now had access to the digital tools used by professionals, and this began the process of narrowing the technical resources gap between professional and non-professional, along with the potential for increased speed and ease of production.

1.1.3 Adoption of networked computing

A Office for National Statistics report (2009) into the rise of home computer ownership established that the amount of networked computers in the UK grew exponentially at the start of the new millennium. The proportion of households with an internet[1] connection rose from less than 10 per cent in 1998, to 61 per cent in 2007 (2009:86). This, with the development of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s and the advance of 'Web 2.0' technologies in the early 2000s, added a distribution channel for non-professional content creators – the ability to publish and 'broadcast' one's self-created content.

The second evolutionary stage of this research project began in 2007, during a Masters in Digital Media, where I explored the use of online creative repositories and new mediums of distribution, accessibility and interactivity on the internet. This culminated in a major project that examined the use of user-generated content from independent filmmakers as an expression of creativity and visual communication. It was the combination of this, and my previously described experience as graphic and moving image designer, that led to the initiation of this project.

Around this time I began to observe online services, such as YouTube and Flickr, which provided media publishing platforms for all, not just professionals. Here they could present, publish and broadcast their self-created content to a potentially large and diverse audience. Indeed, until 2009 YouTube used the tagline 'Broadcast

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[1] Since its inception, the "Internet" has often been spelt with a capital 'I'. This research conforms to the current preference in internet studies for using the lower-case 'i' when writing the word 'internet'. The capitalising of the word suggests that 'internet' is a proper noun and implies a unique entity, such as a person's name or a specific place, such as London or Manchester. "[This would] lead to granting the internet agency and power that are better granted to those who develop and use it" Baym, N. K. & Markham, A. N. (2009:vii).

Yourself' "which neatly capture[d] the difference between old-style TV and new" (Burgess and Green, 2009:133). This made a clear distinction between the practices of a television graphic designer like myself, and the practice of an everyday digital content creator. The former, through the medium of television, created broadcast content in a creatively structured, financially remunerated, professional framework. For the latter, creating, publishing and shared digital content practices were self-initiated and self-motivated in which they sought no reward other than self-expression and perhaps recognition. This was an area I felt needed further exploration.

1.2 Conceptual approach of the research

Three criteria have informed the direction of this study and form the starting point for my conceptual approach to this research. Firstly, the proliferation of and access to digital technology by everyday people has grown hugely since the start of the new millennium. The increasing power and speed of computers, the advance in high-speed broadband connections, and a greater choice of web tools have facilitated this. Consequently, as mentioned above, creating content is no longer the preserve of the professional, and the process of sharing self-created digital content is much easier for everyday people than in previous decades. Secondly, everyday internet users who create, share and publish digital content online are less reliant on receiving and 'passively' consuming traditional one-to-many media. Many academics and media commentators (Gauntlett, 2011; Castells, 2009; Leadbeater, 2008; Shirky, 2008; Benkler, 2006; Poster, 1995) see this as a significant shift towards a participative position where they are more actively, responsively, and inclusively engaged. The creation and sharing of digital content has demanded that traditional media organisations adapt and reassess their modus operandi, a point argued by David Gauntlett in his book *Making is Connecting*.

> Just 20 years ago [...] you had to be one of the absolute elite, employed by a media organisation, and selected to produce content, to even get to speak. Today, a lot of non-elite, non-professional people are creating and sharing media, making their mark on the world, and sharing what they have to say about an incredibly diverse range of spheres and subjects (2011:233).

Thirdly, an Ofcom Communications Market Report (2010) had revealed that the divide between younger and older people's technology use had become narrower. The active online universe in the UK aged as older people's use of the internet grew faster than younger people. This may have been due to saturation in internet usage being reached by young people. However, more than 50% of over 55s had by then got broadband connections at home, with 20% using social networking sites, a rise of 7% from 2009. The report also revealed that, although there was a greater adoption of technology among older people, the services they used was narrower in range. In recent years, a considerable amount of valuable research has been conducted into the impact of technology on children and young people (Buckingham, 2006; Livingstone, 2002; Facer and Furlong, 2001). This has been complemented by statistical surveys of the UK populace (Becta, 2010; Office for National Statistics, 2010). In addition, many web commentators have written with enthusiasm of so-called 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001) and the 'net generation' (Tapscott, 2008; 1999). By contrast, a relatively small amount of research has been conducted into adults' use of technology and the internet in comparison to young people and children. Indeed, specifically, little is known of the content creation and sharing practices of adults in the UK. Without a review of different adult age ranges it is difficult to evaluate how and why people are creating and sharing their self-created content, and what drives them to engage in this practice. In order to bring clarity to this subject, research is needed to understand how web users of different age ranges use digital technologies. Many adults, myself included, have been using digital technology for many years, and the introduction to the internet has been acquired in different ways and in some cases gradually through work or home. This, therefore, needs further investigation and makes this research project conceptually relevant and appropriate.

One of the issues considered in this research is the validity of terms 'digital natives' and 'net generation' in relation to content creation and sharing, as mentioned above. This will help to assess whether 'generation' is a relevant term for this research and, more specifically, whether a 'digital generation' exists, or whether learning digital technology is more experientially age non-specific. However, this research reaches further than this initial premise and will explore how adults create digital content in relation to vernacular/everyday creativity and practices and how they share it online

with other individuals and groups. The project will also consider the motivation behind these practices through theories of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Adult age ranges will be selected in relation to the technology they grew up with, which links with Tapscott and Prensky's concepts of age and (digital) technology, and will help in the assessment of their digital/media literacy. Therefore, this study draws on a number of concepts but does not import pre-existing theoretical frameworks. This research employs a critical approach to the study of different age ranges from young adults to middle aged and retired adults who are currently creating and sharing digital content outside of a professional framework. It discusses and includes, among other concerns, use of the terms 'digital natives' and 'digital generation'.

1.3 Research structure

Social media is contemporary both in its practice and origins. This research, therefore, is themed around topics that are thematic rather than chronological. Consequently, the following two chapters provide a background to the current themes and literature relating to the subject of this research. They explore the development of social media, and the relationships between the user and new online and digital technologies. This background knowledge contributes towards the empirical research of how adults adopt and use these tools and technologies, and their motivations for creating and sharing digital content online.

Chapter two begins by defining and contextualising social media within the new media landscape, and provides a summary of academic and media discourse from both advocates and sceptics. Widespread discussion, particularly over the last 50 years, has focused on the influence of new technologies on society. This has intensified over the last couple of decades with the development and adoption of digital technologies. New online technologies are central in enabling the rise and progress of social media and self-created content, along with how individuals engage with and use them. Therefore discussion continues in this chapter on the topic of new technology and user agency with an analysis of both recent historical debates and current theoretical discussion with consideration given to the relationship of adopting new technology in contemporary society. This is followed by an examination of the relationships between technology and users and their changing role in the shifting

media landscape, which has initiated a redefinition from traditional to new media audiences. The chapter continues by considering the different age groups, age ranges and generations that potentially make up the participants in this study and by which help inform the methodology. The chapter ends with a look at the topic of online identity, and it's relevance to this research.

Chapter three concentrates on the core subjects of this research. It begins by focusing on content creation and, one of the characteristics of social media, self-created content, often known by the term 'user-generated content' (UGC). The redefining of new media content are then discussed through the topics of creativity and remix culture before considering the definition and practices of online sharing. Many web users share much of their self-created content via web platforms, which potentially connect them to a community of friends, like-minded people or individuals with similar interests. Chapter three continues by considering the concept and role of virtual and online communities and what constitutes and defines a community. The chapter concludes by examining motivation and what the drivers might be for online users to create and share content, along with digital literacy and how this relates to creating and sharing digital content.

Chapter four describes the methodological approach to this research, with attention given to the validity and meaning of the term 'generation' and its relevance to this study. It also asks a poignant question that informs the progress of this research – is there a 'digital generation'? Having established the background and the methodological approach, chapter five introduces the empirical research, giving an in-depth background to the characteristics of the age range and the participants in this research. It starts by identifying how each participant has acquired their technical knowledge and finds common themes within each group. It also considers the participants' relationship with both analogue and digital technology.

Chapters six, seven and eight are concerned with the analysis of fieldwork and themed accordingly. Each addresses a particular subject through case studies and add additional topics that were identified as being relevant during interviews but not covered directly in chapters two and three. Chapter six and seven examine the practices of content creation and sharing respectively, while chapter eight considers what motivates participants to create and share their content, and the outcomes that

result from these practices. The study closes with a concluding chapter that discusses the findings.

Chapter 2 – Social media, technology and new media audiences

2.1 Introduction to the title – Social media: Digital content creation & sharing

'Social media' is a relatively new term without a clearly defined or universally accepted definition. Coined in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, it refers to many-to-many public and personal communication, mediated through online technology that facilitates the distribution of digital content. Recent developments in digital technology with access to social media software and applications have increased the ability for people to create content and share it with others online. The use of web-based applications in conjunction with digital media platforms has afforded individuals more extensive 'media rich' communication and interaction opportunities. This has enabled communication to extend beyond purely text-based exchanges, characteristics of the early years of the World Wide Web, and facilitated greater online sharing and collaboration opportunities through self-created videos, images, audio and digital media files. Therefore, social media is fundamentally a participative medium that is as much about the people that use it as the technology that drives it.

There are a number of opposing views on both the virtues and flaws of social media. Many advocates believe this marks a paradigm shift away from individuals' reliance on traditional forms of media distribution delivered by large media gatekeepers, such as television, radio and newspapers, to a position where individuals are not only the consumers, but also the producers of media. Conversely, sceptics believe social media encourages creative mediocrity and, rather than creating meaningful connections, isolates users from real-world relationships and communities and is a form of free 'digital' labour exploited by commercial internet companies. What is undisputed, however, is the growth in use of, and engagement with, social media to a significant demographic since the beginning of the new millennium, particularly in the population of western societies and increasingly other parts of the world.

2.1.1 Social media in context

When Tim Berners-Lee designed and conceived the World Wide Web in 1990, he built it as a networking tool that was for both searching and reading content, as well as creating and editing content.

> The Web is more a social creation than a technical one. I designed it for a social effect – to help people work together and not as a technical toy. The ultimate goal of the Web is to support and improve our weblike existence in the world (Berners-Lee, 1999:133).

The notion of media being social relies on a 'feedback-loop' of communication, which provides a continuous call and response of information. This idea was pioneered by the American mathematician Norbert Weiner through his studies into cybernetics, and dates back to the Second World War (Naughton, 2000; Harkin, 2009; Milton and Barnes, 2010; Giddings and Lister, 2011). Weiner used the idea of feedback loops in engineering systems and electrical circuitry to help anti-aircraft gunners track aircraft in flight.

> The gunner, his firing system and the anti-aircraft predictor machine […] could all be seen as embedded in the same system of continuous feedback. […] Just like the gunner, the enemy pilot depended on a continuous loop of information about both his own direction and the direction taken by anti-aircraft fire. […] It was as if gunner and their respective machines had all been fused via an information loop into a new kind of self-regulating system akin to a thermostat (Harkin, 2009:21,22).

This concept forms the basic structure of social communication on the web[2], where users constantly update content based on feedback from other users. This culture of real time updating or 'status update' is what Aleks Krotoski calls "the big shift in our [online] relationships [and it is these] constant status updates, this being in the online loop, which has dragged the web into a new age" (Krotoski in Milton and Barnes, 2010). These online methods of communication assist in connecting users through network-of-networks within a many-to-many paradigm. J. C. R. Licklider, a pioneer of

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[2] Instances of 'the web' and 'web' use the lower case 'w' in the same convention as 'the internet'. Exceptions are World Wide Web, Web 2.0 and quotes where the author has chosen to use an uppercase 'W'.

ARPANET and predecessor of the internet, was one of the first people to imagine the social potential of the internet as far back as the late 1960s.

> We believe that communicators have to do something nontrivial with the information they send and receive. And we believe that we are entering a technological age in which we will be able to interact with the richness of living information—not merely in the passive way that we have become accustomed to using books and libraries, but as active participants in an on going process, bringing something to it through our interaction with it, and not simply receiving something from it by our connection to it (Licklider and Taylor, 1968:21).

As the numbers of users, particularly in western societies, rapidly increased in the first decade of the web, so did the speed of access to and distribution of ever-greater volumes of digital content. Access and usability was assisted in the first few years of the 21st century with the advent of high-speed broadband connections, more powerful home computers and the availability of comparatively inexpensive or free software. At this time, Manuel Castells commented that communication architecture is based on three principles: "a decentralised network structure; distributed computing power throughout the nodes of the network; and the redundancy of functions in the network to minimise the risk of disconnection" (2001:17). In the early years of the new millennium, a greater choice of online tools and platforms began to appear. The way online content was created and used was changing, too. Access to ever-greater quantities of data facilitated a remix culture where the ability to 'mash' together content and information from different sources continued to affect the conventional way we use and view original content, intellectual property and copyright. By 2004, 'Web 2.0' had become a term associated with these, seemingly, new advances in technology and collective and participatory opportunities for users to network online. The term 'Web 2.0' was coined and defined by Tim O'Reilly as:

> A set of economic, social, and technology trends that collectively form the basis for the next generation of the internet — a more mature, distinctive medium characterized by user participation, openness, and network effects (O'Reilly and Musser, 2006).

However, it must be noted that Berners-Lee rejects the term 'Web 2.0' as "piece of jargon" (Laningham, 2006), arguing that this "was what the Web was supposed to be

all along" (ibid.). Suggestions have been made that the term Web 2.0 was derived as a response to the internet financial crisis at the turn of the millennium, the so called 'dot.com bubble' (Fuchs, 2014; Hinton and Hjorth, 2013), which, through the adoption of the terms social media and Web 2.0, sought to give confidence to financial markets after the crash (Fuchs, 2014:33)

2.1.2 'Social Software' and the user

'Social Software', a term first conceived in the 1990s, re-emerged in the early part of the century to describe software used to support individual users online interaction. At a *Social Software Summit* in November 2002, Clay Shirky defined the term as being, "software that supported interacting groups, even if the interaction was offline" (Allen, 2004). As the term became more widely used, Tom Coates elaborated this definition asserting that it was software that:

> Supports, extends, or derives added value from, human social behaviour – message-boards, musical taste-sharing, photo-sharing, instant messaging, mailing lists, social networking (2005).

Social media researcher, danah boyd, advances this definition arguing that social software is, indeed, 'new' but it is "a movement, not simply a category of technologies" and that the 'new' she refers to "has nothing to do with technology; it is to do with attitude" (2007:17). The proliferation of online sharing, communication and self-created content through social software and Web 2.0 technology, led *Time* magazine to nominate 'You', i.e. users of online networks, as 2006 'Person of the year', stating that:

> It's about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes (Grossman, 2006).

In the few years of the 21st century, the terms 'social media' and 'user-generated content' (UGC) came to prominence. Indeed, Clay Shirky (2008) argues that it marks a time when the ability for people, particularly in post-industrial countries, to access knowledge, information and express themselves, is greater than any other period in history. However, in the second decade of the 21st century issues of privacy and data

management by large multinational companies and concerns over surveillance by government agencies make the Time magazine proclamation appear somewhat naïve.

2.1.3 Academic and media discourse: advocates and sceptics

The rapid growth in popularity and use of social media applications, social software and publishing platforms by large sections of the population has prompted much literature to be written in response. Many media commentators and academics have eulogised as to how this democratises access to information and shared knowledge, so-called 'cyber-utopians". But many, particularly in recent years, question western society's increasing reliance on technology and online communication, so-called 'cyber-sceptics'.

2.1.3.1 Advocates

Advocates argue that social media and UGC now offer greater opportunities for individuals to express themselves through digital mediation along with access to a wealth of information online. Indeed, Tapscott and Williams, authors of *Wikinomics*, breathlessly observe that:

> Surf around today and it's clear that [a] new culture of participation pervades the Web. Nobody hangs around in the "publish and browse" internet anymore. Increasingly people prefer to participate in a new generation of user-fabricated communities where users engage and co-create with their peers (2007:38).

Tapscott and Williams' concept of 'Wikinomics' is primarily concerned with the emerging online economy and the need for businesses to adapt their modus operandi to compete in the digital environment. However, the authors describe how new technologies have given individuals the 'weapons of mass-collaboration' required for social development, sharing, peer-production and creativity.

Yochai Benkler, Professor of Entrepreneurial Legal Studies at Harvard Law School, was one of the first academics to argue that media production was no longer the sole preserve of the company or the market. He argues that this was due to the dramatic lowering of transaction costs enabled by the internet and the contributions made by

collaborating volunteers sharing a common pool of (online) resources. Benkler argues that we are seeing "the emergence of a new stage in the information economy" (2006:3), where the industrial information economy of the 20th century has shifted towards, what he calls, the "networked information economy" of the 21st century. He considers that "the removal of physical constraints on effective information production" (ibid.:4) through use of non-proprietary, non-market motivated, commons-based peer-production of information, is leading to a networked society less reliant on the one-to-many paradigm. This economic model is not dependent on large-scale industrial investment, such as printing presses, telegraph, radio and television transmission, to deliver information. Benkler argues this puts the means of production, through communications and computation capacity, in the hands of the population at large. In so doing it creates "a flourishing nonmarket sector of information, knowledge, and cultural production based in the networked environment" (ibid.:7). In summary, Benkler considers that individuals have been given the ability to more easily seek out information independently and become less reliant on mass media organisations as their information source. This harnesses collaboration, creating an environment where ideas can thrive by uniting creativity and human experience.

This rise in peer-production and UGC, through networks and the access to relatively inexpensive or free, open-source software, challenges the dominance of traditional mass media establishments. Chris Anderson, Editor-in-Chief of *Wired* magazine and author of *The Long Tail* suggests:

> We are at the dawn of an age where most producers in any domain are unpaid, and the difference between them and their professional counterparts is simply the (shrinking) gap in the resources available to them to extend the ambition of their work. When the tools of production are available to everyone, everyone becomes a producer (2006:73).

During the industrial age, the ability to produce and distribute a magazine, film, photograph, or piece of music extensively and quickly was financially and technologically restrictive for the mass population. This was the preserve of the company or media organisation, which needed large investment to buy the means of production and generate the profits to repay its investors. The arrival and distributive

structure of the internet, as networks, has changed this paradigm, ensuring that individuals now need little or no financial investment to publish, reproduce and distribute. This has led to a participatory culture which "increasingly demands room for ordinary citizens to wield media technologies" (van Dijck, 2009:42). In 2006, Evan Williams, co-founder of micro-blogging platform Twitter, predicted that participatory web and mobile tools were:

> going to be part of everyday life – creating and sharing media will be a thing that normal people do all the time, every day, and it doesn't seem strange (Benedictus, 2006).

Manual Castells conceptualises this as:

> mass self-communication [which is] self-generating in content, self directed in emission and self selecting in reception (2010:xxx).

He believes that multi-modal communication, through digital networks, has become such a major platform for cultural expression and personal experience that it has made "virtuality a fundamental dimension of our reality" (ibid.:xxxi).

Two books stand out as having clear links to this research project. Both analyse the power of online communication, collaboration and creativity. Firstly, in his book, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations,* Clay Shirky discusses how social media offers greater opportunities for collaboration. He addresses the rise of social media through internet-based social networking and the collective benefits of participatory media, and remarks that:

> The linking of symmetrical participation and amateur production makes this period of change remarkable [and that] the increase in the power of both individuals and groups, outside traditional organizational structures, is unprecedented (2008:107).

Starting from a basic level, he observes that owning a television does not enable the viewer to make programmes, but owning a computer changes that. A computer can create as well as receive information in different forms from text, images and sound, which moves individual media use from passive viewer/consumer to active user.

Amateur production, the result of all this new capability, means that the category of 'consumer' is now a temporary behaviour rather than a permanent identity (ibid.:108).

He argues that internet users have also become free from the constraints of institutional structure and hierarchy. Commercial imperatives become less important and individuals in online communities are not bound by deadlines or overheads. Therefore, users can take their time and don't have to be efficient – just effective. Everyone with access to a computer (which may also now be a mobile phone or gaming device), an internet connection and reasonably basic skills has the ability to publish on the web, no matter how great or small, proficient or inexperienced. This produces a 'publish then filter' model with the potential for an endless process of collaborative redrafting. Shirky refers to the constant updating of Wikipedia pages as an example of this.

Secondly, Charles Leadbeater's book, *We Think: Mass innovation not mass production,* addresses how people's use of the internet and its associated technologies can enhance and empower lives through collaboration and creativity. Leadbeater argues that "we are what we share", to describe a society where self-organised participation is key in this online environment. He explains this as a shift from industrial era mass-production for mass-consumption to an information era where innovation comes from the masses, not just for the masses, and where consumption has now become participation. This is a transformation that moves innovation and creative activity from the elite toward mass activities across society, enabling the everyday person to participate and be a voice in the conversation. Leadbeater argues this could be just the beginning of a process that not only changes how the media, software and entertainment work, but also how education, healthcare, cities and, indeed, the political system is organised.

David Gauntlett continues this line of thinking in his book, *Making is connecting: The social meaning of creativity, from DIY and knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0,* where he addresses the subject of the meaning of making in a digital environment and how connecting encourages personal happiness.

A significant part of […] online creativity, is of course that it does *not* rely on hierarchies of experts and elites to be validated, and does not depend on editors and gatekeepers for its circulation (2011:218).

As the title suggests, Gauntlett's book is about far more than creativity on the web. In fact, he argues that:

future creative diversity, in the here and now, offers a powerful and tangible form of inspiration to others [and is] a vivid example that you do not have to accept all of mainstream culture, and can start to create your own alternatives (ibid.:219).

He concludes that "creative projects, especially when either online, or offline but linked via online platforms, are invaluable for human happiness" (ibid.:223).

Certainly, Gauntlett, Leadbeater and Shirky et al. regard the ability for everyday web users to create, share and communicate as positive characteristic of the affordances of the internet. However, alongside advocates of social media and its associated communication technologies, there have been a number of media commentators and academics that harbour reservations.

2.1.3.2 Sceptics

These, so-called, 'cyber-sceptics' question western society's increasing reliance on technology and online communication. Many critics argue that web technology, far from helping us communicate better, has made us isolated, dumb and lazy and is having detrimental effects on our brains.   Neuroscientist Susan Greenfield specialises in the physiology of the brain at the University of Oxford and has long been a critic of how the internet affects the brain. In particular, she is concerned with how children's brains develop when given large amounts of exposure to the web.

If you give a human brain an environment where actions don't have consequences, if you give that brain an environment that is just literal, where there is no significance, might it not be the case that, the brain stays in an infantilised state (Milton and Barnes, 2010).

The effect of the internet on the brain is an issue taken up by Nicholas Carr. Following an article entitled *Is Google Making us Stupid?* (2008), in which he

believed that the internet was diminishing his cognition and his ability to concentrate, Carr wrote *The Shallows: What the internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. In this book he states:

> Dozens of studies by psychologists, neurobiologists, educators, and Web designers point to the same conclusion: when we go online, we enter an environment that promotes cursory reading, hurried and distracted thinking, and superficial learning (2010:115-116).

He claims that:

> [T]he Net seizes our attention only to scatter it [and] its cacophony of stimuli short-circuits both conscious and unconscious thought preventing our minds from thinking either deeply or creatively (ibid:119).

Carr also questions the alleged "democratisation" of media production as championed by Benkler (2006), Shirky (2008), Leadbeater (2008) and Gauntlett (2011).

> By putting the means of production into the hands of the masses but withholding from those same masses any ownership over the product of their work, Web 2.0 provides an incredibly efficient mechanism to harvest the economic value of the free labor provided by the very, very many and concentrate it into the hands of the very, very few (Carr, 2006).

However, it must be noted that Carr's assertion that the ownership of content is "withheld" from the user is not strictly true and is inaccurate in the case of platforms such as YouTube, which allow users to "retain all of [their] ownership rights in [their] content, but [they] are required to grant limited licence rights to YouTube and other users of the Service" (YouTube, 2010). Indeed, YouTube offers a partnership program where content creators share the revenue generated from advertising used with their content (YouTube, 2013).

Two web commentators who appear to have changed their positions from optimists to sceptics are Jaron Lanier and Sherry Turkle. In 1995, Turkle wrote *Life on the Screen*, a mostly optimistic account about identity in the digital age. However, in her 2011 book, *Alone Together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other,* the MIT professor says that:

These days, our problems with the Net are becoming too distracting to ignore. At the extreme, we are so enmeshed in our connections that we neglect each other. We don't need to reject or disparage technology. We need to put it in its place (2011:294).

Turkle argues that the online world is no longer a place for freedom or invention and that our expressions are constrained by technologies and platforms we use. We aren't "happy" anymore, but simply a semicolon followed by a parenthesis (ibid).

Computer scientist Jaron Lanier believes, "information is alienated experience" (2010:28). He argues that by having free and open access to everything the web creates mediocre 'mush' and that these characteristics of Web 2.0 limits individual creativity. This overloads the human brain with information, finding it difficult to organise without creating more technology to process it. Lanier also attacks the 'hive mind' practice of collective decision-making through, what Leadbeater describes as, "mass online collaboration" arguing that, "when a collective designs a product, you get design by committee, which is a derogatory expression for a reason" (ibid.:41). He argues that, far from bringing individuality, some Web 2.0 services promote conformity by "organising people into multiple-choice identities" (ibid.:35) through un-customisable templates. This reduces the ability to show our individuality, because our identities are being adapted to suit the workings of the software and technology.

Evgeny Morozov takes a more political stance arguing that activists have been replaced by lazy 'slacktivists' who think political action is merely clicking a Facebook petition. In his book *The Net Delusion*, Morozov decries the democratic vision of, what he calls, 'cyber-utopianism' and 'internet-centrism' where the perceived answer to all the world's problems are contained on the internet. He calls instead for, what he describes as, 'cyber-realism'. It is his belief that attention should be moved away from the characteristics of the technology itself and focused more directly on the social and political context of how the technology is used (Morozov, 2011).

Douglas Rushkoff puts forward his own solution to these issues by saying that we need to understand and know the underlying code that run the program or software to keep control of our individuality, our identities and our privacy. In *Program or Be Programmed*, Rushkoff argues that in using modern technology we have a choice.

Choose the former and you gain access to the control panel of civilization. Choose the latter, and it could be the last real choice you get to make (2010:7-8).

One issue of increasing importance to critics of social media is how large and powerful internet companies benefit financially from free content produced by the user. Christian Fuchs (2014) uses the term 'digital labour' to describe this practice. Greater attention and analysis will be given to this issue in relation to participatory media when discussing the subject of online sharing.

In *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* Jose van Dijck (2013a) brings many of the early optimistic expectations of social media and Web 2.0 into perspective arguing that talk of user equality and equal access turned out to be utopian.

> All platforms treat some users more equally than others owning to the hierarchical system inscribed in their interface designs. Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and Wikipedia all reward users who have proven to be successful or reliable contributors of content. […] Popularity rankings filter out people are less "valuable" that others. A far cry from the egalitarian principles once ascribed to social media (ibid.:159).

But she also argues that potential user empowerment is itself as a double-edged sword.

> For some, user participation in social media has become a thoroughly commercial or consumptive act. […] [U]sers may enjoy their roles as follower, consumer and viewer, even if they are aware of the commercial mechanisms involved. Moreover, manipulating data streams is not the sole privilege of managers; users, too, can play the system to "crowdsource" opinion and rally support (ibid.).

It is clear from this last comment that some users of social media have developed a sophisticated knowledge of the workings of platforms they use, which enables them to gain a social currency and value. More discussion will be given to the subject of content creation and sharing in the next chapter.

2.1.4 Summary and comment: Social media in context

The idea of 'media' being 'social' is perhaps a misnomer given that all media has had some element of sociality. However, in a relative short space of time 'social media' has become a commonplace term within our society to describe a form of digital participation that has impacted the lives of many people around the world. Although initially it was seen as a progressive and even democratising form of communication many have come to question the power and true value of social media in society. Discourse into the changing landscape of media consumption and the use of the internet and social media continue to be widely discussed by academics and media commentators from around the world. In recent years, particularly in the US and the UK, opinion over the value of the way individuals' use the internet is divided

From a democratic, creative self-expressive and communication point of view, there are obvious affordances the internet and social media applications can provide for the individual. The networking potential to communicate and collaborate with large amounts of people from around the world, and share and discuss personally produced content has the capacity to bring value to people lives. Having the ability to develop as a content producer and publisher, no matter how small, opens up greater opportunities for creative self-expression and the ability to reach and build niche communities regardless of physical location. This can facilitate a level of control and independence to the individual much less available in the one-to-many media distribution of traditional media organisations and can have a democratising effect on individuals to enact an active and less passive relationship with media.

Scepticism has arisen in some quarters regarding the effect internet technologies associated with social media has on our brains, and that we are becoming too reliant on and spending too much time using the internet. This, they claim is hampering our ability to use the web optimally. I would argue that the effect of the internet on our brain is still open to question and hard to prove the negative effects definitively. It could be argued that all new technology and practices have changed the way our brain functions from the introduction of the alphabet, the reading of books and the introduction of radio and television. Certainly, there have been concerns for many years about the effect of watching television for long periods of time on children's

brain development (see Christakis, 2008; Christakis et al., 2004; Smith and Gevins, 2004).

There is also concern that the web encourages a 'hive mind', where collective decision making and too much choice have created a mediocre 'mush' and diminishes the ability to have a truly individual identity. Rushkoff's *Program or Be Programmed* mantra makes a pertinent of observation. If web users are to gain greater democracy on the web and attain high levels of digital literacy (discussed in chapter three), they may need to know or at least understand the underlying code, structure and architecture of the digital technology they use to be fully aware of the implications of their actions. One of the most currently debated subjects is the issue of digital labour and whether online media sharing services financially exploit content created free by users. However, it is clear that there are merits and weakness on both sides of the debate and taking a Manichean view of social media and associated technologies at this stage in the research would be unhelpful. It is clear from the previous discussion that the relationship between users and technology are important issues regarding this study. Therefore, a historical context needs to be given to the role of new technologies and their effect on user agency.

2.2 New technologies and user agency

As new technologies have been invented, developed and adopted they have become an intrinsic part of how society progresses. However, during the process of acceptance and integration there has typically been much discussion around the merits or shortcomings of new technology. As far back as Ancient Greece, Socrates complained about the invention of the alphabet (Ong [1982] cited in Baym, 2010), and electricity and telecommunications were both derided and celebrated in the late 19th and early 20th century (Marvin [1988] cited in Buckingham, 2008b). More recently, Google and over-reliance on the internet has been castigated as "making us stupid" (Carr, 2008). Indeed, new technologies have been historically derided, treated with suspicion, or with relentlessly optimistic hyperbole. These views are often rhetorically argued as either utopian or dystopian. David Buckingham draws similarities between previous technological debates and current discussions about the internet. To advocates, technology is seen as liberating the individual from the

constraints of previous practices. Conversely, critics regard technology as an artificial or unnecessary alternative to a genuinely valued system that it is replacing (Buckingham, 2008b). Vincent Miller argues:

> New technologies always breed anxiety about their consequences, and certainly the internet and mobile phones have bred both anxiety and optimism in their potential to shape the future (Miller, 2011:3).

However, although the debate surrounding the role and influence of technology on society has been a widely deliberated subject for over 2000 years, acute scrutiny has been given to the advancement and proliferation in computer and internet technologies in the later part of the 20th and early part of the 21st centuries. In order to better understand how digital technology shapes and is shaped by human agency we need to go back to the early 1960s.

2.2.1 McLuhan and Williams

Ironically, this debate began in the 1960s and 1970s before the development of the PC and the World Wide Web with the contrasting and counter theories of Marshall McLuhan and Raymond Williams. McLuhan's key ideas considered the need for non-linear ('mosaic') thinking with regard to electronic (new) media and the practice of remediation, where "the 'content' of any medium is always another medium" (McLuhan, 1968:15,16). McLuhan asserted that media and technologies are extensions of the human body, and senses and he coined the phrases 'the global village' and 'the medium is the message', which are still widely referenced. The latter phrase places the importance on the medium carrying the information, not the content it carries. It also describes the way media shape our behaviour and thinking, and can be seen in many contemporary issues regarding how the internet affects our brains and memory, as discussed earlier. Although McLuhan's popularity waned in the 1970s and 1980s, his ideas struck resonance with a new generation of contemporary commentators and digital utopians in the 1990s (Turner, 2008). With the proliferation of digital media, the rise of the internet and web technologies, his profile was raised to the status of 'patron saint' in newly launched *Wired* magazine in 1996 (Wolf, 1996).

However, McLuhan's declaration that "we become what we behold, that we shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us" (McLuhan, 1964:xi-xii), and the impact of any technology is in "the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs" (McLuhan, 1964:8) has been interpreted by many academics as technological determinism (Lister et al., 2009; Murphie and Potts, 2003; Bolter and Grusin, 2000; Williams, 1974). Indeed, this may not have been helped by his comments that, "our conventional response to all media, namely that it is how they are used that counts, is the numb stance of the technological idiot" (McLuhan, 1968:26).

It was Raymond Williams, a critic on many of McLuhan's ideas, who countered and opposed many of McLuhan's seemingly deterministic statements. William's theory of 'cultural materialism' rejects the notion that technologies "are discovered, by an essentially internal process of research and development, which then sets the conditions for social change and progress" (Williams, 1974:5). His criticism points to McLuhan's narrow focus on the technology, its intrinsic properties and particularly opposes the statement about technology being the extension of man arguing that, "a technology, when it has been achieved, can be seen as a general human property, an extension of a general human capacity" (Williams, 1974:129). Murphie and Potts also argue that McLuhan "ignores the socio-economic factors underpinning […] cultural developments" (Murphie and Potts, 2003:13). Lister et al. devote a section of their book, *New Media: A Critical Introduction,* to Williams and McLuhan. They make the distinction that, for Williams:

> New technologies take forward existing practices that particular social groups already see as important or necessary. [Whereas] McLuhan's ideas about why new technologies emerge are psychological and biological (Lister et al., 2009:86).

They posit that in Williams' account, the social shaping of technology can be seen as an examination of three elements.

> (1) the reason for which technologies are developed, (2) the complex of social, cultural, and economic factors which shape them, and (3) the ways that technologies are mobilised for certain ends (rather than the properties of the achieved technologies themselves) (Lister et al., 2009:86).

Bolter and Grusin claim that the debate between Williams and McLuhan has left Williams' standpoint more convincing to almost all historians, social scientists, and humanists,

> with the result that technological determinism has been one feature of traditional Marxism rejected by postmodern theory and cultural studies. Whenever it is made, the charge is now considered fatal and nothing good can come of technological determinism, because the claim that technology causes social change is regarded as a justification for the excesses of technologically driven capitalism in the late twentieth century (Bolter and Grusin, 2000:76).

However, criticism of McLuhan must be assessed with caution. Bolter and Grusin comment that although they "reject McLuhan's determinism [they] still appreciate his analysis of the remediating power of various media." (Bolter and Grusin, 2000:77). What also needs to be considered is the era in which his work was written. In the early 1960s, before the formal development of cultural studies or the networking potential of the internet, McLuhan's work was seen by many as visionary and revolutionary (Postman, 1985; Barbrook and Cameron, 1995; Harkin, 2009). His term 'the global village' is considered to be a 'metaphor' that today can be seen to closely resemble the internet and the web where "the online visitor […] can live anywhere in the world with a personal computer" (Levinson, 2001:7). Indeed, many contemporary media commentators (Poster, 1995; Levinson, 2001; Harkin, 2009; Naughton, 2011) see his ideas as more relevant today than ever before, and the accusations of technological determinism are, in many cases, misinterpretations of his, at times, rather confusing terminology and delivery. What resonates in contemporary society is his understanding of the word 'medium'.

> McLuhan's big idea was to spot that the word 'medium' has distinctly different meanings. The conventional one is that a medium is a channel for communicating information – which is why much discussion about media up to his time focused on the content that was being conveyed by print, radio and television. But there is another, equally significant, interpretation. To a biologist, a medium is an environment containing the nutrients in which tissue cultures – organisms – grow. Change the medium and you change the organisms. Our communications media likewise constitute the environment,

which sustains, nurtures – or constrains – our culture. And if the medium changes, then so does the culture. The medium is far more than the message, in other words. In fact, it's all we've got (Naughton, 2011).

In an interview on the BBC television programme, *Virtual Revolution: Homo Interneticus*, Jonah Peretti, co-founder of *The Huffington Post*, explains McLuhan's relevance today. McLuhan claimed that people always judge new media by the standards of old media. He contextualises this with the example of a 'silly cat video' on YouTube explaining that, although the social web is all about social relationships and the network, people still judge this as static content. But Peretti explains that more is happening to the media we produce.

You look at it and say, "this silly cat video" and judge it as content, instead of saying, "Oh, this is something that one person created in their garage that three other people collaborated on and added to; that was now being used to satirise a political campaign" and then it's part of a web of creativity and a network of sharing that is actually more interesting and important than the media itself (Peretti in Milton and Barnes, 2010).

While McLuhan's views of technology are still deemed relevant by many commentators and his seemingly deterministic views consigned to the time in which they were made, there is a need to take a contextual look at the technological determinism.

2.2.2 Technological determinism

Technological determinism is an enduring phrase with relation to how new technology is used. Although it has exclusively negative connotations, its use has changed over the decades. Initially linked to the technologies of the industrial revolution in the early part of the 20th century, the term was used extensively in the 1960 and 1970s – particularly in media and cultural studies circles to describe the role of technology in society. Historically, Murphy and Potts claim, the term 'technological determinism' was attributed to Thorstein Veblen in the 1920s and was linked to the ideas of progress, a progress measured in industrial terms: speed of movement, volume of production, forged as a social attitude emanating from the

Victorian era (Murphie and Potts, 2003). Today, the rejection of technological determinism is almost universal in academic circles. Buckingham analyses the discourse surrounding technological determinism and "the limits of determinism". Technological determinism dictates that technology is:

> seen to have effects – to bring about social and psychological changes – irrespective of the ways in which it is used, and of the social context and processes into which it enters (2008b:11).

Furthermore, he observes that this theory places the computer as an autonomous, independent force acting outside of the society it influences but is not influenced by that society. However, Buckingham proceeds to argue that this is a highly debatable assumption that leads to a 'desocialised' view of technology and ignores the contrary argument that ascribes that technology is shaped by the user. Murphie and Potts argue that "the relationship between technology and society cannot be reduced to a simplistic cause-and-effect formula" (2003:21). They believe that technology is "intertwining", and therefore it does not determine but "operates, and are operated upon in a complex social field" (ibid). MacKenzie and Wajcman metaphorically state "a new device merely opens a door; it does not compel one to enter" (1998:6). Of course, technological determinism is still in use today but it is manifested in different forms.

> It is equally significant in the post-industrial era: the terms 'information society' or 'computer age' betray the technological determinist notion that society is shaped by its dominant technologies (Murphie and Potts, 2003:12).

Indeed there are still many commercial and business examples of technological hyperbole.

> Whether they are blaming or praising technology, politicians, futurologists, and the print and electronic media fall easily into the rhetoric of technological determinism. […] The idea that new electronic technologies of communication will determine our social organization is clearly not threatening to corporations that produce and market those technologies (Bolter and Grusin, 2000:76,77).

An example of which comes from *Time* magazine's headline "How Twitter will change the way we live" (Johnson, 2009). Examples like these, Vincent Miller argues, are a

form of technological determinism where "culture and society 'react' to technological development in a cause-and effect manner" (Miller, 2011:3). However, David Gauntlett raises a note of caution with respect to the 'technological determinist' label given to anyone entering into optimistic discussions about new technology and the web.

> People who say descriptive or positive things about aspects of Web 2.0 are dismissed as naïve optimists, and [...] if you try to encourage some curiosity about the possibilities of shareable digital media you are summarily accused of being a 'technological determinist' – the worst of all things to be. But of course, thinking about how certain kinds of technology might be used is not 'determinism' of any sort (Gauntlett, 2011:193).

Here Gauntlett suggests that technological determinism, in current parlance, is used as a term of abuse to anyone who dares to speak about the positive potential of technology.

Technological determinism is an enduring phrase with relation to how new technology is used. Although it has exclusively negative connotations, its use has changed over the decades. Today it is used either by commercial organisations that offer technologically deterministic rhetoric to describe the 'life changing' qualities of their new technologies or as an insult. So what are the perceived relationships between technology and society?

2.2.3 Technology/society relationship

In recent years and following on from the debates about technologies relationship to individuals, commentators and academics have been attempting to more clearly define this relationship. Lister et al. argue for a view of the 'social shaping' role of technology, citing Raymond Williams' claim that:

> new technologies take forward existing practices that particular social groups already see as important or necessary [and] have uses and effect which were unforeseen by their conceivers and developers […] Whatever the original intention to develop a technology might be, subsequently other social groups,

with different interests or needs, adapt, modify or subvert the uses to which any particular technology is put (Lister et al., 2009:86).

They conclude, therefore, that user agency rests on users' awareness of how technology shapes thought and action. However, they offer a caveat.

> [T]here is good reason to believe that technology cannot be adequately analysed only within the humanist frame Williams bequeathed cultural and media theorists (Lister et al., 2009:79).

Buckingham suggests that "technology is both socially shaped and socially shaping" (Buckingham, 2008b:12). This incorporates both opposing views where technology is not simply the 'cause' of social change or solely the 'fix' for social problems. Nancy Baym's book, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age,* devotes a chapter to the way new technology and new media are perceived publicly, academically and through portrayal in the media. Baym contrasts the polarised theories of technological determinism, in which "the technology is conceptualised as an external agent that acts upon the changes in society" (Baym, 2010:25), against the social construction of technology, where "technologies arise from social processes" (Baym, 2010:39). However, she concurs with Buckingham that the truth lies somewhere in the middle, through the third standpoint, mentioned above, emphasising the social shaping of technology. This considers "how societal circumstances give rise to technologies" (Baym, 2010:45). This would also include the possibilities and constraints of these technologies and how they affect the actual practices of use through reworking or rejecting them in everyday life. She considers a fourth process, one of 'domestication', where technology that was once "capable of creating greatness and horror is now so ordinary as to be invisible [and] no longer an agent of change" (Baym, 2010:24). The chapter concludes with Baym arguing that:

> In order to connect digital media to social consequences, we need to understand both features of technology and the practices that influence and emerge around technology (Baym, 2010:48).

Clay Shirky discusses this theme using historical comparisons to explain how technologies have caused different effects on society than were originally intended. He gives the example that Gutenberg would not have known that his press would aid

Protestantism and, similarly, how manufacturers of the mobile phone could not anticipate the importance or popularity of texting.

> Because social effects lag behind technological ones by decades, real revolutions don't involve an orderly transition from point A to point B (Shirky, 2008:67).

He also expresses a belief that the many social changes that the internet affords creates a period of chaos where the "old systems get broken long before the new ones become stable" (Shirky, 2008:67). Shirky also argues that "communication tools don't get socially interesting until they get technologically boring" (Shirky, 2008:105). This echoes and expands Baym's comments concerning the 'domestication' of technology. But he implies that once technology has been accepted, more focus can be given to how people use them.

On the release of his book, *Cognitive Surplus*, Shirky remarked that there are similar 'techno-deterministic' discussions currently occurring on the web. This time there is a point of agreement between internet utopians and sceptics. They both believe that the web has fundamentally changed human behaviour. On this issue Shirky disagrees, arguing that:

> Techies were making the syllogism, if you put new technology into an existing situation, and new behaviour happens, then that technology caused the behaviour. But I'm saying if the new technology creates a new behaviour, it's because it was allowing motivations that were previously locked out. These tools we now have allow for new behaviours – but they don't cause them (Shirky interviewed in Aitkenhead, 2010).

Shirky frames the "determined or determining" debate firmly from the perspective of the web arguing that new technologies are enablers that unlock suppressed (new) behaviour, and appears to concur with the "social shaping" theoretical conclusions expressed by Buckingham, Baym, and Lister el al. There are similarities in Shirky and Baym arguments, too. They both consider recognising characteristics of both technology and practices as being necessary for comprehending the impact and social effects of digital media and the internet. Furthermore, they suggest that as digital technology becomes domesticated into people's lives, its effects can be viewed with greater clarity.

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The relationship between technology and the individual has become of greater importance with the rise of digital technologies and the internet, particularly as the concept of audiences has become redefined.

2.3 New Media Audiences

As previous described social media a broadly defined term that refers to public and personal forms of mediated communication and, along with user-generated content, has contributed to the fragmentation of traditional media audiences and the media environment. Livingstone describes this as part of a significant "shift from 'the audience' to 'activities and practices in which people engage' (2005:1). At the turn of the century media commentators were still considered audiences solely as consumers. Roscoe noted that,

> the idea of an audience presupposes a binary opposition between producers and consumers, between creators, providers and purveyors of content and the 'audience' itself, which views, browses and 'consumes' content" (1999:678).

However, this is can no longer considered to be the case. New technologies provide online audiences and users with unparalleled control over when and how media is consumed and produced. This has blurred the line between content creator and provider and audience consumer. Napoli (2011) considers this fragmentation as split into two inter-related components, media fragmentation, which refers to the technological process that increase the range of content options available to media consumers (ibid.:55), and audience fragmentation that signifies how audience attention is dispersed across a wide-range of content options (ibid.:57). Media fragmentation is considered a mix of inter-media, the growth of new delivery platforms, and intra-media with sub-division of increasing bandwidth and the disaggregation of content. Audience fragmentation is denoted by the concept of narrowcasting to small audience, as the case of niche cable TV channels or specialised web platforms, has given way to the term 'slivercasting' to an even smaller but more engaged and targeted audience (Hansell, 2006). This is exemplified by 'the long tale' of media consumption highlighted by Anderson (2006) where audience cluster around popular but select 'hits' but then spread out creating an ever longer tale of diverse and niche-content options. Consequently, audiences not only

have traditional terrestrial, satellite and cable television broadcasting but also have an abundance of online destinations and delivery platform options. This includes social networks sites and media sharing platforms sites, such as YouTube and Flickr, where audiences are able to publish and share self-created content.

2.4 Redefining media content and content creators

As described earlier, long before the popular rise of the internet, World Wide Web and personal computers, Marshall McLuhan first proposed the idea that 'old' media could be reconfigured as the content of 'new' media. Media theorists Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin use the term 'remediation' to describe this process, whereby old media is re-appropriated and refashioned into a new media environment. They believe that, through this process, new visual media achieves a cultural significance precisely by paying homage to, rivalling, reworking, and remixing older media (Bolter and Grusin, 2000). Indeed, the commonly used term "new media" is a misnomer because it implies that 'old media' are being replaced by 'new media' when in reality both new and old media co-exist through remediation and adaptation. Astra Taylor argues that,

> Instead of distinct old and new media what we have is a complex cultural ecosystem that spans the analog and the digital, encompassing physical places and online spaces, material objects and digital copies, fleshy bodies and virtual identities. (Taylor, 2014:8)

Jean Burgess and Joshua Green (2009) continue this area of discussion by considering the use of traditional media content on YouTube. In 2007 they selected 4,320 videos using four of YouTube's most popular categories: most viewed, most favourited, most responded and most discussed, and gathered a sample from six days across two weeks in each of three months of 2007. Their research found that over 50% of videos were user-generated, which contained a high proportion of video blogs, user-created music videos, live performances and sport. Of the rest, 42% of videos came from mainstream media and 8% were difficult to distinguish between professional and UGC. Results from their research suggest that up to 40 per cent of YouTube's content is mainstream media remixed, 'mashed-up' and re-appropriated where multiple sources of material were used and adapted by the user and then

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presented as a single piece of work. They cite John Hartley's use of the word 'redaction' to describe this process as:

> [T]he production of new material by the process of editing existing material [that is] a form of production not reduction of text (which is why the more familiar term 'editing' is not quite adequate). Indeed the current moment could be characterised as a redactional society, indicating a time when there is too much instantly available information for anyone to see the world whole, resulting in a society that is characterised by its own editorial practices (Hartley [2008:112] cited by Burgess and Green, 2009:48).

Hartley also suggests that this amalgamation of 'author', 'producer' and 'text' has created a 'citizen consumer' who, through consumption, also produces a form of 'value creation'. Burgess and Green interpret this as meaning that media consumption, under redaction, has "moved away from being a 'read-only' activity to becoming a 'read-write' one" (Burgess and Green, 2009:48).

As web technology and social media continue to develop, so too does UGC, acquiring hybrid terms to distinguish its evolving forms. The merging of words like 'consumer', 'producer' 'user' 'content' and 'creator', serves to composite a variety of descriptions on the concept of UGC. The term 'prosumer' has been used since the 1980s. It derived from a time when developed nations were seen to be transforming from industrial to information age nations. 'Prosumer' denotes the practice of 'consumer-as-producer' (Tapscott and Williams, 2007). As UGC has become media parlance, new terms have become deployed such as 'produser' 'co-creator' and 'produsage'. The term 'produsage' was coined by Axel Bruns and given much discussion in his book, *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life and Beyond*. He describes it being derived from:

> today's emerging user-led content creation environments [which] offers new ways of understanding the collaborative content creation and development practices found in contemporary informational environments (Bruns, 2007:1).

However, José van Dijk argues that user agency is a much more complex concept than "bipolar" terms like producer and consumer. She sees it involving not only the users' cultural role as the facilitator of civic engagement and participation, but also bringing economic meaning as a producer, consumer and data provider.

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Consideration needs to be given to the users' volatile position in the labour market. Van Dijk considers this to be a multifaceted concept needing to be met with:

> proposals for multi-levelled methodologies that combine empirical research of users' activities, motivations, status and intentions with contextual analyses charting techno-economic aspects of media use. User agency in the age of digital media can no longer be assessed from one exclusive disciplinary angle as the social, cultural, economic, technological and legal aspects of UGC sites are inextricably intertwined (2009:55).

User agency is a multi-faceted area for discussion. It is clear that with the redefinition of audiences and the adoption of the term 'user' there is a need to consider their new roles as content creators and self-publishers.

So far, users of technology have been mentioned in age non-specific terms. As this research is concerned with different age ranges of adults, this chapter continues with a discussion of how age and persons born into certain generations are perceived in relation to digital technology.

2.5 Generations and technology

The use of digital technology and the internet by young people is a widely discussed theme within academic circles. 'Digital natives' (Prensky, 2001) and 'the net generation' (Tapscott, 2008; 1999) are terms used to describe a generation born into the digital era and are considered to have a well-developed understanding of digital technology and the internet. Today, it is claimed, many teenagers and young adults immerse themselves in a permanently connected digitally mediated environment. Young people's use of digital media is seen to 'disrupt' the institutional control of school and adult authority through self-directed 'informal learning' via interactive and social communication (Prensky, 2006). This is a generation that feels increasingly comfortable with online communication, and uses information technology freely to access entertainment, news, and interact in social networks. Indeed, to this so-called digital generation, many media commentators believe, the digital world is now an extension of their physical world (Palfrey and Gasser, 2008; Tapscott, 2008).

In *Young People and New Media,* Sonia Livingstone (2002) analyses how young people's leisure time has become increasingly centred domestically in the media-rich home. This has also seen a shift away from family television viewing and towards a culture of bedroom media consumption. She associates these changes as partly due to the loss of public leisure spaces and street-corner culture, the diversification and multiplication of available media and the changing family structure where "family members pursue their (media) interests as individuals" (ibid.:183). In a preceding 2000 study, Livingstone and Moira Bovill identify three contexts for young people's media use: leisure; the family; and the home (Livingstone and Bovill, 2000). Large sections of young people in the UK now have the ability to engage in online leisure activities almost anytime, anywhere (within limits) via mobile devices from the classroom to the bedroom.

David Buckingham (2008a) reviews the issues and challenges for young people using the internet today from a negative and positive perspective. His first consideration is one of negative discourse and how the web is perceived along with the potential risk it poses. This ranges from access to undesirable material, the threat to cognitive development and the causing of behavioural issues. An example of this can be seen outside of Buckingham's research in the alarmist declaration from neuroscientist Susan Greenfield who announced her concern that "IT culture is changing children's brains" (MacLeod, 2006). Although sceptical, Buckingham explains the positive notion that new technologies and web culture are creating liberating environments for the 'digital generation'. These are environments that allow young people to be more open, more democratic, more creative and more innovative than their parents' generation. He highlights two advocates of this way of thinking, Marc Prensky and Don Tapscott (Buckingham, 2008a:13). Both have written about young people who have grown up in a digital world and categorise them respectively as 'digital natives' and the 'net generation'.

One of Prensky (2006) studies relates to Digital Game Based Learning and how young people learn and interact through this medium. He perceives 'digital natives' as responding to a different style of learning that is more reliant on interactivity and graphics than words. Equally, he considers 'digital immigrants' as less likely to use the internet as their primary choice for accessing information and using manuals

rather than finding helpful resources online. Furthermore, he believes 'digital natives' see 'digital immigrants' as using alien and out-dated language (Prensky, 2001). Tapscott's book, *Grown Up Digital*, takes an even more polemical view of these two groups. He differentiates them as the 'net generation' or 'N-Geners' and the 'baby boomers/generation x' or 'television generation'. His view is unswervingly partisan towards the 'N-Geners' who he sees as having a 'net generation brain' through 'digital immersion' (Tapscott, 2008:101). Conversely, the 'television generation' is considered to have values that are increasingly conservative, inflexible and centralised. However, Ola Erstad notes that while Tapscott (2008) claims data for his book is based on several interviews with young people all over the world, he "[does] not specify clearly with whom and how this has been done" (Erstad, 2010:61). Alongside this, Tapscott sets television and internet technologies as being diametrically opposed media forms and considers them as having little relation to one another. Tapscott regards television as a passive, isolating, dumbed-down medium. Whereas the internet is proselytised as a community building environment that empowers users by giving them access to vast amounts of information. He maintains that by sorting, categorising, and remembering all this information the internet "has enhanced their intelligence" (Tapscott, 2008:30).

Buckingham points out, however, that while Tapscott's and Prensky's standpoints are 'relentlessly optimistic' (2008a:14), they ignore the interdependence and convergence of today's old and new media through issues such as cross-platform content sharing and remediation. He considers their positions to be technologically deterministic. This is what Robin Fox calls 'ethnographic dazzle' (Fox, 1973), where "the fact of difference overwhelms the equal fact of consistent central patterns" (Tiger, 2008). Buckingham argues that history shows that old and new technologies often coexist side-by-side. New technology may change the functions of old technologies, but they rarely displace them completely (2008a:14).

Sherry Turkle turns the argument around and argues that although the younger generation may adopt and use technology more easily, they don't understand the implications of their actions on the web. She calls on the older generations that have grown up with the internet to play a part in this process of education.

So as [young people] begin to fight for their right to privacy, we must be their partners. We know how easily information can be politically abused; we have the perspective of history. We have, perhaps, not shared enough about that history with our children. And as we, ourselves enchanted, turned away from them to lose ourselves in our e-mail, we did not sufficiently teach the importance of empathy and attention to what is real (Turkle, 2011:294,295).

As the previous discussions have shown, there are considerable varying views as to the role, impact and use of digital technology on young people lives. Alongside this are broad assumptions, particularly from Tapscott and Prensky, on its relationships to adults. They argue that young people have an intimate and wide-ranging relationship with digital technology, so much so that it has become an extension of their physical world and suggest that digital immersion has somehow "enhanced their intelligence". These opinions contradict much of the media theory discussed earlier in this chapter, which suggests technology is as much socially shaped as it is shaping. Indeed, as Buckingham suggests, separating perceived media use into rigidly defined groups dismisses the generational diversity and convergence of old and new technology use. One of the topics this research will proceed to consider is how non-digitally created content and practices, both physical and analogue, are transferred to a digital environment and used in a remediative process. Tapscott's claim that technology increases intelligence through immersion appears to be too simplistic a concept in a digitally pluralistic and generationally inclusive environment. I may also be true that in the time since Tapscott wrote his book that adults of all ages have embraced the digital world to an extent that it is part of their everyday lives.

This topic has revealed that there is a considerable amount of research conducted into the impact of technology on children and young people and several statistical surveys of the UK populace. A good deal of the discourse into social and digital media activity is largely referred to in the form of an amorphous group of users without reference to age delineation. However it is difficult to know from this data whether there are different practices and behaviour performed by different ages groups. Particularly pertinent to this study are adults and the older generations the, so-called, 'digital immigrants'. It is important to note that, as the web has been in existence for over 20 years, many 'digital immigrants' could quite possibly have been

using the web for longer than most 'digital natives'. Indeed, many people over the age of 30 could have been using computers and e-mail as part of their work for at least 15 years. This is an important point that needs consideration as it may debunk many of the claims made by Tapscott and Prensky.

This review of generations and technologies brings into focus questions as to the validity of the term 'generation' in this research and its appropriate use to differentiate between age groups. Certainly, the arguments put forward by Tapscott and Prensky are over simplistic and too generalised when applied to generational use of the internet and technology. They do not take into account the interdependence and convergence of today's old and new media, and that people within generational groups use and access technology differently. Different people of different age groups with different education and cultural backgrounds have also have adopted digital technologies at different stages in their lives. Some may have had to start using it fore their jobs, such as email, or for hobbies such as, image editing and compositing software.

2.6 Adult engagement with communication domains

As previously discussed, Tapscott and Prensky spoke about how the 'digital natives' and 'net generation' grew up in a digitally enriched world, which gave them certain advantages over, so called, 'digital immigrants'. Before empirical research of adults commences an understanding is needed into the communication domains that many of the older adults will have grown up with and are familiar. There were two traditional mediums: broadcast media and communications media, before the internet came to prominence as a mass communication platform. Broadcast media uses a one-to-many paradigm, where television, radio, newspapers and film companies delivered one-way communication from a central location to a mass audience. By contrast, communications media, such as telephony, offer a one-to-one communication channel between two people through a two-way communication system. Both of these mediums have central hubs and communicate directly to an intended source or recipient.

The internet has provided a third model, the many-to-many paradigm, where delivering and receiving communication combines and extends the reach of the

previous two. Along with greater communication opportunities, this domain allows UGC to be distributed and shared with a wider virtual community of users with the ability to enable instant collaboration. Clay Shirky devotes a portion of his book, *Here Comes Everybody,* to consider how this new communication medium is used. He makes the point that:

> The pattern we *didn't* have until recently was many-to-many where communication tools enabled group conversations. […] Most user-generated content is created as communication in small groups, but since we're so unused to communications media and broadcast media being mixed together, we think that everybody is now broadcasting. This is a mistake. If we listened in on other phone calls, we'd know to expect small talk, inside jokes, and the like, but people's phone calls aren't out in the open. One of the driving forces behind much user-generated content is that conversation is no longer limited to social cul-de-sacs like the phone (Shirky, 2008:87).

Certainly, Shirky's comments are considerations many of the older adult web users will have needed to address and adjust to as they come to terms with the networked, many-to-many communication model. An outline of communication domains with regards to adults in this study will be addressed in the methodology chapter.

2.7 Statistics of generational participation

Web 2.0 technologies and tools are now being used widely and there is evidence that today's web users are more adept at using the web to create, remix and share content. Continuing research into the uptake of social networking and the creation of UGC shows that an increase among all age groups is talking place. However, research into the use and participation of social media has returned varying results. Recent research by Nielsen Online reveals that social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have become reasonably pervasive in the UK (2009), and the uptake of older users is rising (2011). In 2013, research conducted by *Pew Internet* in the US showed that:

> 54% of adult internet users post original photos or videos online that they themselves have created. (Duggan, 2013) .

Forrester Research produced statistics in 2007 indicating that there were six levels on a participation ladder. These being:

1. Creators (13%): Publish web pages or blogs, upload videos to video sharing sites.
2. Critics (19%): Comment on blogs, post ratings and reviews.
3. Collectors (15%): Use RSS, tag web pages.
4. Joiners (19%): Use social networking sites.
5. Spectators (23%): Read blogs, watch peer-generated video, listen to podcasts.
6. In-actives (52%): None of these activities.*

(Li and Bernoff, 2007)

(*Percentages rise above 100 per cent because, excluding the in-actives, the other five levels overlap with each other.)

More recently research by *Pew Internet* showed that:

- 30% of web users shared something online that they had created.
- 38% of teens 12–17 and 30% of adults over 18 shared content.
- 21% of teens 12–17 and 15% of adults over 18 remixed content (Lenhart et al., 2010:42-44).

2.8 UK online statistics

'Going online' and accessing information has become easier than ever before, and browsing the web is now a widespread activity for pleasure, business or research. However, this research is concerned with the creation and sharing of content from outside of a commercial environment by adults in the UK. It is, therefore, important to establish, at an early stage, the numbers involved in such an activity.

The Office for National Statistics shows that in 2013 36 million adults (73%) households in Great Britain access the internet every day (2013b:1). The statistics also reveal that all different ages in UK society create and share content online (see Fig. 2.1).

Fig. 2.1

Uploading Self-Created Content to Any Website and Shared

Age group

16-24	60%
25-44	50%
45-54	45%
55-64	22%
+65	11%
All	45%

0   10   20   30   40   50   60%
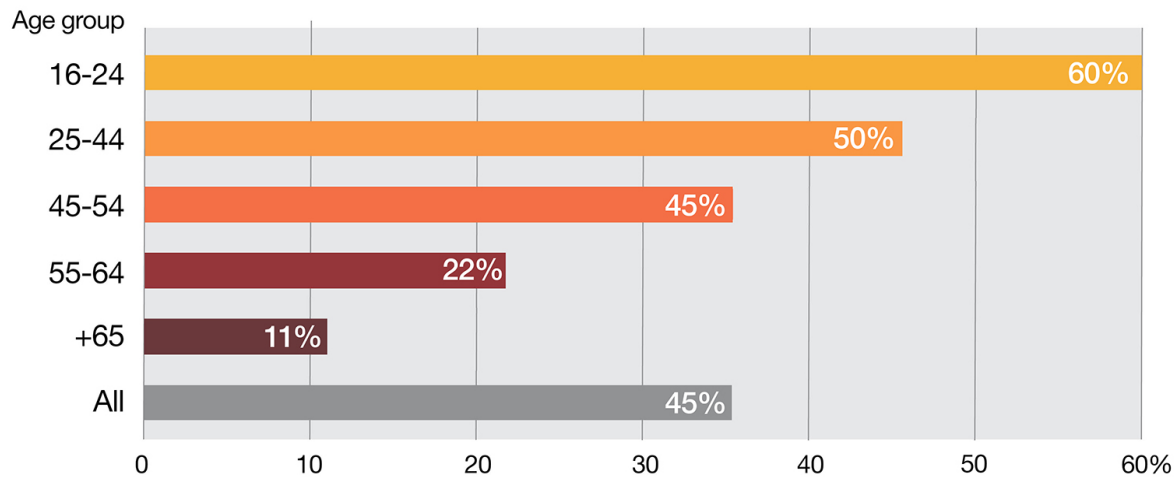
Source: Office of National Statistics - Internet Access 2012 UK Households and Individuals, February 2013

(Office for National Statistics, 2013a)

The 2013 Office for National Statistics survey (Fig.2.1) shows that 45% of all UK web users now upload self-created content to the web (up from 38% in 2010). As one might expect, this is higher among the younger age groups and lower among the older age groups. These statistics are important as they establish the extent to which adults within the UK engage in the content creation and sharing, and give relevance and scope for the research. Furthermore, the percentages for each age group are significant enough to make this study relevant and timely.

Hitherto this chapter has dealt with technology and its relationship to people. To conclude this chapter and to lead into the next chapter, which concerns the practices of content creation and sharing online, it is appropriate to consider discussions relating to online identity.

2.9 Online identity

The rise of social media and particularly social networks sites in the first decade of the 21st century has given rise to much discussion regarding the notion of online, internet or digital identity. The concept of 'identity' has various definitions that reveal identity to have distinguishing characteristics. According to the *Dictionary of Sociology* identity is defined as, "the sense of self, of personhood, of what kind of person one is" (Abercrombie et al., 2006:190). This definition is perhaps less clear

and explicable as the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, which states identity as "the qualities and attitudes that a person or group of people have, that make them different from other people" (2014) or The Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, which defines identity as "who you are; the identity of a person or place is the characteristics they have that distinguishes them from others" (2014). While there are certain identity traits that may remain stable, such as ethnicity or, less so, gender, identities are not regarded as fixed but fluid. They may, for example, present or act out different identities in different situations (Goffman, 1959), or at different stages of life through continuous reflexivity (Giddens, 1991). Identity may be developed through social interactions, which help one to reflect about oneself based on others perceptions (Harter, 1998).

In the physical world identity corresponds to a physical self whereas online identity is a personally constructed online representation of oneself. Without an online identity, individuals have no way of explaining how they differ from others whilst also aiding in the communication and interaction with others electronically (Donath, 1998). Nonetheless, an online identity could either uses ones own name, remain anonymous or resort to pseudonymity by using a false name as a form of disguised identity. Online identity on the internet of the early 90s was represented almost exclusively as text and online social environments were generally anonymous, as characterised by 'Multi-User Domains' (MUDs) (Turkle, 1996). Little association was given to 'offline' or 'online' identities, the latter seen as "'disembodied' and free from embodied identity discourses" (Miller, 2011:181). Turkle (1996) argued that through MUDs computer screens became new location for our fantasies, both erotic and intellectual.

> You can be whoever you wanted to be. You can completely redefine yourself if you want. You can be the opposite sex. You can be more talkative. Whatever. […] You don't have to worry about the slots other people put you in as much. It's easier to change the way people perceive you, because all they've got is what you show them. They don't look at your body and make assumptions. They don't hear your accent and make assumptions. All they see is your words (ibid.:184).

Developing one's online identity is relatively easier than offline because it is not constrained by the limitations of a physical space. Aspects, such as age, gender and race that affect offline self-definition and self-presentation offline can be hidden online through several digital resources, such as avatars, which portray a selected online image, however, one's online identity may be constrained or limited by the online platform (boyd et al., 2004). An identity established online therefore is not necessarily accurate of the identity of the individual offline. In a virtual space, not only is the validity and confirmation of a person's physical world identity difficult to verify, there is an absence of nuanced social cues, which deliver less intimate ways of conducting personal communication. This is in contrast to face-to-face communication, where nuances of gesture and expression can provide social cues. This is a subject raised by Baym:

> People often question the quality of mediated interactions, believing technological mediation takes away the social cues that provide rich meaning (Baym, 2010:30).

In the second decade of the 21st century developments of digital communications and the internet have seen a greater integration between offline and online identities. The advancement of internet technologies and particularly the greater use of images on social networking sites has seen a shift from textual self-representation to image or photographic based representations of the self. Mainstream online social platforms have become tools to represent and aid 'offline' selves, such as Linkedin, which have tied and integrated offline and online identities that "leaves little room for identity play or decentred identities. Instead there has been a centring of the offline self within the embodied online self" (Miller, 2011:182). Papacharissi (2011) in a references to Goffman (1959), suggests that "users create a 'face' for each interaction and develop 'faces' for a variety of situational contexts" (Papacharissi, 2011:307). This analogy is used to describe how individuals use multimedia tools to enable controlled and imaginative performances of identity. Social networks sites in this context allow greater control of the distance between the 'front' and 'backstage' areas of the self. Self-representation on these platforms therefore, becomes complicated communication act that combines a variety of audiences observing the same

'performance' but from different vantage points, which are dependant on their relationship to the 'performing self'. The individual must then:

> engage in multiple mini performances that combine a variety of semiological references so as to produce a presentation of the self that makes sense to multiple audiences, without sacrificing coherence and continuity. (ibid.)

Identity, according to Papacharissi, when presented through networks of social connections, is performed to multiple audiences using multiple tools on multiple stages with potentially multiple meanings. It could be argued Papacharissi and Miller's perspective is that the self has become more centred and situated through the use of pervasive "always on" communication technologies, which has led to a blending of different social contexts and roles associated with them, in what Goffman would call "frames".

In recent years authenticity or anonymity of online identity has become a widely debated issue with web companies, such as Facebook and Google, wanting to link online and offline personas (Krotoski, 2012), and concerns over anonymous 'cyberbulling' from online 'trolls' on micro blogging site, Twitter, becoming mainstream news stories in the UK (BBC, 2013). Indeed, Marc Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook was quoted saying,

> You have one identity. The days of you having a different image for your work friends or co-workers and for the other people you know are probably coming to an end pretty quickly. […] Having two identities for yourself is an example of a lack of integrity (Kirkpatrick, 2010:199).

In response to this statement van Dijck (2013b) conducted a study into identity formation on Facebook and Linkedin. She argues that social media profiles are not reflections of one's identity but part and parcel of a power struggle between users, employers/employees and platform owners to steer online information and behaviour.

> The conflation of self-expression, self-communication and self-promotion into one tool, which is subsequently used for personality assessment and manipulating behaviour, should raise the awareness of users in their different roles as citizens, friends, employees, employers and so on. After all, social

media are not neutral stages of self-performance – they are the very tools for shaping identities (ibid.:213).

This brings into focus the attempts by social media sites to drive for users' uniform online identity (as stated by Zuckerberg) coupled with an unconscious directing of online behaviour. On the one hand users have become increasingly skilled at self-promotion and on the other personalised data has be used by site owners to sell advertising directed their projected and uniform online identity. Additionally participants on social networking sites may not realise that their conversations and communications are being potentially "privatised" and sold (Andrejevic, 2011). In his essay *Facebook, Anonymity and the Crisis of the Multiple Self*, Geert Lovink (2011) argues that the shift towards projecting one identity through social media is problematic. Often users have developed two 'faces', a private one of how they really feel, and a 'public' one they wish to project to the outside world, which they cultivate on YouTube and Facebook. This is coupled with the way that SNSs "offer their users a limited, user-friendly range of choice for submitting private and professional data to the world" (ibid.:41). Lovink argues that the mechanisms of Web 2.0 encourage a 'cult of self-disclosure' through built-in algorithms that continually urge the collection of more 'friends'. In order to counter this he proposes a need for 'mass anonymity' that will protect us from our only Facebook sanctioned idea of the true self. "We are told there is no true face behind the mask […] instead of what the wearer is performing. What we need to make clear is that the internet provides the potential for self-performance and creative play" (ibid.:49).

Kim et al (2011) studied knowledge contribution from the perspective of an online identity in South Korea blogging communities and examined the effects of its personal and social aspects on knowledge contribution of blogging community. The personal characteristics they studied were online kindness, online social skills, and online creativity (a subject of the next chapter). The results reveal that both the personal and social aspects of online identity and their interactions significantly influenced knowledge contribution.

Significantly, and of most relevance to this research, are the personal aspects of online identity, such as online social skills and online creativity, which show to have significant influence on online knowledge contribution in a blogging community.

Blogging communities' involvement moderates the relationship between online creativity and online knowledge contribution. However, blogging communities' involvement has a negative moderating effect on the relationship; members with high online creativity contribute less knowledge in the blogging communities as their level of blogging community involvement increases. One possible reason is that creative people are constantly looking for new ideas Creative people are more interested in new and challenging environments that involve the opportunity to try out new things. (ibid.:1767).

This subject of creativity in relation to content creation will be discussed in the next chapter. One of the issues raised within this topic of online identity is whether mediated interaction and nuanced social cues, prevalent in the physical world, inhibit online communication or does creating, sharing and opening up conversations about content in online spaces build rich communications?

2.10 Comment

The first objective of this chapter has been to give a background in to the subject of social media. Nonetheless, its primary focus has been directed at the relationships between technology and users and their changing role from traditional audience to new media audiences. This has been brought about emergence of a networked many-to-many communication paradigm and has offered different ways of communication from that of the 20th century one-to-many media distribution model. The continuous feedback loop afforded by digital technology and the internet has facilitated online conversations and dialogues that are different from the one-way or one-directional form of communication. For internet users, it has provided the ability to produce and distribute content to a potentially worldwide 'audience' without the need for approval, interference or intervention from mass-media gatekeepers. This has presented opportunities for individuals to move from a position of media consumer to one of active media creator, publisher, contributor, participator and commentator. There is an on-going debate within academic circles and media commentators as to the value of these affordances brought by new delivery platforms. While discussing the merits of social media and content creation and sharing, it must me noted that several sceptics are concerned with the notion of

democratisation on the internet. Some view this as mere exploitation that encourages individuals to produce free content for large commercial internet companies, which they consider a form of and free (digital) labour. Conversely, advocates counter this argument by contending that content creation and sharing is self-initiated which stimulates creative self-expression, helps builds confidence and encourages an active engagement with the media.

Debates about how technologies are used, socially shaped, constructed or domesticated are relevant to this research project. They point towards understanding the link between the usage and acceptance of technology into everyday life and the communicative and collaborative affordance this gives the user. Use of phrases such as 'net generation' and 'digital natives' have polarise the act of internet and social media participation based on age which is represented through the crude term 'digital generation'. This age 'group' are said to have 'enhanced their intelligence' as a result of extensive use and reliance on the web. Conversely, generational terms and phrases like 'baby boomers', 'generation x', 'television generation' and the pejorative 'digital immigrants' have sought to polarise the view of how different age groups use the internet. This invokes the idea that there is standardisation of knowledge and a generalisation of behaviour within generations. But digital technology did not have a year zero when one day there was none and the next day the world was full of computers and digital devices. No, it evolved over time. Many adults, especially those over the age of 35, could potentially have been using computers, e-mail and the web in the workplace for some considerable time, in some cases far longer than most young people. Many adults bring evaluation skills learnt from experiences in their daily lives and analogue technology to the digital domain. Conversely learning technology is dependent on many other criteria, such as education, access to technology, confidence and motivation, to name but a few. Therefore, the issue of whether it is correct to describe an age group born at a certain time as a 'digital generation' needs further examination to establish its validity. Additionally, there are indications that the term 'generation' in association to the adult age ranges appear unhelpful in our understanding of how people use the web. The methodology chapter will give further analysis to the definitions and theoretical background of the term 'generation', and its validity and use in differentiating between ages in this research.

Statistics show that there is now a widespread practice of creating and sharing content on the internet through all age ranges. Therefore, this is an opportune time to conduct research into this subject. Studies of this nature have tended to be focused on the younger age spectrum. While this research is concerned with digital content creation, it is important to acknowledge that some online content may be remediated from a non-digital source. This means that analogue or physical content is presented in a digitised form alongside digitally created content. There are also forms of digital content creation and production that use multi-modal sources of media assisted by the ease with which digital content can be copied. Consequently, this research will include content created in an analogue format that is transferred to the digital domain.

The subject of online identity raised the issue of the quality and value of communication through digitally mediated interactions. This research will seek to examine this subject through qualitative interviews to establish the implications of creating and sharing content in a digitally mediated environment. Having focused attention on the relationship between technology and users in this chapter the next chapter concentrates on the core subjects of this research, that of content creation, creativity and sharing with attention given to digital literacy and the motivation of online users to engage in this practice.

Chapter 3 – Digital content, creativity, sharing & motivation

The previous chapter introduced the opening topics of this study by outlining the rise of social media and examined the use of technology and its relationship to people. Correspondingly, the chapter discussed the changing role of audience and the potential for a change in emphasis through the practice of self-production and self-publishing on the internet. This included how using the internet, and particularly social media platforms, to develop these practices has engendered the need to develop ones own online identity. Accordingly, this chapter continues the subjects emanating from the previous chapter but focuses succinctly on the themes that directly concern this research – the practices and experiences of the individual everyday user. Consequently, after defining and discussing digital content creation and user-generated content (UGC) this chapter will introduce the subject of creativity with regard to everyday internet users followed by the concepts of remix culture, online sharing and online/virtual communities. The chapter will conclude by examining the motivation for creating and sharing content and the digital literacy of online users.

3.1. Digital content creation & user-generated content

3.1.1 Definitions of user-generated content

As the previous chapter described, digital technology has evolved and developed, and has become less expensive and more accessible to the mainstream population. User-generated content (UGC) is a term that surfaced around the middle of the 2000s to describe self-content that is shared predominantly by everyday users on the internet. In its most basic definition, UGC can be considered any digital content that is created and published by the user from a non-professional environment. Although UGC refers to all types of personally created content, such as a simple comment

posted on a blog or social networks site, this study defines digital content creation and UGC as:

an arrangement of visual and/or audio material that requires some element of composition or editing. This could be conceptual or adapted work, original or remixed content.

The main distinguishing features in the production of UGC (also referred to as user-created or self-created content) are that it is usually a non-commercial personal expression with the intention of communicating with peers. In the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) publication, *Participative Web and User-Created Content: Web 2.0, Wikis and Social Networking (Vickery and Sacha, 2007),* it identifies UGC as comprising three main characteristics. Firstly, the content should be publicly available over the internet. Secondly, it should be created outside of professional routines and practices, and, thirdly, it should "reflect a certain amount of creative effort" (ibid.:20). However, the description of 'creative effort' is vague and lacking in definition:

> a minimum amount of creative effort is hard to define and depends on the context (ibid.).

Apart from this indistinct definition, the OECD report is extensive and covers the social and economic impact of the internet and how it has enabled users to access, produce, distribute and reuse information, knowledge and entertainment. The report observes that the user has been afforded greater autonomy, which has increased participation and diversity leading to the effect of democratising media production and increasing the flow of information, freedom of expression and "decentralising approaches to content creation" (ibid.:14). The publication continues to define what it regards as the "drivers of user-created content" that have contributed and led to the rise of UGC. These are described as technological, social, economic, institutional and legal, which include the increased speed, availability and cost of broadband connections coupled with higher hard-drive storage space and faster processing power of personal computers. Additionally, this has been supplemented by access to high-quality software for creating content that is more intuitive and economical to use, as well as available at low or no cost to the user.

The social drivers of UGC identified by the report were a desire to create and the ability to express oneself interactively through communities and collaboration. The most eager participants are seen to be the young, so-called, 'digital natives' who typically have less concern about revealing personal information, whereas the older, more hesitant users are increasingly using the web for social engagement, politics and education. Finally, the publication comments that the move towards more flexible legal copyright schemes, such as Creative Commons, has provided greater access to previously created and copyrighted material. For the date of publication (2007) this report makes typical assumptions about the nature and demographic of individuals producing UGC with particular emphasis on the term 'digital natives'. Further discussion will be given to this assumption in the following chapter when the question of the term digital generations is investigated.

Clay Shirky defines UGC as not merely user-created output. He insists that it must also be accessible to other users where it can be shared through what he calls "re-creative tools", such as Flickr or weblogs (2008:83). In creating UGC, the user is no longer simply a consumer; they can just as easily be the creator, contributor, commentator and publisher (Shirky, 2008; Benkler, 2006). UGC moves the users' online activity from that of passive media consumers to that of active creators of creative media content (Bowman and Willis, 2003). Martin Lister et al. (2009) suggest a "symbiotic relationship" between contemporary media and media culture, which offers audiences greater participatory opportunities. They argue that as more people start to use the web to create content, two elements have changed.

> [A]udiences have become 'users' and user-generated content has become a real competitor to traditional media (Lister et al., 2009:221).

As production levels of UGC grow steadily, many media organisations actively encourage UGC contributions to their sites. For user-generated media sites, such as YouTube and Flickr, UGC plays an intrinsic role that is vital to the success of their businesses, which in turn has brought criticisms of user exploitation, which is discussed later in this chapter. The BBC now produces guidelines for the integration of UGC into their programmes and media platforms to "encourage [a] relationship with the audience" (BBC, 2006) and develop '360º programming', its term for

programme content that is available across multi-media platforms from television to mobile phones.

In his book, *Convergence Culture: Where old and new media collide,* Henry Jenkins (2006) develops this commercial perspective further by analysing how 'fan' communities have become co-creators alongside media producers. In addition to creating content, they also use the "new tools and technologies […] to archive, annotate, appropriate and re-circulate media content" (ibid.:18). He sees convergence involving two trends:

> as both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process. Media companies are learning how to accelerate the flow of media content across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden markets and reinforce consumer loyalties and commitments. Users are learning how to master these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact (and co-create) with other users. Sometimes, these two forces reinforce each other, creating closer, more rewarding, relations between media producers and consumers. Sometimes the two forces conflict, resulting in constant renegotiations of power between these competing pressures on the new media ecology (Jenkins and Deuze, 2008:6).

Jenkins remains committed to his view that networked technologies help users build relationships along with the ability to influence decision-making within media companies. However, along with social software and technological tools that enable collaboration and UGC for users, advertisers and media companies are themselves using advanced technologies, like metadata aggregators, to track individual social behaviour. José van Dijck comments in her paper, *Users like you? Theorizing agency in user-generated content,* that it is important to recognise the new role of users as:

> both content providers and data providers. Besides uploading content, users also willingly and unknowingly provide important information about their profile and behaviour to site owners (2009:47).

UGC has indeed given users more freedom of expression to produce and distribute personal media but, as the last statement implies, their involvement generates issues

of privacy. Also, as site owners encourage users to upload UGC to their sites, they are:

> integrating (those) amateur efforts into a capital- and technology-intensive media system […] while making a profit on them as targeted consumers (ibid.:50).

In recent years the issues of digital labour and the exploitation of users self-created content supplied for free to the media sharing platforms have become a widely discussed subject. Indeed, one commentator disagrees with the use of the term to describe content created and shared on the internet by individuals. Derek Powazek, posted a blog post entitled *Death to User-generated Content*, which criticised the term.

> Dear Internet,
>
> Can I make a suggestion? Let's all stop using the phrase "user-generated content" I'm serious. It's a despicable, terrible term. Let's deconstruct it.
>
> User: One who uses. Like, you know, a junkie.
>
> Generated: Like a generator, engine. Like, you know, a robot.
>
> Content: Something that fills a box. Like, you know, packing peanuts.
>
> So what's user-generated content? Junkies robotically filling boxes with packing peanuts. Lovely" (Powazek, 2006).

Andrew Keen is another author to express a dissenting voice towards the concept of UGC and the ability of the, largely anonymous, amateur to provide quality and cultural value. Keen commented in his polemical book, *The Cult of the Amateur,* that:

> In any profession, when there is no monetary incentive or rewards, creative work stalls (2007:115) [and] creat[es] an endless digital forest of mediocrity (ibid.:4).

Laurence Lessig, professor of law at Harvard Law School, challenges Keen's "disparaging" definition and use of 'amateur'. Lessig cites the early 20th century American musician, John Philip Sousa, in response.

> Without the slow process of acquiring a technic, it will be simply a question of time when the amateur disappears entirely [and] amateurism cannot but

recede, until there will be left only the mechanical device and the professional executant. (Sousa, 1906:282).

Lessig points out that Keen's book misses the value to our culture that comes from anyone developing the ability to create, irrespective of the quality of the content.

> I think it is a great thing when amateurs create, even if the thing they create is not as great as what the professional creates (Lessig, 2007).

This is a theme continued by Clay Shirky. He discusses the popularity of 'lolcats' – the combination of cute cat with humorous caption – as being mediocre UGC. However, he points out that although the spectrum between mediocre and good is large:

> you can move from mediocre to good in increments. The real gap is between doing nothing and doing something, and someone making lolcats has bridged that gap (Shirky, 2010:18,19).

The points expressed by Lessig and Shirky are ones that encourage active engagement and self-expression, irrespective of the subjective opinions of artistic merit. Indeed the argument regarding 'artistic merit' raises the concept of creativity in within this field. The conflicting views between Keen, and Lessig and Shirky are based on opposing views of production and output. Keen is mainly critical of the perceived and subjective value of UGC, whereas Shirky is concerned with value of entering into the practice of creating content, no matter how rudimentary. A link therefore has been made on the concept of creativity and how it may be perceived from different viewpoints and the different ways it can be defined.

3.2 Creativity

Creativity has become increasingly important in contemporary society. The ability to be creative increases ones ability to problem solve through a wide variety of different domains and disciplines, these might include social, economic, scientific, and artistic. As previously discussed the wide scale adoption of the internet, particularly in western societies, has facilitated an online environment for creative expression. Furthermore, digital technologies offer opportunities for creative practices to transfer or develop online through tools and platforms for creating, editing, collaborating and

sharing. Due to the diversity of the subject, it is necessary to give a brief historical background regarding research and ideas behind the notion of creativity before addressing individual creativity in a non-professional capacity.

The origin of the word 'creativity' derives from the Latin 'creation' and was used uniquely to define the divine creation and the beginning of the world. The concept of 'inspiration' or 'getting an idea' originates from the belief that it is produced from a higher power and is located in the Christian, Muslim Greek, and Judaic traditions (Ryhammar and Brolin, 1999:260). The notion of human creativity did not occur before the beginning of the Renaissance (Leach, 2001) and until the twentieth century, creativity was considered to be a characteristic found only in exceptional individuals (Kok, 2009). Indeed, the term 'genius' has been a commonly used word to describe a person who is percived to be highly creative. Early studies of creativity were conducted by Bethune (1839) and Galton (1869), both of which related to genius. This area of study continued until the 1920 when four major traditions were developed; psychoanalytic, cognitive, behaviourist and humanistic. The 1950s brought a rich and influential period to creativity research with a focus on the psychological factors of individual genius and giftedness (Craft, 2001) that developed into three strands: personality, cognition and how to stimulate creativity. Since the 1950s there has been a shift towards prioritising the development of creativity in education. By the 1980s and 1990s research into creativity progressed along a social psychological framework, which recognised the important role of social structures in fostering individual creativity (Ryhammar and Brolin, 1999; Jeffrey and Craft, 2001). This is considered the fourth area of study (Jeffrey and Craft, 2001), creativity and social systems. In the 1990s theories were constructed in which creativity is viewed from a systems perspective where social and cognitive contexts are seen as highly significant to creative activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998; Sternberg, 1998; Sternberg and Lubart, 1995). Today creativity is considered an essential life skill for working particularly in, so called, information societies (Puccio et al., 2011). The development of creative skills encourages individuals to use their imagination, express themselves and make original and valued choices in their lives.

Creativity has been contextualised as a process that is situated within a domain. An example of creativity as a process can be ssen in Wallas's (1926) four stages;

preparation, where a creative problem is considered; *incubation*, where ideas are conceptualised; *illumination,* where ideas are developed into a solution; and *verification* where the soultion is tested. Additionally the creative process works on many different levels. Divergent thinking can lead to unusual or unexpected outcomes as a result of questioning exisiting norms and ideas. Boden's research defines differnet outcomes of the creative process as either 'P-creative'; psychological driven that have meaning or importance to the individual, or 'H-creative; historically important because the idea has not existed before (1990:32). Creativity within a domain is an interaction between an individual, domain (a cultural aspect) and field (a social aspect) that gives a context. Csikszentmihalyi argues that creativity can only occur in this form. He defines a 'domain' as a "set of symbolic rules and procedures" within a field, such as music, mathamatics or graphic design, (1996:26). Consequently, he claims, creativity is a process that can only be observed at the intersection where individuals, domains, and fields interact. This rather ridged defined assertion needs further examination. Firstly analysis into the meaning of the word 'creativity' and some definitions are required to give broader understanding.

3.2.1 Characteristics and criteria of creativity

In discussing creativity one is always conscious of the difficulty in providing definitive criteria or characteristics that describe what 'creativity' is. This is due to the diversity of applications, domains and processes. 'Originality' is a commonly used criterion as it relates to the 'authentic' or "the process of bringing something new into being" (May, 1975:22). 'Newness' is a term used by Hausman (1981) stating that for something to be new it "must at least be different from what preceded it" (ibid.:239). However, he argues, "every discriminable item is […] unique as a discrete, specific item which is identifiably distinct with respect to all other items" (ibid.). This would, in his view, include a single instance of general repeatable types or kinds, such as a grain of sand or blade of grass. Therefore, this could even include a single example of a mass produced product or design. Hausman claims that every act or occasion is unique and 'newness', explicitly or implicitly, means that the world is everywhere open to creative acts. "Each experience, event, and object, is new in the sense of being unique actualised integration of components. As such, it is new in the sense of

being different. And all things to this extent exemplify creativity. Creativity then, pervades all things" (ibid.). Therefore, 'new' or 'newness' as a criterion relating to 'original' alone are not sufficient as it can be interpreted as having far broad a meaning that makes distinguishing among creations difficult.

More recently, in their paper *The Standard Definition of Creativity* (2012), Runco and Jaeger argue that creativity should include two criteria, both originality and effectiveness. Originality is fundamental but on it own is not sufficient as a random act or processes:

> "will often generate something that is merely original. […] Original things must be effective to be creative. Effectiveness may take the form of value. This label is quite clear in the economic research on creativity; it describes how original and valuable products and ideas depend on the current market" (Runco and Jaeger, 2012:92).

When the inaugural editorial of the Creativity Research Journal appeared in 1988 and described what kind of research it would publish the criteria for the standard definition used: "Originality is vital, but must be balanced with fit and appropriateness" (Runco, 1988:4). Over the years it has been suggested that at least a third defintion be added, 'surprise'. Mayer (1999), meanwhile, prefers 'usefulness' to 'appropriateness' suggesting, "the two defining characteristics of creativity are originality and usefulness" (ibid.:451).

However, both 'appropriateness' and 'usefulness' are problematic in relation to this research. 'Appropriateness' suggests that an act of creativity has to have correctness or suitability, which implies it be judged not from the creative individual but from some external body or institution and, as stated, derives from economic research angle. Equally 'usefulness' implies that a creative artefact should have some practical worth, yet this would not be true of a piece of art, which may be perceived as having aesthetic qualities and a financial market value but is of no practical use or useful value. In this respect these characteristics of creativity are not suffcently ample or inclusive for the purposes of this reseach.

3.2.2 Definitions of creativity

A definitive and generally agreed definition of creativity remains elusive as it is subjective, open to one's interpretation and relative to the area of creative practice under discussion or scrutiny. Runco and Jaeger (ibid.) suggest that the first person to offer the standard definition in an unambiguous form was Stein (1953), predecessors' attempts, they argue, were more inclined to focus on originality or genius.

> The creative work is a novel work that is accepted as tenable or useful or satisfying by a group in some point in time. […] By 'novel' I mean that the creative product did not exist previously in precisely the same form. […] The extent to which a work is novel depends on the extent to which it deviates from the traditional or the status quo. This may well depend on the nature of the problem that is attacked, the fund of knowledge or experience that exists in the field at the time, and the characteristics of the creative individual and those of the individuals with whom he [or she] is communicating. Often, in studying creativity, we tend to restrict ourselves to a study of the genius because the 'distance' between what he [or she] has done and what has existed is quite marked. […] In speaking of creativity, therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between internal and external frames of reference (Stein, 1953:311–312).

Stein definition recognises that creativity is not exclusive to the 'genius' and that there is a difference between the internal and the external contexts. His definition uses ideas that are still in use today and advanced for the time they were written. Indeed, if one reads further into the text there is a signpost to remix culture through his assertion that creative insight, "arises from a reintegration of already existing materials or knowledge, but when it is completed it contains elements that are new" (ibid.:311).

Academics, writers and commentators on creativity recognise that there is a broad range of activity which can be considered as creative. Distinctions have been made between a high level of creativity and ordinary or 'democratic' creativity, the latter phrase coined by National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCA) (1999). ''High' or 'big' creativity would include definitions such as:

> The achievement of something remarkable and new, something which transforms and changes a field of endeavour in a significant way […] the kinds of things that people do that change the world (Feldman et al., 1994:1).

Or:

> [E]xceptional human capacity for thought and creation (Ryhammar and Brolin, 1999:261)

The problem with definitions concerning a high level of creativity is that they exclude the majority of the population as they deal mainly with highly talented individuals and, therefore, less pertinent to this focus of study. Csikszentmihalyi's definition is a primary example:

> For creativity to occur, a set of rules and practices must be transmitted from the domain to the individual. The individual must then produce a novel variation in the content of the domain. The domain then must be selected by the field for inclusion in the domain (1996:315).

Csikszentmihalyi's definition demands that creativity must be innovative within a domain of expertise. Furthermore, the results from that creative process have to be acknowledged and accepted by 'gatekeepers' within that domain. This would mean that to produce a creative work the individual would not only need to produce a ground-breaking or pioneering outcome but have it recognised and approved by prominent and esteemed peers of that field. This would preclude most individuals and mean that their attempts at creativity would be unrecognised.

Therefore, definitions with a more 'democratic' orientation are more relevant to this study, which are concerned with and recognise the creativity of everyday people. This type of 'small creativity' could be considered to be more humble, though equally valuable. A good starting point is the previously referenced NACCCE report (1999).

> [I]maginative activity fashioned so as to yield an outcome that is of value as well as original (ibid.:29)

The report's definition places an importance on using one's imagination to generate ideas. Crucially the report broadens the concept of 'original' to a more personal context in relationship to their previous work and their peers' work as opposed to only 'unique' work.

Being original: The originality of an outcome can be at different levels such as: individual originality in relation to one's prior work, relative originality in relation to peer work and historic originality in relation to works that are completely unique. (ibid.)

The report makes a reference to the fashioning of imaginative activity arguing that creative activity involves playing with ideas and trying out possibilities, including modifications and failures, which shape an idea. Robinson (2001) has directed criticism at the UK education system arguing that people are being educated out of their creativity through the discouragement of experimentation and the failure that may result from this. Failing is often part of the process in learning how to reach a positive outcome. The NACCCE report (1999) suggests that there is a value in evaluation that is reciprocal to the generative mode of imaginative activity and provides critical, reflective review from peers. This implies a social and interactive process not directly associated with the internet but relevant to it.

A Demos report by Seltzer and Bentley defines creativity as: "the application of knowledge and skills in new ways to achieve a valued goal" (1999:viii) and offers four main characteristics that define the creative problem-solver.

- The ability to formulate new problems, rather than depending on others to define them.

- The ability to transfer knowledge gained in one context to another in order to solve a problem.

- A belief in learning as an incremental process, in which repeated attempts will eventually lead to success.

- The capacity to focus one's attention in pursuit of a goal. (1999:19)

Here importance is placed on the process of creating and emphasises the intrinsic characteristics of creativity and less on the 'uniqueness' or 'originality' of the outcome. This is echoed by Craft who argues, 'creativity […] is not necessarily linked with a product-outcome' (2000:3). The emphasis is placed directed to ideas of individual creativity.

In recent years there has been a recognition of the role of digital technologies and the internet in individuals' creative practice. Gauntlett (2011) defines creativitiy to include

these practices with an importance given to the process of making and the connections made thereafter.

> Everyday creativity refers to a process which brings together at least one active human mind, and the material or digital world, in the activity of making something. The activity has not been done in this way by this person (or these people) before. The process may arouse various emotions, such as excitement and frustration, but most especially a feeling of joy. When witnessing and appreciating the output, people may sense the presence of the maker, and recognise those feelings (Gauntlett, 2011:76).

Gauntlett's defintion acknowleges a relationship to the digital world and emphasises the everyday process of creativity, rather than high level 'innovative' creativity that need expert validation. His definition focuses on the feelings of engaging in the creative process, which reaffirm the personal value of individual creativity to the creator and the connections and emotional connections made with the audience. Indeed, Gauntlett stresses the importance of making and connecting in acts of creativity and that they are actually part of the same process of making connections.

- Making is connecting because you have to connect things together (material, ideas or both) to make something new.

- Making is connecting because acts of creativity usually involve, at some point, a social dimension and connect us with other people.

- And making is connecting because through things and sharing them in the world, we increase our engagement and communications with our social and physical environments (ibid.:2).

Having made a link to the kind of creativity definitions pertinent in this study consideration needs to be given to the form of content this creativity could take.

3.2.3 Vernacular creativity

Often acts of making and connecting take the form of everyday cultural production and creative practice produced outside of commercial institutions without the incentive of payment. Practices like personal drawings, painting, storytelling, family

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photographs, home movie making, scrapbooks and journaling have been conducted over many centuries and pre-date the digital age. Nonetheless, these practices are now manifested in digital form online. These creative practices are deemed non-elitist, what Burgess (2007) terms 'vernacular creativity' and Gauntlett (2011), as previously stated, refers to as 'everyday creativity'. Burgess unpacks the term describing the word 'vernacular' as colloquial and being "usually applied to 'native' speech of a populace as against the official language" (Burgess, 2006:206). It is a word that empathises and gives respect to 'ordinary' and 'everyday' cultural forms. The connection of 'creativity' in this context is an "attempt to rescue the term from the exclusivity of high culture" (ibid.). Therefore, Burgess defines vernacular creativity as:

> "everyday creativity practiced outside the cultural value systems of either high culture (art) or commercial creative practice (television). (2007:71) […] [It] predates any particular innovation in technologies by centuries, and that at the same time its forms and social functions are transformed by cultural and technological shifts" (ibid.:76).

Gauntlett argues that a "shift towards internet-based interactivity […] has had a genuine impact on the way people spend their time and on the ways they can connect together" (2011:12). This has encouraged a shift away from a 'sit back and be told' culture, such as traditional school education (and reinforced by television), towards a culture that is about 'making and doing', which is a more hands-on way of learning that encourages inquisitive enquiry.

Digital forms of vernacular and everyday creativity can be seen online in the form of popular photography and everyday storytelling through personal weblogs, video and photo galleries on media- sharing websites, such as Flickr and YouTube. However, while the value, quality and relevance of these forms of creativity in the digital age has be disputed (see Keen, 2007), Shirky reinforces Gauntlett's, elaborating on his previously stated point arguing that, "the real gap is between doing nothing and doing something" (2010:18,19). Shirky's point is that once a person has moved from passive media consumption to the creation of something, no matter how simple or basic, they have entered an environment of creating content that can develop and grow.

This is a postion very different to some of the previously illustrated writers and academics who position creativity within the context of the individual human mind and its capacity to think and develop new thoughts. Savage and McGoun (2012) make the point that the creative process involves the mind and body.

> The use of symbols, external tools or technologies and other elements all demonstrate that creativity is not solely something that happens within our heads (ibid.:80).

3.2.4 Social creativity

Fischer's (2013) focus is to directly link creativity and digital technology and discusses 'social creativity' within the context of cultures of participation. This resonates with the subject of this research in that it considers socio-technical environments and argues that technologies have been used as add-ons to existing practices rather than as a catalyst for fundamentally rethinking what education should be about in the next century (1998). His initial premise is in line with Gauntlett, and Savage and McGoun's in that creative individuals are often thought of as working in isolation but in reality human creativity arises from activities from within a social context where interaction with other people and artefacts are important contributors in the process. Therefore, "social creativity is based on the assumption that the power of the unaided individual mind is fundamentally limited" (2013:2) and that this can be aided by cultures of participation. Fischer's research primary addresses the circumstances of complex problem solving, where contributions from a wide range of individuals form different backgrounds, with different skills and knowledge can contribute ideas. Often the systemic, complex, and open-ended problems of 21st century real world tasks require on-going contributions of many minds. Creativity from this perspective is an interaction between a person's thoughts and a sociocultural environment.

It is clear from this discussion that there are opposing views of the definition of creativity. The notion of 'historical creativity' is often been associated with high-level ideas and discoveries that are primarily unique, innovative and novel with relation to the whole of human history. By contrast democratic, everyday or vernacular creativity happens on a daily basis sometimes as forms of self-expression that are shared with

others or as real problem-solving activities. These are activities that are not confined to the research laboratories or art studios as outstanding events. This form of creativity connects with this research as it is principally concerned with ideas and creative exploration in everyday life that are communicated to others online through a self-created content sharing with respect to individuals or a social community.

Before considering the practice of online sharing some reference need to be given to the process of creating content online and the digital equivalent of a collage, montage or bricolage: the adding together of different media types to create something new. I recent years the emergence of the term 'remix culture' has had direct association with online practices of content creation and sharing. It also questions the notion of 'originality', as discussed in the previous section on creativity, and links analogue and digital media and the technological and creative processes.

3.3 Remix culture

The role of the content creator in the digital age is multidimensional, which is not only concerned with the agency of the user but also the content they create. The access to ever greater amounts of digital material, be this remediated analogue or digitised physical artefacts, has led to an increase in mixing together different types of media forms, as suggested in the research of Burgess and Green (2009).

Firstly, it must be noted that the remix is not a phenomena that is derived from the new digital domain. The ability to adapt, alter, re-interpret and redefine is a practice that dates back to the earliest human use of tools. According to Kirby Ferguson in his *Everything is a Remix* video series, the basic elements of creativity are to: copy, transform, and combine (Ferguson, 2011). Ferguson argues "nobody starts out original. We need copying to build a foundation of knowledge and understanding" (ibid). He cites Johannes Gutenberg's printing press, Henry Ford and The Ford Motor Company and Tim Berners-Lee and the World Wide Web as things which all possessed elements and components that had already existed to make their technological breakthroughs possible (ibid).

Indeed, in the 20th century there are many creative examples of companies, musicians, writers and artists using already existing material to make something new.

Many of Walt Disney's early films were adaptations of Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales (Lessig, 2004:22,23). Dada artists' re-appropriated objects and used photomontage to create their art. The writer William S. Burroughs developed the cut-up technique to re-order sentences and words into different meanings. Pop Art remixed cultural images into art to make statements about society, and musicians such as Grandmaster Flash and Danger Mouse used parts of previously released songs to create new ones. All these historical examples existed within the analogue domain.

> Analogue media exists as fixed physical objects in the world, their productions being dependent on transcriptions from one physical state to another (Lister et al., 2009:19).

Making analogue copies, therefore, was not a simple process were generally inferior to the original. Audio or visual material suffered from analogue 'generation loss' each time it was copied or transferred to a new source.

Digital media, by contrast, exists as a numerical representation of information that facilitates the transfer and duplication of data, and enables the production of countless exact copies with relative ease. As a result, this has afforded users with access to an almost infinite amount of digital material for producing remixed content (it must be noted, however, that digital media can also be 'transferred' to an analogue hard copy, such as a digital photograph to paper). In *Language of New Media,* Lev Manovich (2001) describes five key principles that make digital media different from old. The first is the data, represented as binary code, which makes digital information programmable and adaptable through algorithmic alteration. The second principle is its modularity.

> A new media object consists of independent parts which consist of smaller independent parts, and so on, up to the level of smallest "atoms" such as pixels, 3D points or characters (ibid.:31).

Automation is the third principle, where many operations involved in media creation, manipulation and access can be automated. The fourth principle, variability, relates to digital media objects not being fixed and with the ability to exist in different forms and, potentially infinite, versions. Finally, transcoding refers to the translation of a new media object from one format to another and the re-versioning of new media for display on different digital devices (ibid). Therefore, digital text, free from physical

manifestation, exists in a permanent state of flux. Accessed via the internet or the web, digital text can be re-edited, re-appropriated and re-distributed perpetually moving from user to user and context to context.

Sampling sections of previously recorded music has been widespread practice both legally and illegally within the music industry since the early 1980s. Music critic Andrew Goodwin describes sampling as "the uninhibited use of digital sound recording as a central element of composition. Sampling thus becomes an aesthetic programme" (Goodwin in Manovich, 2008b:235). The development of image editing software, such as Adobe Photoshop, in the 1990s with the ability to use the cut, copy and paste commands, has made it easier for users to 'sample' images in the same way as music has been sampled previously. Laurence Lessig uses the read/only and read/write computer analogy to describe the change in cultural consumption.

> The analogy is to the permissions that might attach to a particular file on a computer. If the user has "RW" permissions, then he is allowed to both read the file and make changes to it. If he has "Read/Only" permissions, he is allowed only to read the file (Lessig, 2008:28).

He argues that in the 20th century read/only technology constrained the production of culture to a small professional elite restricting the mass-population to read/only access, which prohibited modification. Whereas the proliferation of digital content and access to it via the internet has created a read/write culture, where users are able to access and modify and mix together content with the use of online tools and software (ibid). This has led to the term 'remix culture' being used to describe a society that encourages/allows the "systematic re-working of a source" (Manovich, 2008a).

Giorgos Cheliotis and Jude Yew, in their analysis of the social structure of remix culture, describe people who engage in this activity as being "motivated by the objectives of open sharing and reuse" (Cheliotis and Yew, 2009), and share three common objectives.

1. Personal expression through the creation of content.

2. Building social relationships through the creative process.

3. Furthering the practices of communities that revolve around creating and personalizing content through remixes and mashups (ibid.).

The 'mashup' is another term that originated in the music industry, where two or more songs were combined to create a new version or experience. This would take the form of using an acapella vocal track/s (vocal without music) and 'mashing' it together with instrumental music from another source. However, on the web it is data that is 'mashed up' from two or more data sources. One could argue that all web pages are mashups as they are composed using different elements of data retrieved from files on one or many web hosts. But commonly they refer to data accessed from databases using (open) application-programming interfaces (APIs) to access it. Web application mashups have complicated and different structures. J. Jeffrey Hanson explains that:

> from a high-level perspective, the technological domain […] mashups can be viewed as presentation-oriented, data-oriented, and process-oriented (Hanson, 2009a:25).

All use data in a different way. For example, presentation-oriented mashups are concerned with mashing together existing user interface artefacts, like Javascript (a web scripting code) and widgets to create new user interfaces. Process-oriented mashups are concerned with mashing together existing processes and services to form new processes and services. Data-oriented mashups mix together data retrieved from multiple data sources, integrating files, databases and external Web service APIs (ibid). Michael Ogrinz identifies three ways of data mashups that can appear. Firstly, where:

> Application developers use both internal and external sources to create data mashups and employ traditional coding techniques to create the user interface around them". [Secondly,] "IT creates a set of "mashable" components and gives end users a sand-box environment where they can freely mix and match the pieces together themselves. If users need new components, they have to solicit IT help to create them". [And finally,] "An organization deploys an environment that lets anyone create and combine his or her own mashups (Ogrinz, 2009:10).

Ogrinz points out that the last type is the most difficult to implement technically but has the most impact as "*everyone* will engage in the practice of reuse" (ibid).

Consequentially, Web 2.0 data mashups are reflexive and no longer rely on sampling, but instead on constant updating of digital content.

The use of the term 'remix culture' has posed the question of what makes digital remixing in the 21st century different from the past. A number of media commentators have indicated that it is the cultural networks, created by new technologies, that have transformed the conception of authorship and, therefore, it is the self-referentiality of the community as a whole that matters not individual authorship (Navas, 2010; Ramirez, n.d.). Paul Ramirez raises an ethical dilemma with regard to traditional and digital conceptions of authorship. He used the case of 17-year-old author Helene Hegemann, who was found to have plagiarised large parts of her book from other internet sources, to illustrate this. Hegemann, in her defence, issued a statement via her publisher stating that "There's no such thing as originality anyway, just authenticity" (Kulish, 2010). Ramirez argues that this case borrows from both traditional and digital authorship.

> On the one hand, the form she is using, the book, has a long tradition of valuing authorship. [...] On the other hand, her conception of authorship has been influenced by digital communities (the internet, D.J.'s, Berlin youth culture, etc.) which do not necessarily value authorship and therefore do not place importance on citation (Ramirez, n.d.).

He concludes that:

> The reason that this example is so controversial is that it is a site where two conceptions of authorship are coming into direct conflict. Attribution is the locus of this conflict because it marks one's allegiances – citing sources signals a traditional understanding of authorship, not citing signals a digitally influenced understanding of authorship (ibid).

This inevitably leads to the issue of copyright and the development of creative commons. In his book, *Free Culture: How big media uses technology and the law to lock down culture and control creativity*, Lawrence Lessig discusses the emergence of the practices such as "copy, paste, edit source, and post to the Web" (Lessig, 2004) and "rip, remix, burn" (Arcuni, 2005) have impacted on copyright law. Indeed, the simple act of visiting a website requires data from the server to be 'copied' to your browser. "Copies are to digital life what breathing is to our physical life" (Lessig,

2006:192). The nature of digital content requires copying as standard and this has, obviously, created issues over use of copyrighted material. The solution, Lessig argues, is the use of Creative Commons (CC) that, through a variety of licences and contracts, allows the copyright holder a choice of exemption from some or all of their rights to the public while preventing others. In *Media Rights and Intellectual Property,* Richard Haynes writes:

> The key to the concept is that information gets to circulate in the public domain far quicker and with fewer restrictions attached than the terms existing under current copyright […] The motto that accompanies the CC licences is 'take a bit and make it new' that is, not to copy but to remix culture" (Haynes, 2005:140).

Through CC collaboration and the remixing of media, new ideas and creativity can be developed more effectively and dynamically. Haynes continues:

> The CC licence therefore potentially breaks down barriers between the author and the consumer and connects culture to wider notions of citizenship (ibid:141).

Eduardo Navas, author of the remix theory website *Remix Culture* concludes:

> What is crucial at the moment is understanding how different acts of appropriation throughout history […] enable us to entertain Remix as part of the consumer/producer model currently at play in culture (Navas, n.d.).

Remix culture is, therefore, a subject that covers more than the mere combining of different modes of content from different sources. Digital content by its nature is easy to copy and combine together. In its simplest form it could be data called up to a web browser from a number of different sources to form a web page, or a montage, combining images from several different photographs. Conversely, it could be a conceptual reworking of material that forms a new digital artefact or a complex stream of constantly updating data sourced via an application-programming interface (API). However, remix culture in the digital age is more than this. Remix culture questions the meaning of originality and the concepts of ownership, and challenges us to reconsider the definitions of and relationships between the consumer, publisher, content creator and producer.

3.4 Online sharing

3.4.1 Physical and digital definitions of sharing

On the internet the word 'sharing' has been adopted by social networks sites and web services over the last decade to describe a wide range of activities. In its simplest form 'sharing' content digitally with other people is different to the physical world. In the physical world, if I share a packet of biscuits with another person or persons I will divide them into smaller parts with the result that I have less biscuits for myself. Sharing content in a digital form is essentially the copying of data. If I share digital data I do not have less of that content. Instead both the person I share content and I have an identical digital copy of that content. However, what these domains have in common is that both these acts of content sharing could also be considered a form of distribution, which allows the other person or persons to participate in a shared experience. Sharing in both the physical and digital worlds is also an act of communication, such as sharing emotions or feelings or a shared experience.

Historically 'sharing' has been associated with computing since the 1950s and 1960s when 'time-sharing' of computers, due to the scarcity of resources, was commonplace. Latterly 'file-sharing' refers to access and copying of digital data from remote computers, which is often associated with of music and video piracy (Naughton, 2012; 2000). Essentially, one could argue that the whole of the internet is one giant sharing technology platform.

3.4.2 Sharing social media

Since the early years of the new millennium 'sharing' is a word that has been widely used by Web 2.0 services, particularly social media sites, such as Facebook, YouTube and Flickr, to describe the distribution of user-generated content. Indeed, numerous sites use a 'share' button to spread content and communicate to wider audiences. Sharing in this broad context simply means participating in in Web 2.0. In *Sharing and Web 2.0: The emergence of a keyword*, John (2012) argues that sharing:

> has become the word of choice to describe the way in which we participate in
> Web 2.0, and that this word builds on more 'traditional' meanings of sharing,

enfolding within it both distribution and communication, as well as the usage of sharing in the context of computing (ibid.:178).

John describes the 'fuzzy objects of sharing' where phrases such as 'share your life' or 'share your world' are only understandable once users are familiar with SNSs terminology to recognise that sharing is shorthand for participating in the site. This is in contrast with 'concrete objects of sharing' such as sharing photos or videos. Although online photos and videos are not tangible they have offline equivalents and, therefore, have physical world connections. Both these types of sharing have vastly extended the scope of how we define sharing on the internet. Sharing is as much about communication as it is about distribution and at the same time both ambiguous and far more inclusive. John introduces the concept of 'no object sharing' when 'sharing' is used singularly and serves as shorthand for 'participate in this site', in a presumption that users already know the range of possible activities in such sites – updating statuses, uploading photos, commenting on others' statuses, recommending links and so on (ibid.:174). Finally, using examples from Bebo and LiveJournal, John shows that certain SNS practices that were not categorised as being sharing before 2005 have since been incorporated in to the 'sharing' definition.

The definition of sharing on the internet, therefore, is very broad and can include on the one hand sharing as distribution in the form of sharing content, such as photographs or videos, or sharing as communication through expressing personal opinion or feelings. But crucially these two forms of sharing are intertwined and SNS's encourage the use of both together. These are often promoted to the user as acts of self-promotion and self-expression, which help build a notion of equality and positive social relations encouraging the user to use their service more.

3.4.3 New definitions and criticism

In recent years the term 'spreadable media' has been used by Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013) to describe the technical and cultural potential for internet users to share content for their own purposes. They argue that if online media "doesn't spread, it's dead". The term refers "not just those text which circulate broadly but also those that achieve particularly deep engagement within a niche community (ibid.:22) and recognises the continued significance of mass media content within the online

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media ecosystem, along with the complex and diverse ways in which various forms of media are circulated. Conceptually this is different to the more marketing derived term 'viral' as viral videos "strips the audiences of active participation in the pass-along process" (ibid.). Whereas spreadable media is "the continuous process of repurposing and recirculation" (ibid.:27). They reject the term 'user-generated content' preferring 'user-circulated content' as a more appropriate description of the practice.

Jenkins et al. argue that predictions by Web 2.0 enthusiasts of a new era of producer-consumer relationships have fallen short of their potential due to the failure of producers to develop reciprocal long-term relationships with users. This is because profit-driven media producers are unable to recognise the social and personal motivations that facilitate content sharing where users/audiences are driven by the reciprocity of a gift economy. Financially motivated producers are more likely to protect their ownership of content for them to appreciate the value of freely spreadable content and suggest that sometimes producers "would rather die than give up control" (ibid.:293). Here the authors consider different economical models that can accommodate both positions. In citing E. P. Thompson's use of the term 'moral economy' to describe "the social norms and mutual understandings that makes it possible for two parties to conduct business" (ibid.:52) they suggest a relationship that is more symbiotic to both a content creating 'audience' and media professionals. Indeed, adoption of a 'digi-gratis' economy, a term described by Paul Booth as a mutually beneficial fusion between the gift and the market economies within contemporary media culture, would tie commodity and gift metaphor's together and helps us "more fully appreciate the extent of contemporary content creation" (Jenkins, 2010).

Consideration is given to the media industry's consumer/producer disputes over piracy and the shifting habits from an appointment-based, linear model of television viewing to an engagement-based model of data downloading and 'time shifting' technologies. "Such models value the spread of media texts as these engaged audiences are more likely to recommend, discuss, research, pass along, and even generate new material in response" (Jenkins et al., 2013:116). While Jenkins et al, consider contemporary audiences as being producers with less reliance on passivity

of media consumption, they also recognise that people perform different participatory roles in different media environments, such as evaluation, appraisal, critique, and recirculation. Thus, it would also be inaccurate to assume that activities requiring greater skill are more meaningful or participatory.

Jenkins et al. revisit Chris Anderson's 'long tail' marketing concept and argue that niche media content "may accrue value at a different pace, on a different scale, through different infrastructure, and on the basis of different appeals" (ibid.:238). Therefore, while Web 2.0 technologies increase the spreadability of such texts, the potential audience is likely to consist of those with niche tastes and interests. In designing for spreadability the authors consider John Fiske's concept of 'producerly texts', where texts offer multiple layers of interpretations for audience adaptation or modification. In so doing they suggest that an understanding of audience motivation, a subject covered later in this chapter, is important in understanding how online media content is made for spreadability, which includes collective values, shared references, humour, parody and ambiguous or unfinished narratives, mysteries and fantasies, controversies, and rumours.

In contrast *Social Media, A Critical Introduction* (2014) Fuch's views the concept of social media and content sharing from Marxist viewpoint, which is in opposition to the views and arguments of Jenkins. Fuchs comes from a power and resource distribution perspective and examines exploitation and domination of both political economy and political communication of social media. He questions Jenkins' promotion of participatory culture and web-based participatory democracy. Fuchs argues that genuine participatory culture must have equality of ownership with much greater and significant roles played by citizen 'prosumers'. Since the internet is governed and dominated by large corporations who own platforms with extensive online reach, the internet cannot be considered to be participatory. He continues by asserting that social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Google reflect the power structures of capitalist society by exploiting the data given for free by users.

Jose van Dijck's book *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* (2013a) highlights the links and relationships between media, sociality, and profitability. She offers analyse in terms of its ecosystem of users, technology and

content. The primary focus of the book is SNS's and UGC, with an analysis of five social platforms Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and Wikipedia. van Dijck argues that early declarations of Google, to "do no evil" and Facebook to "make the web more social" and transparent has been overtaken by motivations of profit (with the exception of Wikipedia) and "a marketplace first and a public forum second" (ibid.:16).

3.4.4 Analysis and evaluation of social media exploitation debate

This leads to one of the key discussions concerning the creation of content for sharing by non-professional users – social media exploitation. Is the act of creating and sharing content for no financial reward exploiting the user by effectively giving large multinational companies free content that helps build and maintain the popularity of their businesses? On one side we have Jenkins, who argues that although users provide free labour through freely 'giving' their content, they benefit socially and through personal expression, and are consequently not exploited for this labour. Conversely Fuchs who, from his Marxist standpoint, argues that a definition of exploitation is the creation of surplus value based on someone else's labour. Therefore, he deduces that the creation of this value, beneficial or not, is however exploitative.

However, it would seem that both arguments have valid points. Firstly, it is legitimate to argue that the direction the internet has taken over the past ten years has moved towards wide scale ownership and colonisation of social media platforms and services by large multinational companies. Their whole business model relies on the constant updates of new data provided free by the users without which their businesses would be unsustainable. Secondly, it is also legitimate to argue that everyday internet users who share content are doing this as an enjoyable and pleasurable pastime, as witnessed by the rise in the practice and large numbers of recorded active users on SNS and UGC sites (Duggan, 2013). This too has the potential to give them wider social interaction with non-location restricted communities that may allow them creative personal expression, which benefits them emotionally. Indeed, this latter point is one of the concerns of this research.

There are at least two possible scenarios in addressing the free labour/payment issue. The first would concern payment to users to make content in the form of commercial transaction. Paying users to make content would make the platforms financially unviable and unsustainable and this would bring commercial logic back into play. If this financial model were adopted it would undoubtedly mean that the content platforms would have to indicate the type and format that the content would take in the form of a creative brief, similar to working practices in the creative industry. This would move away from the whole concept of participation, self-expression and freedom to create ones own content. The second scenario is one that has been adopted by YouTube, whereby content creators are paid small amounts of money dependent on the amount of 'views' their content reaches, known as the YouTube partner program (2013). This adds a financial imperative and incentive to create and share and may affect the motivation to create and share, discussed later.

This in turn leads to the second issue of user and data exploitation. One of the areas that does not equate in the digital labour debate is the association with, what Marx would define as, labour, such as production line factory work or, for example, working in a cotton mill. These were often labour jobs of necessity and not choice and may have been the only job available to them. The jobs were also likely to have been monotonous and repetitive with little choice of alternative options and were often taken to prevent the worker and their family from destitution. The contrasting argument to the online comparison is the freedom of the individual to choose, firstly, what content they want to create and, secondly, where and with whom, if at all, they want to share it. In this sense the independent will of the user is maintained.

In concluding this discussion on social media exploitation there are points on both sides of the argument that are genuine. Yes, SNS and UGC sites can exploit users data and they have the potential to gain financially while users create and share content for free but there is evidence, of which this research I will contribute, that everyday users do benefit from the online interaction, sharing and participation.

3,4.5 Social networking sites as 'techno-cultural constructs'

In the early years after Web 2.0 technologies were defined and social media and social networking were relatively new concepts academics and internet

commentators spoke of the power of the user to publish and share their own content. Some even went so far as to associate this with a return to Habermas's concept of a 'public sphere'. However, in recent years a more nuanced and expansive view of the relationship between the way audience/users create and share media and the platforms they use have emerged (van Dijck, 2012).

van Dijck's central argument is that social media, in its relatively short history, has moved from a community-oriented connectedness to owner-centered connectivity, where platforms manage and engineer daily human interactions. Therefore, van Dijck argues that online sociality has increasingly become a co-production of humans and machines.

> Analysing user agency as a techno-cultural construct requires a conceptual distinction between implicit and explicit user participation. *Implicit* participation is the *usage* inscribed in the engineer's design by means of the coding mechanism. […] *Explicit* use refers to how real or actual users interact with social media (ibid.:33 authors emphasis).

She considers platforms these 'techno-cultural constructs' as three-fold. Firstly, technology can be used by internet companies to influence user behaviour. An example of this can be seen in the controversial decision by Facebook researchers to deliberately skew what 689,003 Facebook users saw when they logged in. This showed that adapting Facebook's code "could manipulate people's emotions!" (Naughton, 2014). Secondly, making changes to (SNSs) platforms can force users to change settings, quit the site or adapt their usage. Thirdly, the design and distribution of content is essential for users to communicate through an effective use of the platform.

3.5 Virtual/online communities

3.5.1 Definitions of community

According to *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology,* the term 'community' is the "most elusive and vague in sociology and is by now largely without specific meaning" (Abercrombie et al., 2006:71). Although it suggests that at its most basic meaning

'community' refers to "a collection of people in a geographical area" (ibid.), it offers three elements that any or all of them may also be present in any usage.

> The first is the concept of people collected together in a particular social structure. The second is the sense of belonging or community spirit and the third being all the daily activities that take place within a geographical area (ibid.).

There has been much discussion within academic circles about whether a community can exist online. Vincent Miller examines the idea of 'community' as it relates to digital culture. He begins by explaining how the traditional meaning of small, localised communities like villages became less prevalent as industrial society evolved where "the space of the 'local' or 'community' expanded to include a sense of belonging that involved entire nations" (2011:186). Miller argues that this is a shift in the spatial order where "nations became the most important community to which one belonged" (ibid.:187), and that, as nations are imagined communities, members of these communities will never know most or have face-to-face contact with their fellow members.

The change in geographic limits of human exchanges in the 1970s through the increase and development of globalised businesses and telecommunications created, what David Harvey called, "time-space compression" (1989) and Anthony Giddens called "time-space distanciation". Giddens described this as "the 'stretching of social systems across time-space" (1986:181). Manual Castells contrasts the ability to communicate globally in real time as the 'space of flows' against the 'space of places' where communication is self-contained and fixed to a geographic location (2010,1996).

The development of real-time digital communication, Miller argues, has yet again transformed the spatial order and "*time has become effectively separated from space in terms of action with others. We no longer have to 'be' together to act together*" (2011:188; emphasis in the original). Miller offers five reasons as to why virtual communities are an "inherently reasonable next step in the transformation of community" (ibid.:189). *Detraditionalisation* allows for new forms of community, and *disembedding* gives more choice in our relationships from outside of spatial limitations. The era of *globalisation* has exposed us to new, varied cultural resources

and experiences and encourages us to connect with people beyond our locality with people we may never meet face-to-face through *imagined communities.* The final reason Miller gives is the computer-mediated feedback loop of *reflexive ordering*, which allows for self-awareness and a constant revision of who we are. Miller concludes that "'community' is not an accurate term to describe the current state of social relations in contemporary post-industrial society" (2011:197) and proposes the concept of 'networks'.

Barry Wellman argues that access to networks anywhere via wireless technologies and mobile phones has moved communication from place-to-place to person-to-person in what he calls 'networked individualism'.

> Moving around with a mobile phone, pager, or wireless internet makes people less dependent on place. Because connections are to people and not to places, the technology affords shifting of work and community ties from linking people-in-places to linking people wherever they are. It is I-alone that is reachable wherever I am: at a house, hotel, office, freeway or mall. The person has become the portal (Wellman, 2002:14).

Howard Rheingold, who coined the term 'virtual community' describes it as a collection of people who share common interests, ideas or feeling over the internet or other collaborative networks, and argues that:

> social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace (Rheingold, 2000:4).

Indeed, Rheingold suggests that people are turning to the internet out of a desire for community spirit, which has become less easy to acquire in offline contemporary society. He argues that we should "ask ourselves if face-to-face communication is the only type of communication that constitutes community" given the "impact technology has on human relationships" (Rheingold cited in Lindemann, 2005:360).

The term 'online community' is an issue addressed by Nancy Baym in *Personal Connections in the Digital Age.* She states "the mere existence of an interactive online forum is not a community" (2010:74). However, she does identify five qualities that help define community in an online context and through online groups. Firstly,

'space'. Critics of the term 'online community' believe that the act of being online means that users are not tied to a geographical space and, therefore, cannot be a part of a community. But Baym argues:

> people who are involved in online groups often think of themselves as shared space. The feeling that online groups meeting on software and hardware platforms constitutes "space" is integral to the language often used to describe the internet (ibid.:75).

Secondly, Baym believes "shared practice" encourages members of active online groups to develop shared communication norms. These are displayed, reinforced, negotiated and taught through shared behaviours. Thirdly, through "shared resources and support", individuals in online groups can give and receive social support thereby contributing to each another's aggregated social capital. This would include emotional, informational and esteem support. Individuals participating in online groups in this way can "collaboratively build a replenishing repository of public goods that can be used by unknown recipients" (ibid.:85). Fourthly, "shared identities" concerns the use of identities and roles appropriated by the users. This could mean the acquiring of an individual or an online group name. Sometimes groups develop a "sense of themselves as a group, social identity or schema" (ibid.:88) that is a shared experience. Baym focuses her final quality on "interpersonal relationships". She relates this to the forming of one-to-one relationships, either through the forming of close friendships or even romances, that providing a "social mesh" that helps "connect the broader web of interconnection within the group more closely" (ibid.:90).

3.5.2 Attributes of a virtual community

According to Subhasish Dasgupta, virtual communities can take many forms, but for them to function properly they should include three important elements: structure, trust and common goals.

- Structure: Each member is required to abide by the rules and regulations as decided by the online community. There is generally no social hierarchy although there are examples of 'gated' and 'hierarchical' 'knowledge

communities' (Jenkins, 2006) emerging. It is believed that the lower the structure of the community, the better it will be.

- Trust: This must be established within the community for effective collaboration to take place. However, this can be problematic. For example, establishing the true identity of community members can be difficult due to the ease by which web users can maintain anonymity.

- Common goals: The main goal is to build an online community that is interactive, participatory and shares information and ideas. Other common goals may emerge or be inherent in the community's areas of discussion or points of actions (Dasgupta, 2006:5).

These three factors must be achieved for virtual communities to be successful and for "social capital to succeed in its goals" (ibid.:21). Robert Putman believes that social capital allows a community the ability to "facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (1995:66). Putman also differentiates between 'bonding social capital', within a closed network of family and friends, or 'bridging social capital' which is an open network bridging different communities (2000:22-24).

Steinkuehler and Williams refer to "bridging" as a "sociological lubricant" that is inclusive but may provide little in the way of emotional support and built around tentative relationships. Nonetheless, they have the advantage of "broaden social horizons or worldviews, providing access to information and new resources" (2006:15). Conversely, 'bonding' is a "kind of social superglue" which is more exclusive and less diverse but with stronger personal connections and provides "continued reciprocity among individuals who share strong emotional and substantive support" (ibid.:16) However, this can lead to a narrowness of connections.

In reviewing the previous discussion on virtual communities it could be argued that, in the literal sense, the term is an oxymoron. The two words together express contradictory meanings. 'Virtual' has many meanings. In philosophy it means 'that which is not real', and in computing as a 'computer-generated simulation'. The vernacular use of 'virtually' means 'almost' as in the phrase 'virtually impossible'. 'Community' also has many meanings but, conversely, describes something that is real and not simulated. The *Penguin Dictionary of Sociology* suggests that it can

mean "a collection of people in a geographical area" or a "belonging or community sprit". However, the use of 'community' in an everyday sense can be used to describe the world's population as in 'the international community'. Although this is real, it is also not tangible and imagined. In this context the word 'community' becomes largely meaningless, as would the contradictory and rather ridiculous 'hermit community'. The point here is that both words, when analysed separately, offer a multitude of different meanings that, in this context, become largely meaningless and, when put together, imply contradictory meanings. What matters is the present day context.

Virtual communities describe a place where communities are imagined in the same way as 'communities of nations' or the world population are imagined. They are 'virtual' in that the members of these communities may never meet or have face-to-face contact. Through a shift in the spatial order of relationships and time-space compression, spatial barriers have been overcome by the increase in the speed of sending digital information via communication technologies. This has had the effect of shrinking space and, as distance has been overcome, time too becomes compressed. However, Wellman argues that it is networks and not groups or communities that are at the centre of social organisation. Online networks develop relationships that are increasingly specialised, they are a-spatial, based on choice of purpose, not location, and there are no limits to the amount of networks one joins or relationships one makes.

So what is the motivation to join and participate in online communities? Indeed, more precisely for this research, what motivates individuals to create and share their content online? In order build an understanding, and before the empirical research in the following chapters, a background study into the field of 'motivation' is needed.

3.6 Motivation

Discussions about motivation are timeless, and attempts to define what motivates people to behave in certain ways are many and varied. In the early part of the 16th century, Machiavelli wrote in *The Prince* about how people are motivated by financial greed and the human motivation for power, and Freud (1920) argued that human behaviour is motivated by drives of life and death instincts, which are neurological

representations of physical needs. In the early part of the 20th century, Fredrick Winslow Taylor (1911) developed the practice of scientific management (often referred to as Taylorism) in response to the needs of mechanised industrial society where work was often routine, or mentally unchallenging. This worked on the premise of motivations of rewards and punishment, or a 'carrot and stick' model. In the latter part of the 20th century, many different theories were introduced as a way of understanding what motives people.

Maslow's *A Theory of Human Motivation* (1943) refers to a hierarchy of needs in relation to the concept of self-actualisation. Maslow's theory denotes how individuals strive to seek a higher need when lower needs are fulfilled. When a lower-level need is satisfied, it no longer serves as a source of motivation. Therefore, needs are motivators only when they are unsatisfied. Maslow's five-levelled hierarchy of needs was simplified down to three by Alderfer through his ERG theory (1969) (see Fig. 8.1).

Maslow's and Alderfer's Needs Theories
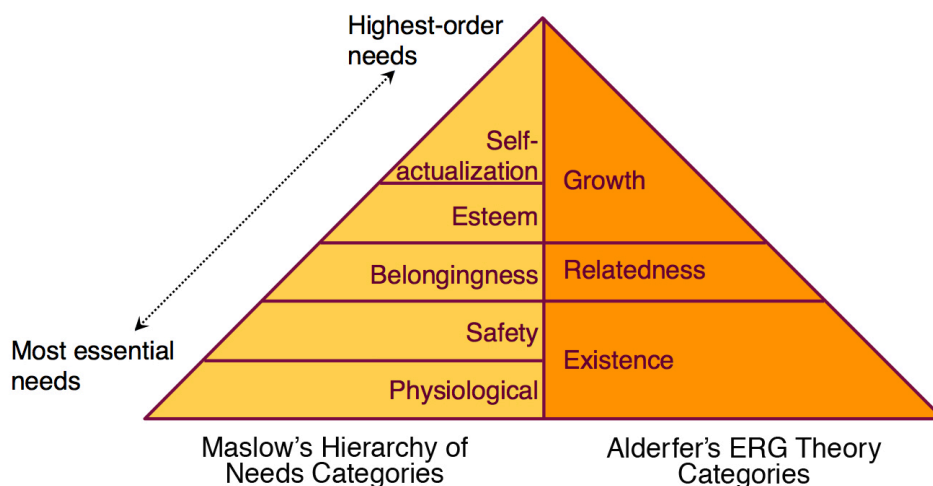
Fig. 8.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Alderfer's ERG Theory

Herzberg introduced the idea of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators through his two-factor/motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg et al., 1959). He argues that these two factors motivate in different ways. 'Hygiene factors' are extrinsic motivators that include financial reward, a good or adequate salary, job security and working conditions. If these factors are not met, individuals will not be significantly motivated. The second factors, 'motivators', are intrinsic and relate to a sense of achievement,

recognition and for personal development or gratification. Essentially, hygiene factors are considered to determine dissatisfaction and can be de-motivational if not present or met. Motivators determine satisfaction. Nevertheless, it must be noted that satisfaction does not always result in better performance or productivity.

McClelland's Achievement Need Theory (1961) proposed three basic needs developed and acquired from life experiences. Although each of these needs are not exclusive, one tends to dominate more than others.

1. Needs for achievement: this relates to people who need challenging achievement goals to attain a sense of accomplishment. They often require feedback as they progress and possess a high level of personal responsibility.

2. Needs for affiliation: this relates to peoples need for agreeable connections with others and are, therefore, people-oriented rather than task-oriented.

3. Needs for power: this relates to people who have the need to control, command or direct other people.

3.6.1 Drive (theory)

The concept of drive was derived from the research of Hull (1943; 1951), which sought to understand the connections between stimulus and response. This related to drives of behaviour that satisfy basic human needs, which are considered primary and innate biological drives, such as hunger, thirst and sex. Drive, in this context, was caused by a deficit or unsatisfied need that, in turn, produces a drive to action. Secondary drives are related to learning by conditioning, reward and punishment or, as previously mentioned, 'carrot and stick' motivations.

In the 1950s Harry F. Harlow argued for a third 'drive' when he conducted experiments into primate behaviour when playing with puzzles (1950; 1953). He discovered that monkeys enjoyed solving them without the need for rewards. Furthermore, he found that monkeys, driven by intrinsic motivations, were quicker and more accurate at solving the puzzles than monkeys who were rewarded with food. Edward Deci replicated similar studies (1971; 1972), this time using humans in his experiments. His results concluded that, "when money is used as an extrinsic reward for some activity, the subjects lose intrinsic interest in the activity" (1971:114).

Continuing this research theme, Lepper, Greene and Nisbett (1973) conducted studies into how pre-school children behaved when rewarded for their 'free play' drawing time. After dividing them into three groups, the first group was told that they would be rewarded with a blue ribbon if they continued to draw. The second group was not told about the blue ribbon at the start of the task, but received it as an 'unexpected reward' at the end. The third group was given 'no award' and not told about the blue ribbon. Two weeks later, the children were given another 'free play' drawing class, and the groups that received 'no award' and the 'unexpected award' continued drawing with the same enthusiasm as before. By contrast, children in the 'award' group were now less interested in the activity. Lepper, Greene and Nisbett, therefore concluded that the extrinsic reward had diminished the pleasure of playing with crayons and paper.

In his book, *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*, Daniel Pink (2010) argues that tasks are divided into two categories: 'algorithmic' and 'heuristic'. Algorithmic describes a set of established instructions down a single route to a conclusion, whereas heuristic is the opposite. In order to complete heuristic tasks it is necessary to experiment and test possibilities to reach a conclusion. Pink illustrates this by referring to the 'candle problem' creativity task devised by Karl Duncker (1945), which is to adhere a candle to a wall using only some tacks (in a box) and some matches. The key to solving the task is to overcome 'functional fixedness', where one only sees the box containing the tacks as having one function, that of holding the tacks, and not as a platform for the candle. In the early 1960s, Glucksberg (1962) timed how quickly two sets of participants completed the candle problem by giving one group different levels of monetary incentives according to their speed, and the other group no financial rewards at all. On average, the incentivised group took three and a half minutes longer to complete the task than the non-financially incentivised group. Pink argues that an incentive designed to clarify thinking and sharpen creativity, in this case financial reward, "ended up clouding thinking and dulling creativity. […] The rewards narrowed people's focus and blinkered the wide view that might have allowed them to see new uses for old objects" (2010:44). However, Glucksberg (1962) conducted the same experiment, but this time separated the tacks from the box and therefore revealing the solution. In this instance, the results were reversed and the rewarded participants completed the task

faster. Glucksberg had effectively transformed the experiment from a heuristic to an algorithmic task.

3.6.2 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivational drives are oppositely different. Intrinsic motivation is internally driven, such as the need for self-expression or self-fulfilment, and extrinsic is externally driven in the form of financial reward or job advancement. Extrinsic motivation is also driven by a reward and punishment, 'carrot and stick' model. This being the 'carrot' of reward for doing a task correctly or effectively, and the 'stick' being a penalty or punishment if the task is not performed well.

Intrinsic motivation can be seen in Csikszentmihalyi's concept of motivational "flow" (1990) where conditions are created that increase interest so that learning and skill are sought for personal pleasure. Ryan and Deci argue that intrinsic motivation is the most pervasive and important and that:

> from birth onwards, humans in the healthiest states, are active, inquisitive, curious, and playful creatures, displaying a ubiquitous readiness to learn and explore, and they do not require extraneous incentives to do so (2000a:56).

They also suggest it is crucial to remember that intrinsic motivation will occur "only for activities that hold intrinsic interest for the individual" (Ryan and Deci, 2000a:59).

Research into 'creative' tasks by Amabile (1993; 1996) found that "intrinsic motivation is conducive to creativity; controlling extrinsic motivation is detrimental to creativity" (1996:119). This is confirmed by Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005) whose research tested Herzberg's theory (1959) and found that factors associated intrinsic satisfaction play an important role in motivating employees to contribute ideas rather than money and recognition. Pink gives seven reasons why he believes extrinsic motivators often don't work.

1. They can extinguish intrinsic motivation.

2. They can diminish performance.

3. They can crush creativity.

4. They can crowd out good behaviour.

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5. They can encourage cheating, shortcuts and unethical behaviour.

6. They can become addictive.

7. They can foster short term thinking (Pink, 2010:59).

3.6.3 Self-determination theory

Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000b) developed self-determination theory, which proposes that human beings have innate psychological needs to be autonomous, self-determined and connected to one another. Self-determination theory is linked to intrinsic motivation and identifies three needs: competence, relatedness and autonomy, which when fulfilled allow for personal growth and richer lives. Through competence, the individual seeks to control the outcome of mastery and in relatedness they want to connect, interact and share experiences with others. Autonomy does not mean independence from others, but increased options and choices to make decisions and act from one's own volition (Deci and Vansteenkiste, 2004). Ryan and Deci argue that if individuals' psychological needs are met within their social contexts this will provide the appropriate developmental framework for "an active, assimilative, and integrated nature [to] ascend" (2000b:76). Conversely, excessive control, low-level challenges and lack of connection to others "disrupt the inherent actualizing and organizational tendencies endowed by nature" (ibid.) and result not only in the lack of initiative and responsibility but also in distress.

3.6.4 Self-efficacy and motivation

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their ability to succeed. Psychologist Albert Bandura is a pioneer of the term, and defines it as "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations. Efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves and act" (1995:2). He contends that the most effective way of creating a strong sense of efficacy is through mastery experiences. In relation to motivation, people with a high level of self-efficacy are generally more motivated to attempt and complete tasks than those with less, and the greater the level of mastery expectations, the more effort is exerted. This is not always the case as, on some occasions, high self-efficacy can

lead to over-confidence with too little preparation with a resultant failure in task. Conversely, some individuals with low self-efficacy may be motivated to attempt difficult tasks but with more planning (Bandura, 1977).

3.6.5 Motivations for producing UGC

As previously discussed, many individuals now use the internet not only as a facility and a resource, but also to self-publish their content comparatively inexpensively and with relative ease. So what motivates people to create and share their content with others online when there appears to be little or no monetary gain? Charles Leadbeater argues:

> The social web provides people with a new way to win recognition. […] Our well-being depends on our being esteemed by people we ourselves hold in high esteem. So long as the Web continues to provide a way for people to earn recognition it will continue to grow (2008:230).

Shao (2009) suggests that individuals engage with user-generated media in three ways by: consuming, participating and producing. Consuming represents only the watching, viewing, and reading of online media. Participation represents user-to-user and user-to-content interaction, such as rating content and posting comments. Whereas production signifies the creation and online publication of personally produced content, such as written text, images, video and audio. He describes these three activities as "analytically separate but interdependent in various aspects [and they] may represent a path of gradual involvement with [user-generated media]" (ibid.:11). However, he posits that these uses are driven by different motivations:

> People consume content for information and entertainment, participate for social interaction and community development, and produce their own content for self-expression and self-actualization (ibid.:9).

Shao defines self-expression as a conscious attempt by the user to control the impression of how others see them and self-actualisation as an unconscious action that reflects one's own personality. As individuals continue to pursue their desire for recognition and willingness to participate, they produce an aggregation of knowledge. Jenkins refers to this as "collective intelligence" and is the:

ability of virtual communities to leverage the combined expertise of their members. What we cannot know or do on our own, we may now be able to do collectively (Jenkins, 2006:27).

In his book, *Making is Connecting,* Gauntlett (2011) discusses the motivations people have for making things, both offline and online, and how this helps them engage with the world and create connections with each other. He conducts personal interviews and analysis of a number of research projects concerned with creating content, like blogs and videos, in an attempt to discover what motivates people to produce digital content. Gauntlett begins with the example of David Jennings, who has been producing a blog entry detailing a recording from his music collection every day since 2005. He deduces that Jennings blog was:

> partly just a personal endeavour – done because a blogger *wants* to, regardless of audience – but also [to] connect him with other people, some of whom share ideas, feelings and musical associations of their own, and some of whom are imagined future readers (ibid.:99).

Gauntlett continues his investigation into motivation by referring to a study of 23 bloggers by David Brake, which showed that his sample "primarily wanted to communicate, to connect, or just wanted to create and share" (ibid.:105) with none of them considering blogging 'hard work'. Shifting to a slightly different perspective, Gauntlett turns his attention to a study concerning online fans of Swedish independent pop music by Nancy Baym and Robert Burnett. The study considers whether fans producing elaborate blogs and podcasts for their idols are being 'exploited' by music groups and record companies for their 'free labour'. Gauntlett argues that this is less about 'exploitation' and more about engaging with music, working with creative people they admired and the opportunity for self-expression.

> As in other studies, the pleasures of communication and creativity are coupled with a need to be heard which requires attention and interaction from other people to be satisfying […] Partly people make these things and share them because *they want to* – the process of making a thing, and knowing that others may encounter it, brings its own pleasures (ibid.:106).

Gauntlett's analysis leads him to conclude that:

These motives, qualities, and desires are in many ways timeless, then, but the internet provides a platform for sharing and exchange, with unique properties of accessibility [and has] given us a forum where people can do this without gatekeepers, without geographical restrictions, and in an organised way that means we can find like-minded people easily (ibid.:107).

However, Gauntlett's analysis of motivations ends with a cautionary note arguing that, although he has no evidence of this happening, we need to be mindful of the potential to become 'closed-minded and insular' and only encounter 'like-minded people' on the social networks, online communities and media sharing websites. What is clear from the previous examples is that a further and deeper investigation is needed into the issue of users' motivation to create and share content. This is an area that will be given greater examination with regard to participant analysis in chapter 8.

3.7 Digital literacy

Throughout the previous two chapters, discussion has been given to how people use and engage with technology, along with the online space they 'inhabit' and with their online personas. One of the topics that emerged, particularly from discussions about generations and age groups, is that of the technical and cognitive understanding of digital technology. Therefore, this chapter will end with an examination of the term 'digital literacy'.

Over the last couple of decades, digital literacy has emerged and evolved into an idea that is more than its name implies. As many contemporary commentators have pointed out the concept of digital literacy has been mistakenly associated with technological literacy (Bawden, 2008; Martin, 2005; Gilster, 1997; Rosado and Bélisle, 2006). This was based on the assumptions that individuals needed to become better skilled at using digital tools to meet the changes that digital technology initiated in society. David Bawden points out in *Origins and Concepts of Digital Literacy,* that the term 'digital literacy' originates from the early 1990s, and was used by a number of authors "to mean essentially an ability to read and comprehend information items in a hypertext or multimedia formats" (2008:18).

3.7.1 Definitions of digital literacy

Digital literacy was expressed succinctly and accurately by Paul Gilster as being about "mastering ideas, not keystrokes" (1997:1), and argues that it is the cognition of what you see on a networked computer. He elaborates:

> It places demands upon you that were always present, though less visible, in the analog media of newspapers and TV. At the same time, it conjures up a new set of challenges that require you to approach networked computers without preconceptions. Not only must you acquire the skill of finding things, you must also acquire the ability to use these things in your life (ibid.:1,2).

David Bawden is generally accepting of these definitions and thinks that Gilster was correct not to directly link use of the internet to digital literacy. Its meaning is not about any particular technology, and paradoxically, not even digital technology itself. He sees Gilster's definition as:

> the ideas and mindsets, within which particular skills and competences operate, and about information and information resources, in whatever format. The term itself is quite reasonable in this context, since all information today is either digital, has been digital, or could be digital (Bawden, 2008:19).

However, Bawden argues that Gilster's explanation of digital literacy was quite broad and does not define, through a list of skills, competences or attitudes, what it is to be digitally literate. He interprets Gilster's definition "as an ability to understand and to use information from a variety of digital sources and regarded it simply as literacy in the digital age" (ibid.:18). He also takes four core competencies from Gilster's text: internet searching, hyper-text navigation, knowledge assembly and content evaluation, and develops an expansive seven points list of skills, competences and attitudes.

1. 'Knowledge assembly', building a 'reliable information hoard' from diverse sources.

2. Retrieval skills, plus 'critical thinking' for making informed judgments about retrieved information, with wariness about the validity and completeness of internet sources.

3. Reading and understanding non-sequential and dynamic material.

4. Awareness of the value of traditional tools in conjunction with networked media.

5. Awareness of "people networks" as sources of advice and help.

6. Using filters and agents to manage incoming information.

7. Being comfortable with publishing and communicating information, as well as accessing it (ibid.:20).

Bawden concludes that the characteristics of digital literacy identified by Gilster in 1997, although broad, are still applicable in today's social media environment. Indeed, in recent years many media commentators and academics have tried to define digital literacy. Eliana Rosado and Claire Bélisle argue that all literacy practices involve critical thinking and refer to digital literacy as an:

> in-depth understanding of literacy in a knowledge society [and a] set of social practices rather than a narrow cognitive skill [that develop] competences, empowerment and critical reflection (2006:18).

Allan Martin and Jan Grudziecki report on the work of DigEuLit (2006), a project to develop a European framework for digital literacy. As an introduction to the report they identify six "literacies of the digital" which have their roots in the pre-digital era but are significant in a digital context.

1. *Computer IT or ICT literacy* has been recognised as a required modern skill as early as the late 1960s, which in itself has passed through three phases of development. Starting with the 'mastery' phase, which lasted up to the mid 1980s, it concerned simple computer science and the basics of how the technology worked. The 'application' phase followed, which saw application software becoming the focus of digital literacy in the mid 1980s to late 1990s. Finally the 'reflective' phase, from the 1990s to the present day, aroused a awareness and realisation that there was a need for more "critical, evaluative and reflective approaches to IT" (ibid.:251). These three phases from skills through usage to reflection were deemed crucial in order to participate effectively in society (van Joolingen, 2004 in Martin and Grudziecki, 2006).

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2. *Technological literacy* was born out of a concern that workforces, particularly in Britain and the US in the 1970s, would not have the skills and knowledge to compete with other more technologically proficient nations. Criticism of this line of thinking was charged with not applying a deeper understanding of the social involvement of technology with the industrial application (Michael [2006] cited in Martin and Grudziecki, 2006).

3. The ideas behind *Information literacy* came about in the late 1980s and came in to prominence with the rise of the World Wide Web and its capacity to access seemingly infinite amounts of digital information. This identified many different cognitive and synthesising skills needed to participate in the 'information society'. These included the location, identification, organisation, creation and communication of information.

4. Allan Martin and Jan Grudziecki suggest that there are many similarities between *media literacy* and information literacy not least the need to access, evaluate, analyse and communicate information. However, they elaborate media literacy as being "focused more on the nature of various genres of medium and the way in which messages are constructed and interpreted" (2006:252).

5. *Visual literacy* is traditionally associated with art education and visual communication, but "visual images have always been a powerful medium for the interpretation of information and the communication of meaning" (ibid.). Access to an immeasurable amount of digital visual material via the web has made the need for visual literacy and visual problem solving more vital. "The wealth and complexity of visual imagery which is possible using digital tools emphasises the power of the visual" (ibid.).

6. *Communication literacy* is perceived as a basic personal attribute whether via digital mediation or orally. The use of digital tools to communicate in different ways; synchronously, asynchronously, to one or many people using text or voice comes with its own communication implications.

Reference to these types of 'literacies of the digital' can be seen in Martin's four-definition list of digital literacy.

1. Digital literacy involves being able to carry out successful digital actions embedded within life situations, which may include work, learning, leisure, and other aspects of everyday life.

2. Digital literacy, for the individual, will therefore vary according to his/her particular life situation, and also be an on-going lifelong process developing as the individual's life situation evolves.

3. Digital literacy is broader than ICT literacy and will include elements drawn from several related "literacies", such as information literacy, media literacy and visual literacy.

4. Digital literacy will involve acquiring and using knowledge, techniques, attitudes and personal qualities, and will include the ability to plan, execute and evaluate digital actions in the solution of life tasks, and the ability to reflect on one's own digital literacy development (Martin, 2005:135).

Tabetha Newman, in her literature review, attempts to synthesise recent discussions concerning digital literacy. Her findings show that there are three basic components that are required to bring about digital literacy; social awareness, critical thinking and knowledge of (digital) tools. (Newman, 2009). She acknowledges that it is unlikely that a short definition will satisfy everyone and that the definition is still evolving, but considers Allan Martin's to be currently most helpful:

> The awareness, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital tools and facilities to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyse and synthesise digital resources, construct new knowledge, create media expressions, and communicate with others, in order to enable constructive social action; and to reflect upon this process (Martin, 2006).

In her review, Newman found that most young people have inadequate web search and evaluation skills and there was an incorrect assumption that young people are automatically or necessarily digitally literate. Evidence from her review also suggested that accessing lots of information does not equate to understanding *quality* information, and that exposure to ICT will not necessarily lead to ICT competence (Newman, 2009).

Sherry Turkle found that, contrary to media portrayals of young adults disregarding issues of privacy, they are instead not fully aware of them. Her own investigations showed that:

> High school and college students don't really understand the rules. Are they being watched? Who is watching? Do you have to do something to provoke surveillance, or is it routine? Is surveillance legal? They don't really understand the terms of Facebook or Gmail, the mail service that Google provides. They don't know what protections they are 'entitled' to. They don't know what objections are reasonable or possible. […] In teenagers' experience, their elders — the generation that gave them this technology — don't have ready answers to such questions (Turkle, 2011:254).

However, Becta, the, now defunct, educational communications and technology agency, states that education has a part to play in the quest for universally acquired digital literacy. A *Teaching critical thinking for our digital world* report (Becta, 2010) suggests five steps needed for the development and integration of digital literacy into everyday life:

1. Defining the task.

2. Finding information.

3. Evaluating information.

4. Creating a solution.

5. Communicating findings (ibid.:6).

The European Commission echoes the importance of digital literacy and concludes that:

> Digital literacy is fast becoming a prerequisite for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship and without it citizens can neither participate fully in society nor acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to live in the 21st century (European Commission [2003] cited in Martin and Grudziecki, 2006:254).

It is clear from the previous examples that digital literacy is a set of skills that represents a much wider and broader set of definitions than the term might suggest. It has evolved and developed from many previous incarnations of computer

mediated, visual and communication literacy practices. The value of acquiring these skills has become as important to an information society as the basic literacies of reading, writing and arithmetic were deemed important to industrial society. Digital literacy is vital for all users of digital technology and networked computers, whether it is for online communication, researching and finding information effectively and securely, or developing a wide-ranging critical judgement and, of course, for the creation and sharing of digital content.

Much of this discussion about digital literacy has brought into focus the perception among many previously mentioned media commentators that young people are naturally digital literate and older generations are not. These perceptions may have overlooked the variety of ways adults' integrated digital technology and communication experiences into their lives. They may equally have misunderstood how young people use and access information on the internet along with their perceived ease in adopting digital technology. Nonetheless, this also might relate to their misconceived meaning of the term 'digital literacy'.

3.8 Comment

The object of this chapter has been to address the primary themes that directly inform this research, namely the practices, experiences and agency of the individual everyday user. Specifically, they concern not only their physical actions and outcomes, such as the content they create and share, but their digital literacy and their motivations for engaging in these practices. In reviewing the literature that frames and informs these themes links to and from the qualitative research can be drawn in the following chapters.

Definitions of creativity can be problematic but the clear differentiation between high level and everyday creativity is a useful distinction for this research, as too is the concept of 'vernacular creativity'. This helps provide a framework for analysis of the practice of content creation in chapter 6. It is clear from the links between digital content creation and creativity that practices everyday content production are not new manifestations. Individuals have been engaging in everyday creative activities such as drawings and paintings throughout history, and family photography and movie making during the 20th century. While this research is concerned with digital

content, it is important to acknowledge that some forms of digital content creation and production use multi-modal sources of media, which is assisted by the ease with which digital content can be copied remediated, edited, remixed and mashed-up. Therefore, some online content may be derived from a non-digital source and mixed together with digitally created content. Indeed, this could be a form of remixing that uses ones own digital and remediated content to create something new.

One of the relatively new experiences for the online user is the comparative ease by which they can share their content instantly with like-minded, communities or networks of people from around the country or world. This is irrespective of time, physical space or location, which they can do either synchronously or asynchronously. Issues raised as to whether or not users are being exploited by sharing their self-created content through commercially driven platforms are theoretical. Therefore, it is difficult to derive a conclusion as to how many users *feel* they are being exploited, as the studies reviewed are not based on quantitative or qualitative research.

Motivation is an area of study and interest that signposts some of the issues of why people create and share their content. Do internet users, and more precisely adult content creators, share their content for the purposes of self-promotion, self-actualisation or some other reason? Are the motivations to create and share content intrinsic or extrinsic, or do they change the longer they engage in this practice?

Issues of how adults use and understand technology both from a technical and critical thinking perspective are crucial in understanding their levels of digital literacy. These cannot be seen in the simplistic terms of, now rather dated, studies by Tapscott and Prensky that young people are the most tech-savvy and literate in the workings of the digital world. Newman's research disputes this assertion, finding that most young people have inadequate web search and evaluation skills and are not automatically digitally literate. Conversely, what need to be taken into account when addressing adults use of digital technology is that digital literacy is based on a number of criteria and not just age. Some adults may have been introduced to the internet in the workplace or has an inquisitive interest in new technology. Indeed, the subject of age and generations is a subject that will be further investigated in the next chapter, which will develop and explain the methodology of this research.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

4.1 Methodological outline

The previous two chapters brought into focus subjects that inform the progress of this research project. Firstly, an Office for National Statistics (2010) survey revealed that 38 per cent of the UK population in all age ranges now upload self-created content to share on the internet, which established that it is not only young people who engage in this practice but all age ranges. Secondly, and following on from the previous chapter, the examination of age groups in relation to technology established that further investigation is needed to determine the use and various meanings of the word 'generation' and its relevance to this study. Thirdly, internet commentators, such as Shirky (2008), Leadbeater (2008) and Benkler (2006), have discussed the widespread use and production of online media by everyday web users at length, but their studies have tended to view the user as age non-specific or in a generic form. This research investigates the experiences of three UK-based adult age ranges currently engaged in creating and sharing content on the internet. This has prompted the research questions:

1) *How do different age ranges of UK adult internet users create and share content online?*

2) *What are the commonalities and disparities of practice within and between three age groups of adult content creators?*

3) *What do adults offer and reveal about their motivations to create and share digital content?*

4) *Do different age ranges of adult content creators adopt and use digital technology in different ways?*

This chapter begins by introducing the definitions of terms as they relate to this research before describing the methodological procedures and approaches adopted.

4.2 Definitions

4.2.1 Social media

Social media was described at length in the first two chapters as encompassing both technology and people. It is a term describing a type of internet-based communication technology, often referred to as Web 2.0, that allows a continuous feedback loop of information. The other important component of social media is the people that use it. They engage in 'conversations' with other individuals, groups and networks via the internet, and create and share content. These 'conversations' offer not only written answer-reply sequences, but also media-based answer-reply sequences via the use of video, image, audio and digitally remixed media content. Although Olsson argues that "social media" is not exclusively a "web-based feature" and that "all media use is social" (Olsson, 2010), the term 'social media', within the context of this research, relates solely to computer-mediated online 'social media'.

4.2.2 Digital content creation

The term, 'digital content' in this research refers to content expressed in a digital form. This is not to say that digital content is all primarily digitally produced or created. Digital content may been remediated into a digital form, as discussed by Bolter and Grusin (2000). Digital content may also have originated in a physical form, such as drawing or painting, and undergone a process of digitalisation. Digital self-created content can be considered to be anything from the simple typed comment on a social network site or a more complex video production. However, 'digital content creation' in the context of this research is defined as:

An arrangement of visual and/or audio material that requires some element of composition or editing and has been created outside of a professional framework.

Digital text is not included in this definition, other than its association to the visual and/or audio content. The inclusion of digital text would make the analysis of content too broad and would include more basic communication such as commenting on a blog, uploading one's profile picture to a social network site or a even a status update.

'User-generated content', as defined in the literature review, is content that has been created by the user and shared on the internet (Shirky, 2008). This differs from the use of the term 'digital content creation' in this research as the latter is digitally created or digitally remediated by the user but not necessarily shared over the internet. As early research into this area revealed, not all digitally created content is shared online and therefore user-generated content, as discussed in chapter two, is not the correct definition or description for content created by participants in this research. Consequently, the terms 'digital content creation' or 'self-created content' refer more accurately to digital content created by participants in this study but not necessarily shared. Sharing digital content on the internet, therefore, is distinguished as a separate activity in this research. However, it should be noted that the activities of creating and sharing, such as making a blog, are inherent to certain online content. As previously described, digital content can be created in a variety of ways. The following list are possible configurations of digital content.

Types of digital content

- Digitally created
- Remediate from analogue to digital
- Digitised physical content to digital
- Digital remix
- Remix of digitised analogue and digital content
- Remix of digitised physical and digital content
- Remix of digitised analogue, physical and digital content
- Redacted or re-edited digital
- Redacted or re-edited analogue content.

4.2.3 Sharing

To 'share' has many different meanings. It can be defined as to partake of, use, experience or enjoy something with others'. In the physical world this would mean the 'shared' use of an object by one or more people. For example, sharing a table means sharing the use of the physical object of a table. In a digital environment 'sharing' has a broader definition. Sharing in the digital domain often means to make a copy of a

digital object or 'sharing' a hyperlink with a friend via an e-mail, social network site or other platforms on the internet. It can also mean receiving a digital copy of shared content via a networked computer or digital device. Therefore, sharing in the context of this research is any visual and/or audio material that is sent via the internet or made available to other users via the internet. The diagrams in Fig. 4.1 show the different sources of content that can lead to the sharing of digital content.

Fig. 4.1 Content creation and sharing flow diagrams
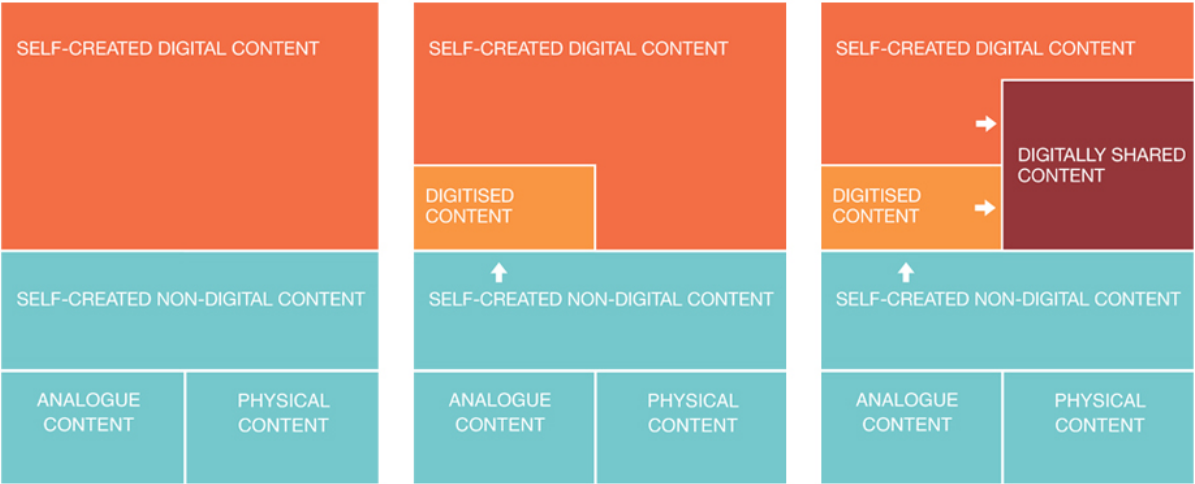
Diagram 1.   Diagram 2.   Diagram 3.

The light blue colour in Fig. 4.1 denotes self-created non-digital content that can be either analogue content, such as material from an analogue videocassette, or physical content, such as drawings produced on paper. The dark orange indicates self-created digital content, such as digital photographs, which have been produced within to the digital domain. The light orange denotes analogue content that has passed through a process of remediation and digitalisation. The maroon colour represents the portion of self-created digital and digitalised analogue material that is shared online.

Diagram 1 shows the sources of content. Self-created digital content is content that is created digitally at source and transferred from device to device, or edited via software programs in the digital domain, such as a digital photograph or a digitally recorded video. In the case of self-created non-digital content this can either be analogue content, such as video, or physical content, such as drawings, paintings or photographic prints. However, all non-digital content could be considered physical

due to the storage system, container or material they use to make them viewable or listenable. This is the case with video or audio, where recorded information is converted into electrical impulses and saved onto magnetic tape. In the case of a movie camera, sequential images are 'printed' on to 8mm or 16mm film or, in the case of single images, 'printed' on 35mm photographic transparencies or photographic paper.

Diagram 2 shows how all non-digital content has to be digitalised or remediated before it can be shared online. This could take several forms. It would include the use of an analogue-to-video converter in the case of videos, or a digital scanner or the digital camera in the case of physical content.

Diagram 3 shows how both self-created digital content and digitised self-created non-digital content can then be digitally shared via the internet. However, it also indicates how not all digitally created or digitised non-digital content is shared. An example of this would be how an individual may take a large number of digital photographs, but choose only to share a small number of them on the internet and delete or store the remainder. This is down to the desecration and decision-making of the content creators. It must also be noted that non-digital content may be left un-digitised and shared physically, such as through traditional photographic albums or exhibitions. Nonetheless, the latter is out of the scope of this research.

4.3 Methodological evolution

Before moving to the methodology and sampling for this research it is necessary to discuss and analyse issues raised in chapter two regarding the use of 'generations'. As this study is concerned with how different age ranges of adults create and share digital content, an understanding of how to delineate and signify the naming of each age band was required. The original title of this project included the word 'generations' to delineate the three generations of adult users to be studied. However, the review of literature on this subject revealed some difficulties with use of the term 'generation' and indicated that its use might be problematic when seeking to differentiate between age bands in relation to the research. This suggested that further investigation was needed to determine whether a generational study or study of age ranges was preferable.

4.3.1 Age range definitions and the problem of 'generations'

Apart from a need to examine historically and theoretically the term 'generation', there was also a need to consider whether a 'digital generation' really exists, and whether 'generation' is the correct name to be used in association with the three age ranges in this study. The following discussion shows the issues that arise from the use of 'generation' and, in particular, its use to categorise members of the three defined age ranges in this study.

4.3.1.1 Defining generations

Before in-depth analysis into 'generations' is conducted, a distinction needs to be made between 'biological generations' (descendants of a common ancestor), and 'social generation' (people born within a similar period of time). 'Generation' in the context of this definition refers to social generation. David Kertzer gives four categories for generations: generation as a principle of kinship descent; generation as cohort; generation as life stage; and generation as historical period (1983:125). Although generational concepts, such as the 'baby boomers', the 'sixties generation', and the 'generation gap' are commonplace, everyday phrases in popular culture, no single universally recognised definition of 'generations' exists in academic discourse. (Kertzer, 1983; Strauss and Howe, 1991; Edmunds and Turner, 2002; Luecke, 2009). For instance, June Edmunds and Brian Turner, who have made a study of the sociological and historical theory of generations, give their definition as "an age cohort that comes to have social significance by virtue of constituting itself as a cultural identity" (2002:7). William Strauss and Neil Howe, on the other hand, state that generation cohorts are permanent and involuntary and have a fixed range of birth years. "Membership" cannot increase once the cohort is defined and will only decrease with time. Situated among others in the same cohort, they occupy "a common age location in history" (1991:48).

4.3.1.2 Generational theory

Karl Mannheim wrote about generations in the 1920s and developed a generational theory that is often contemporarily cited (Kertzer, 1983; Edmunds and Turner, 2002; Buckingham, 2008b; Luecke, 2009). In *The Problem with Generations,* he formulated a synchronic structure comprising three building blocks: generation location; generation as actuality; and generation unit, which express the different components of a generation. He defines generation location as:

> individuals who belong to the same generation, are endowed, to that extent, with a common location in historical dimension of social process (Mannheim, 1952 [1928]:290).

Social location relates common experiences of events which constitute the 'fate' of the generation and can encompass both negative and positive constraints and affect "certain definite modes of behavior (sic), feeling, and thought" (ibid.:291). Here, Mannheim argues that the generational location of the individual establishes their perception, interpretation and experience of the world, which consequently influences different forms of behaviour. However, this is an extensive range and, therefore, members are not conscious of their social ties to one another. Mannheim describes 'generation as actuality' as:

> where a concrete bond is created between members of a generation by their being exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of dynamic de-stabilization (ibid:303).

This is where members of a generation share historical responses and reactions to events experienced in social location, be this through reassessment of accepted norms or perceived worldview opinion. Generation units are sub-groups or sub-divisions with different and sometimes conflicting units within a generation. "[T]hose groups within the same actual generation which work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways constitute different generational units" (ibid.:314) and make up 'an identity of responses' (ibid.:306) to the same phenomena or events. Therefore, generational consciousness within a generation is not necessarily homogenous or coherent, as there may be distinctive division within a generation with opposing views that take the form of 'generation units'. Edmunds and Turner argue that generational units help understand contemporary generational

movements. They cite a 1989 study, *Beyond the Barricades* by Whalen and Flacks, exploring intergeneration differences in the 'sixties generation', to add scepticism to ideas of a coherent and continuing generational identity. (Whalen and Flacks in Edmunds and Turner, 2002). They concluded that "there were a number of distinctive groups or 'generational units' in this generation" (Edmunds and Turner, 2002:5). On a more general level, Mannheim believed that as the speed of change in society increases, the boundaries between generations are likely to become less distinct.

In the mid-1960s, Norman B. Ryder challenged Mannheim's concept of generation and replaced it with the concept of 'cohorts'; a "group of individuals (within some population definition) who experience the same event within the same time interval" (1965:845). Ryder argues that "for the sake of conceptual clarity 'generation' should be used solely in its original and unambiguous meaning as the temporal unit of kinship structure" (ibid.:853). However, Tim Luecke notes that although "cohort analysis enjoyed considerable success in the social sciences, it has failed to replace Mannheim's approach to generations" (2009:11). Luecke argues that Mannheim's concept of 'generation location' and Ryder's concept of 'cohort' are each a:

> purely analytical concept which makes no reference to the social relationships between the individuals occupying a generation location, but simply refers to the particular historical challenges and opportunities that objectively shape the life chances of a particular age cohort (ibid.:13)

David Kertzer also sees research using generations as potentially problematic. He argues that merely using generational groups to distinguish significant differences between the values of the younger and older generations "offers us no means of knowing whether to attribute these differences to life-course effects or to permanent cohort characteristics" (1983:131). This is an issue raised by Pierre Bourdieu, who argues that the "relationship between social age and biological age is very complex" (1993b:95), and that culture and attitudes from one generation can cross-pollinate to others.

> It is quite possible for the culture and politics developed within a particular generational cohort to become attractive to groups that do not, in a chronological sense, belong to that generation. […] Nor does a chronological

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understanding of generation shed light on how a generational consciousness produced in one era can continue to operate in another (1993a:116).

In addition to the members of each generation's perceived characteristics is the issue of precise dates, where one generation starts and another one ends, along with the accepted duration of each generation. Generational timeframe definitions are often disputed, and questions as to whether the term actually means anything to the people who are considered members of that generation are frequently challenged (Ulrich and Harris, 2003). David Buckingham concludes that:

> To identify a generation, set boundaries around it, and characterise or define it, is far from being a straightforward matter – particularly if we wish to avoid undue generalisation, and to acknowledge the significance of other social differences (2006:11).

So what of the so-called 'digital generation', people born into the digital era?

4.3.2 Is there a digital generation?

This question refers back to the previous chapter, which raised questions as to whether young people's immersion in technology sets them apart from other generations. Polemicists like Prensky and Tapscott rather simplistically pit the 'net generation' against 'baby boomers/generation x' and 'digital natives' against 'digital immigrants'. Analysis of digital native literature by Sue Bennett, Karl Maton and Lisa Kervin demonstrates that assertions made about the superior information processing powers of people born into a digital world show, "a clear mismatch between the confidence with which claims are made and the evidence for such claims" (2008:782). As the above analysis shows, clear delineation between the experiences, perceptions, interpretations and attitudes vary within generations; similarities can occur between generational groups as well as differences. David Buckingham argues that:

> The notion of a digital generation – a generation defined through its relationship with a particular technology or medium – clearly runs the risk of attributing an all-powerful role to technology. [Technology] needs to be seen in the context of other social, economic and political developments (2006:11).

Drawing from mainly years of teaching diverse groups of young people, Siva Vaidhyanathan argues that talk of a digital generation is a generational myth and that not all young people are tech-savvy. He believes the assumption that people are 'born digital':

> wilfully ignores the vast range of skills, knowledge, and experience of many segments of society. It ignores the needs and perspectives of those young people who are not socially or financially privileged. It presumes a level playing field and equal access to time, knowledge, skills, and technologies (2008:2).

Such presumptions about the use of digital technology in all social generations may lead to assumptions about how people within a certain generational groups act. This results in the development of policies, design systems and devices that match those presumptions which "either pander to some marketing cliché or force an otherwise diverse group of potential users into a one-size-fits-all system that might not meet their needs" (ibid.). He concludes that thinking in generations is too simplistic, and knowledge and understanding of technology varies greatly within the 18-23 age group. Consequently, there is a danger of overestimating the digital skills of young people and underestimating older age groups. Buckingham argues that:

> To a greater or lesser extent, technological change affects us all, adults included. Yet the consequences of technology depends crucially on how we use technology and what we use it for, and these things are subjected to a considerable degree of social variation within age groups as between them (2006:11).

This discussion reveals that use of the term 'generation' is problematic when used for the categorisation of age delineation due to the false assumption of perceptions, interpretations and attitudes associated with each generation. Indeed, similarities can occur between generational groups as well as differences. This is particularly critical in the digital era when the distinction made *between* so-called 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants' can be less divergent as well as differ considerably *within* generations. Tapscott and Prensky's standpoints presume the use of technology to be neatly ordered into definitive groups, when in reality there is a greater crossover of skills, experience and knowledge. These suppositions also ignore the proliferated

and extensive use of digital technology in the workplace over the last two decades, enabling many 'immigrants' to access and learn digital technology over a longer period than many 'natives'. Indeed, White and de Cornu argue, "technology, computer applications […] have moved on to the point that the Native/Immigrant dichotomy is now redundant" (2011:2) and prefer the age-neutral term 'visitors and residents'. This describes 'visitors' as "unlikely to have any form of persistent profile online which projects their identity into the digital space" (ibid.:5). While for 'residents' the web is "a place to express opinions, a place in which relationships can be formed and extended. [...] A proportion of their lives is actually lived out online where the distinction between online and off–line is increasingly blurred" (ibid.).

In addition, the concept of the 'net generation' tends to ignore the socially or financially under-privileged, and disregards the interdependence and convergence of old and new media. Numerous examples where the word 'generation' has been used to define and characterise the knowledge and behaviour of particular age groups of web users, as highlighted above, have been shown to be flawed and problematic. This is due to the diverse backgrounds and experience of each user where access to digital technology and the internet may span a period of over 20 years. Having established the problems with using 'generations' in this study, I resolved to adopt 'age range' as the chosen term to describe different ages bands in this study, and is preferred to 'age groups'. The use of 'age group' would indicate a societal acceptance of age delineation, which, as discussion regarding generational groups would indicate, is not the case.

4.4 Age range definition and communication technology

Tapscott (2008; 1999) and Presky's (2001) original premise used the link between the age of individuals and the technology they grew up with, as the basis for their argument regarding 'digital natives' and the 'digital generation'. In the present study, three age ranges of adult participants were selected based on the different technologies that would have been prevalent around the time of their birth.

The research sample was divided into three different adult age ranges: 18–28, 40–50 and 65+. This gave a good balance to the sample and also left a significant age gap between age ranges to formulate comparisons. Originally the oldest age range was

restricted to an upper limit of 75, but this was considered unnecessarily restrictive for the purposes of the study. Fig. 4.2 shows a timeline with the relationship of participants in this study to the technologies they grew up with.

Fig. 4.2 shows a timeline with the relationship of participants in this study to the to the introduction and rise in use of communication technology during the 20th and 21st century. It gives an indication of the modes of communication available to them when in their early life. The ten years range of birth dates of each age range of participants is represented as a solid block of colour and shows. The +65 age range maroon block is graduated, as some participants were over 75 years of age.

Fig. 4.2 Age range and communication technology timeline

Age Range and Communication Technology
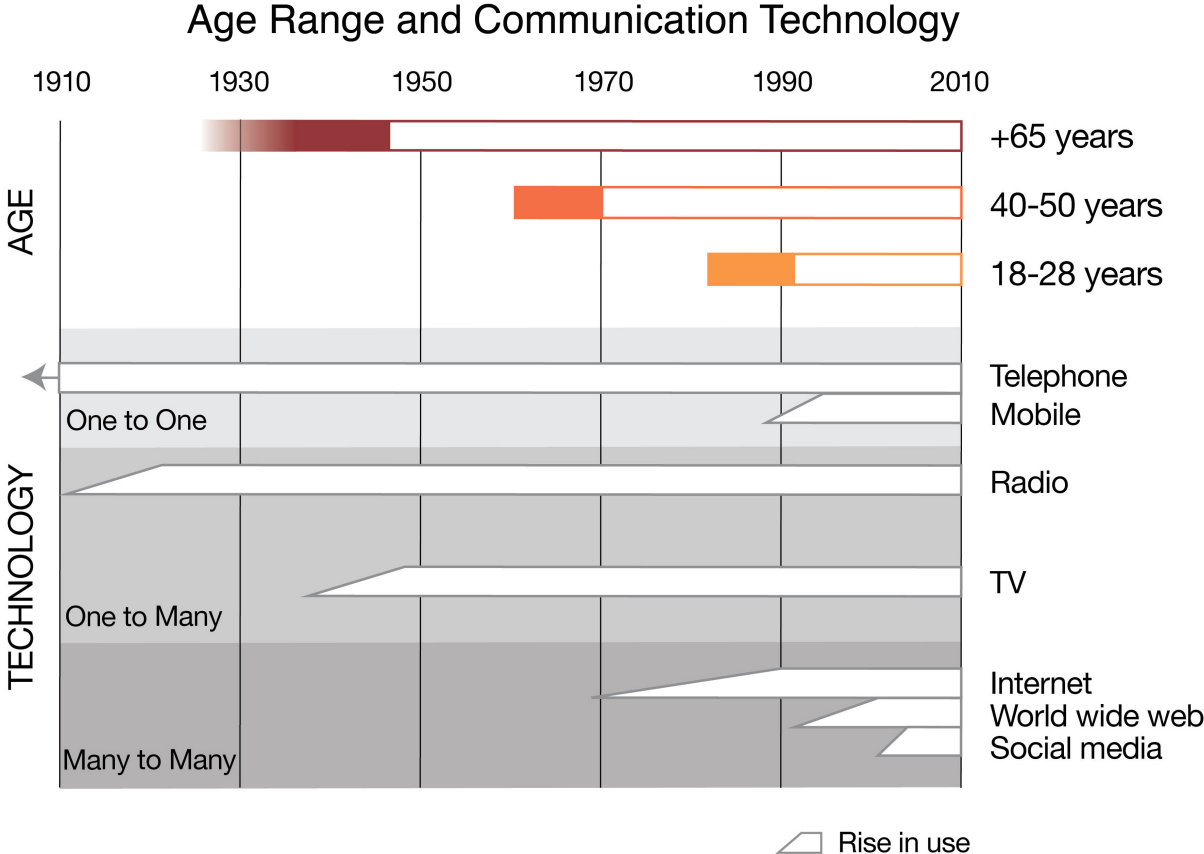
Fig 4.2 illustrates how older age ranges have had the opportunity to be exposed to digital technologies for a longer period of time than some of their younger counterparts. The bottom half of fig 4.2 shows the communication and distribution channels associated with each technology (although the internet and the web can accommodate all three). These are described as follows:

Communication paradigms:

- 'One-to-one' – Interpersonal

- 'One-to-many' – Mass

- 'Many-to-many' – Networked.

New web technologies provide two types of time-based communication for web users.

Time-based communication:

- Synchronous – real-time communication

- Asychronous – sender and receiver are not concurrently engaged[3].

4.5 Methodological outline

As previously stated, the primary aim of this study is to investigate how three different age ranges of adult internet users create and share content online, and their motivations for doing so. This research uses qualitative research methods with one-to-one, face-to-face recorded interviews as the primary source of data collection. A website was also created where participants were asked to upload an example of some content that they had created and shared to the site shortly after they had been interviewed. This acted as a way of supplementing and enriching the content of the research. In addition, and where possible, participants' content was observed over the course of the data collection and analysis process. This is, therefore, qualitative internet research that uses both online and offline data. Shani Orgrad describes this online and offline internet research data as:

> *texts* such as online postings and textual elements such as threads or links, face-to-face interview accounts, or ethnographers field notes; *images* such as pictures from websites or photos of spaces that are related to users' experience of the internet; and *sound*, for example online clips. […] *Online data* are materials obtained using […] virtual methodologies: methods

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[3] As a note of accuracy, it should be noted that the telephone used a pre-digital type of asynchronous communication via answer-phone messages and voicemail in the form of stored telecommunications voice messages.

implemented by and through the internet (Orgad, 2009:35; emphasis in the original).

This research project was based in the UK and used data collected from participants between March 2011 and February 2012. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in London and the South East of England, with the exception of one participant who lived in Derbyshire, UK. Two interviews were completed using Skype with a two-way camera connection, enabling both interviewer and interviewee a visual context. All interviews were conducted in a semi-structured and open-ended manner. No financial or gift incentive was given to any of the participants and all gave information freely and without premeditation or instruction. No time limit was set for interviews and each interviewee was given as much time to speak and answer questions, as they required. Each interview lasted between 25 to 80 minutes, generating a total of over 27 hours of data. Twelve interviewees were selected for each age range, leading to 36 interviews in total. The interviews were conducted entirely by myself.

The criteria for recruitment of participants required that data be sourced from individuals *already* engaged in some form of digital content creation and sharing. This, particularly with the older age range, included behaviour such as e-mailing friends and family. The research excluded adults who were currently at the early stages of learning to use digital technology and create content for the internet. Throughout the participant recruitment procedure I was offered many people who were not experienced at creating and sharing digital content. However, the nature and subject of this project made it necessary to use only participants who were already producing and sharing digital content. This was essential if I was going to discuss the experiences of creating and sharing their content and the resultant 'conversations' they were having with other people online. During the interview process I endeavoured to elicit a willingness in the interviewee to talk about content they were already sharing with people online. This was achieved though face-to-face, one-to-one interviews in a relaxed and quiet environment of their own choosing, which enabled them to be more reflective about their actions and behaviour. Selection was obtained through a number of institutions, web platforms, personal recommendations and hobby interest ranges. The interviews took the form of a semi-structured, open-ended discussion. Questions were used as prompts to progress

conversations and enable continuous and flowing conversation. Participants were asked to talk about how they created and shared content, with whom they shared it, and what their motivation was for entering into such a practice. A digital voice recorder was used to document the interview. At the end of the interview, participants were asked if they would upload examples of their content to a blog style website created for the project. This was devised to give added value to the research as it shows the range of different content produced by participants.

4.6 Sampling

Due to the specific online practices and social behaviour of subjects in the research, a theoretical sampling method was used. Jennifer Mason describes the link between sampling and theory.

> [T]heoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position […] and most importantly the explanation which you are developing. Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample […], which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria, which help to develop and test your theory or your argument (2002:124).

The random sampling method was deemed inappropriate for the research project as there was a likelihood of not locating enough examples in my chosen age ranges whom were already engaging in the creating and sharing of digital content.

4.6.1 Recruiting participants preparation

The recruitment of participants was conducted in stages and interviewees were enlisted throughout the data-acquiring period. This was to give flexibility and allow for variation to the sample as the process progressed, a point raised by Miles and Huberman.

> Samples in qualitative studies are usually not wholly pre-specified, but can evolve once fieldwork begins. Initial choices of informants lead you to similar and different ones. […] This is conceptually driven sequential sampling (1994:27).

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Criterion sampling was used to assess cases or individuals who met the research criterion and rejecting those who did not. In this circumstance, individuals within the defined age ranges that create and share visual and/or audio content outside of a professional framework on the internet. On a number of occasions, snowball sampling was also used to connect with potential new participants through previous interviewees and through a number of recommendations and suggestions, which helped link with "cases [that] are information-rich" (ibid.).

The first action in the process of recruiting interviewees was the formation of a 'call for participants' document (see Fig. 4.3), which gave an outline of the research and details of the participants' involvement.

Fig. 4.3 'Call for participants' document

Do you create and share content online?

My name is Tim Riley and I am currently in the second year of a PhD at the University of Westminster. I'm looking for London-based volunteers within the age ranges of 18–28, 40–50 and 65+ who create and share content on the Web.

Creating content, in this context, could be anything from taking, editing and sharing digital photos, to making videos or music and putting them online, or updating or managing a website. It could also include taking images or sounds from other sources and reusing them to make something new.

Your involvement would consist of a 45-minute audio-recorded interview at a place and time convenient to you.

I must stress that in accordance with University privacy and ethics guidelines, all personal information from this project will remain strictly confidential.

If you create and share content online and are interested in taking part, or know anyone else who might be suitable, please contact me at the address below. Your assistance in this research will help us to understand how we can improve communication over the internet.

Thank you for taking time to read this correspondence.

Best wishes,

Tim Riley

Contact details:

tim@timrileydigital.com

tim.riley@my.westminster.ac.uk

Mobile phone: 0778 696 8891

One of the main issues with this document was that it had no validation, accreditation or verification of my status as an individual or with my association to an academic institution other than my university e-mail address. This was solved with the creation of a webpage on the University of Westminster's Communication and Media Research Institute (CAMRI) website, detailing my research student status and research topic. A hyperlink was added to the document, which helped verify my status. This was then used as both a digital and non-digital document as part of the process of gaining access to potential participants via a number of events and media. Recruitment involved using different forms of communication, events and establishments.

1. Internet: content sharing websites, social media platforms, social network site, email, forums, internet searches.
2. Telephone: personal one-to-one telephone calls.
3. Educational establishments: universities, colleges.
4. Introductions though events: open days, meet-up groups and exhibitions.

Throughout the recruitment process I was conscious of the need to use a considerable proportion of participants who created and shared content from non-artistic backgrounds. Participants were recruited using two different strategies.

4.6.2 Age non-specific recruitment

This method approached online platforms and organisations from an age non-specific position and included using media-sharing websites to source appropriate online practices and for approaching participants. A process of joining user groups on *Flickr*, searching for appropriate users on *YouTube* and recommended blogs were used to initiate the recruitment process. Vincent Miller observes that, along with a

diverse age range of users, these platforms "link friends from different periods of life, childhood, university, as well as family and brief acquaintances in a timeless networked collection" (2011:24).

I circulated and distributed information of my need for participants via phone conversations, local organisations, social events, e-mail and social networks with the purpose of providing wider and diverse introductions. This also acted as a form of snowball sampling. For example, I visited an open day at The Institute, a leading adult education hub in East Finchley, London and discovered an organisation called East Finchley Open. This is a group of local artists and craftspeople that open their houses to the public every year for the purpose of displaying personal artwork. Through members of this group I was introduced to The Muswell Hill Photography Society in north London. All of these organisations yielded willing and appropriate participants from all three age ranges.

4.6.3 Age ranges specific recruitment

The second method involved approaching each specifically targeted age range through age- specific organisations and online platforms.

4.6.3.1 +65

Data from the Office for National Statistics survey (2010) shows that 22 per cent of online users in this age range create and share content. However, although this appears to be a relatively high percentage, the type of content defined in this survey is very broad and includes simple tasks, such as uploading a photo to a social network site. Therefore, finding members of this age range who created content that fitted the criteria of this project proved problematic. Attempts at recruiting participants via e-mail or via the web gained a small response and two participants. Prospective participants in this group were more responsive to direct face-to-face requests. Personal visits to organised groups helped reassure the validity and genuine nature of the project. I was also able to describe why I was conducting the research and they were able to ask questions.

The first organisation I approached were local area groups of the *University of the Third Age* (U3A). U3A is an organisation that provides education and hobby interest

groups for retired members of local communities around the UK and the world. Each local area group is autonomous from national and international control. My first visit was to a science and a photography group at the Hillingdon U3A, in west London. Attempts to access and distribute the call for participants document through the *Saga Zone* website, Britain's largest social network for over-50s, proved unsuccessful. This was due to the company rejecting my request to submit.

4.6.3.2 40–50

The 40–50 age range appeared initially to be quite unidentifiable in respect to their online presence. This was due to two factors. Firstly, the nature of online identity and ability to remain relatively anonymous, as addressed in the previous chapter, made it difficult to identify the age of potential participants. Secondly, unlike the younger age range, there was not a recognisable platform where this age range shared their content. Early recruitment was conducted using a word-of-mouth procedure. This proved to be a good starting point as, being a similar age myself, I was able to contact colleagues from previous employment and education establishments with the intention for them to recommend appropriate people. Although these contacts were not suitable themselves, they were able to give me links to individuals with personal blogs and photography galleries. The first of these provided a participant at the charity Diabetes UK, and a self-proclaimed 'stay-at-home dad'. Nearly half of this age range was recruited using the age non-specific recruitment method.

4.6.3.3 18–28

The *Office for National Statistics* (2010) survey revealed that this age range of adults participates most in creating and sharing of self-created content in the UK. Recruitment began by targeting educational institutions within media and design subjects. Initial stages of recruitment began by sending an internal e-mail to members of Media, Art and Design School at the *University of Westminster* in Harrow, north-west London. Permission was also granted to distribute the 'call for participants' document at the design and communication university, Ravensbourne, located on the Greenwich peninsula, south-west London.

Recruitment was also acquired online via a variety of photo- and video-sharing platforms. For instance, the online community of 'user-made' art, deviantArt, was accessed to make contact with potential participants. These were identified through London-based user groups. This process was repeated using Flickr, MySpace and recommendations through Facebook. This enabled a balance of participants to be drawn from both formally-trained artist backgrounds and artistic hobbyists. It also meant that bias was shifted from university-educated participants.

4.7 Data collection

4.7.1 Data collection method

The interviews for this research were conducted using qualitative interviewing techniques.

> The purpose of the qualitative research interview [...] is to obtain descriptions of the lived world of the interviewees with respect to interpretations of the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale, 1996:30).

This interview method sought to gain certain aspects that would not be acquired using quantitative surveys, as the interviews are theme orientated and conversational. In this setting the interviewer and respondent talk about topics that are of interest to each other, and the resultant interview can be analysed with respect to the comments and disclosed experiences of the interviewee. Steinar Kvale (1996) suggests that qualitative interviewing benefits research in a number ways. The qualitative interview is used to elicit a response about the everyday lived world of the interviewee and his or her relation to it. This technique can achieve qualitative knowledge expressed in the vernacular, which is not concerned with quantification. The interview also seeks to interpret the meaning of central themes in the 'life world' of the participant which can lead to 'open nuanced descriptions' of specific situations and actions. The interviewer then registers and interprets the meaning of what is said as well as how it is said. Interviews are focused on particular themes and neither strictly structured with standardised questions nor entirely 'non-directive'. This process of being interviewed may produce new insights and awareness where the knowledge obtained is produced through the interpersonal interaction in the interview

(ibid.). Kvale also points out that qualitative interviews may produce unexpected responses. For example, during the course of the interview respondents may change their descriptions and meanings about a topic, and suddenly see relations they had not seen earlier.

4.7.2. Strengths, weaknesses and limitations of semi-structured interviews

It must be noted that, there are both strengths and weakness with any research method, and semi-structured interviews are no exception. One of its strengths is the ability to build a positive rapport between interviewer and interviewee through the conversational style of the interview. This makes observing and recording subtleties of emotion, behaviour or reactions more recognisable. However, the success of this could be limited by the proficiency of the interviewer to use empathetic interaction or indeed the articulacy and lucidity of the interviewee. The interviewer may also project subconscious signals that direct respondents to anticipated or typical answers.

As mentioned above, one of the merits of semi-structured interviews is the ability for respondents to speak about a subject in depth and with relative freedom, which may reveal the meanings behind their actions. Potentially, therefore, complex questions and issues can be discussed or clarified through further questioning. For example, the interviewer may become aware of information given by the interviewee that needs exploration. In allowing the respondent influence on the topic unexpected issues and topics can emerge. The weakness of this approach is that because of the individualised nature of the interviews the depth of qualitative data may be difficult to analyse. Also decisions of the relevance of data could be problematic and there are limitations as to the dependability and interpretation of the data. There could be an issue with the interviewee exaggerating; giving misleading responses or information that is deliberately sympathetic to the perceived objectives of the research. Therefore, the validity of the data is difficult to evaluate due to the interviewer not knowing whether the respondents are being untruthful.

Having pre-set questions for semi-structured interview has the advantage of avoiding the pre-judgement of the interviewer based on the individual. This maintains a consistent structure ensuring that a core list of questions is asked in each interview, while also enabling the interview to deviate based on the responses of the

interviewee (as stated above). Nonetheless, this method could lead to unreliable results due to the difficulty of repeating the same sequence of questions for each interview.

While interviews are easy to document using video or audio recordings they are time consuming to organise and conduct, as a result the amount of interviewees tends to be small. A considerable amount of time needs to be given to the transcription of the recordings (unless one pays for a transcription service. However, the researcher may lose an in-depth understanding of the data that one gets with personal transcription). Analysis of findings is painstaking and must be done by the person or persons who conducted the interviews. Additionally, due to the flexibility of the interviews, it may be difficult to generalise findings and compare answers.

4.7.3 Interview preparation

Qualitative interviews were conducted using a semi-structured method, with a mixture of open-ended questions and a general interview guide approach. This had two advantages. Firstly, the general interview guide approach made sure that the same general areas of information were collected from each interviewee. This ensured that focus was given to specific detail while also allowing a degree of freedom and adaptability for getting information from the interviewee (McNamara, 1999). Secondly, the open-ended questions and discussion gave the interviewees the freedom to choose how to answer the question rather than supply a 'yes' or 'no' answer. This made his or her replies more qualitative, but also allowed the same question to be asked to each respondent (ibid.). Interview questions were designed to lead respondents into the subject and flow though topics. In effect this meant that, in many cases, respondents answered several of the pre-prepared questions before they were asked. Further enquiry and questioning of the interviewee was, therefore, conducted in a more naturalistic and organic way. David Silverman suggests that this is good practice as:

> Usually, the interviewer will have a prepared set of questions but these are used only as a guide, and departures from the guidelines are not seen as a problem (2010:194).

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Shortly after the participants had agreed to be interviewed, a procedure was put in place to give participants further information about the interview process prior to the interview. This took the form of an e-mail briefly outlining the structure and subject matter of the interview, and then subsequent correspondence agreeing and confirming a time and venue for the interview.

4.7.4 Locations

All the interviews, with the exception of two, were conducted face-to-face at locations in and around the Greater London area. This had the advantage of easier access to the participants along with the logistics of time, travel and cost. Participants were given the opportunity to choose a time and place convenient to them. The only proviso was that the venue should be quiet and relaxing so they could think clearly and calmly. This was also necessary for recording purposes. Many of the respondents chose to be interviewed in their own homes, which had the benefit of them being in familiar surroundings and, as a result, perhaps more relaxed and open to questioning. Two interviews were conducted using Skype, the proprietary VoIP (Voice-over-internet Protocol) service. In one case, this was due to the location of the participant and, in the other, due to the participant's unavailability for a face-to-face interview. In both cases the interviews were conducted using the camera facility that enabled interviewer and interviewee to see, as well as speak to each other and greatly enhance communication.

4.7.5 Face-to-face interview

Data for this stage was gathered through 34-recorded face-to-face interviews (two being via Skype, as previously stated). This allowed greater connection with the participants and enabled greater verbal participation. As a consequence, added value was given to the research results as it allows the participant greater involvement and closer connection with the subject. Before the interview began and the recording started, interviewees were given a brief reminder of the nature and structure of the discussion. The research question was not disclosed as this may have detracted from the relaxed environment. Silverman points out, "if respondents are made aware of [research questions] this can affect their responses" (2010:197).

4.7.6 Conducting interviews

At the beginning of this process it was important to set out some personal guidelines to ensure I conducted each interview as consistently as possible. As previously stated, one of the main issues when conducting semi-structured interviews is to ask the same questions in the same order to each interviewee while allowing freedom for some relevant deviation and elaboration of subject. In order to do this I used a list of pre-defined open-ended interview questions (see Appendix A) that I could casually refer to during the interview while keeping a flow of the conversation with the interviewee. This had the effect of keeping a rapport with the respondent while ensuring, even after deviation, that all questions were asked in the same order. I was also aware of partiality and imposing my own thoughts and ideas on the interviewee; therefore, each interview was conducted in a non-judgemental style, taking care to let the interviewees express themselves candidly without unnecessary interruption. Kvale argues that the interviewer must take a position of "deliberate naïveté" when interviewing participants and exhibit "openness to new and unexpected phenomena, rather that having ready-made categories and schemes of interpretation" (1996:31). However, a small number of respondents had their own agenda and frequently veered far away from the questions. Indeed, one interviewee had a pile of books and magazines he wanted to discuss that he thought were relevant to the interview (they were not). On these occasions it was necessary to gently steer interviewees back to the questions.

On the whole I found that using qualitative research methods with personal face-to-face interaction elicited relaxed informal environments. As a result, participants appeared able to provide a more contemplative response to the questions and deliver freethinking contributions about their online experience. They were given time to respond to questions and this meant the they often did not give the first answer that came into their heads. These techniques allowed the interviewee some influence to elaborate on and take time to think about the interview topics. Understandably this resulted in each interview being of a different length. Each interview lasted between 25 to 80 minutes, generating a total of over 27 hours of data for the 36 interviews.

The combination of semi-structured and open-ended interview facilitated a rapport with the interviewee, which included some probing of responses and active listening.

The semi-structured style also enabled questions and discussions to develop outside of a pre-defined structure, allowing for deviations dependent on participants responses and relevance to the topic. The two Skype interviews followed the same style, albeit via a computer. In both cases participants were in a quite place where they were uninterrupted by external noise. As both interviews used a two-way camera there was little noticeable difference in rapport with the interviewee through this mediated system.

Reliability and validity of respondents' answers was an issue of concern throughout the interviewing process. How does one know whether the answers to questions are correct, exaggerated or untrue? I became sceptical of one particular interviewee in the 40–50 age range due to his over-emphasis of selfless, altruistic acts, which seemed at odds with the description of his content, sharing behaviour and sharing platforms. However, due to the online nature of the respondents content and the fact that they had either feely given links to their content or revealed them in their interview, in this particular case I was able check to see if there was evidence to support his claims. This was also a good practice for other interviewees to help give another angle and visual support to their interviews. As a result of this I regularly visited their sites or online content to see what they were currently creating and sharing or whether they had stop or reduced their output. I also asked each interviewee to upload and share some of their content on a website repository after each interview (see 4.10).

At the close of each interview I asked each respondent how they felt about the experience of being interviewed about their content creation and sharing habits. Many indicated that the interview elicited a positive experience and enabled them to think more clearly about their online practices. This was expressed in many of the posts sent to the website repository (see 4.10). Kvale points out that a well carried out research interview "can be a rare and enriching experience for the interviewee, who may obtain new insight into his or her life situation" (1996:31).

4.7.7 Post-interview

At the end of the interview and after the recording had been completed, participants were asked to complete two further tasks. Firstly, they were asked to fill out a

personal details form, which would provide background demographic details of their age category, ethic background, education, occupation and location (in the case of Skype this was conducted by myself). Secondly, they were requested to upload some of their digital content to the website repository which was created for the project. This final task would need to be completed after the interview and, therefore, ran the risk of not being completed either through forgetfulness or indifference.

4.8 Data analysis procedure

4.8.1 Transcription

As each interview was completed, an audio mp3 file recording of it was archived and stored ready for transcription. After failed attempts to find effective transcription software, all 36 recordings were produced using the traditional listen-and-type method. This was a very time consuming process, but enabled a much greater engagement with the data and more in-depth and nuanced knowledge of the participant and their responses. On reflection, this was a much more effective method of interpreting and analysing the data than software executed transcription. All of the participants' interviews were transcribed in their entirety, with the exception of four. Only edited sections of these four interviews were transcribed due to the interviewee speaking about unrelated subjects, drifting away from the questions or giving repetitious answers.

4.8.2 Developing and finding themes

The listen-and-type transcription process elicited a deeper understanding of each participant due to the close attention given to the responses. Metaphorically, constructing the themes and related subjects initially felt like a giant jigsaw puzzle where the connecting edges were difficult to see. However, during the transcription process it became clear through recurrent topics within and between age ranges that consistent themes were emerging from the data. Coherent subjects and concerns specific to each age group evolved, such as retirement, re-education and learning for the over-65, family and children for the 40-50s and recent education and early working life for the 18-28s. I judged these particular themes as a natural starting point

for the initial examination of each age range and a subject that could be subsequently re-examined later in the research. From this juncture a review was made of each participant's transcription, and general themes and quotes were highlighted that were specific for each age range and common to all groups. Through this technique a logistical flow of information emerged that showed clusters of relating themes. For example, all age groups and all participants used digital photography but it became clear from responses that a significant amount of people in each group took a particular standpoint as to its value and importance in creating digital content. This process was continued for all the transcriptions until interlinking themes could be identified from interview response. By this stage clarity began to emerge that linked the 'jigsaw' of themes to logical groupings or categories. A flow categories was developed based on experience (age specific information), knowledge (technical skills), production (content creation), self-publishing (sharing content), reflection and incentive (motivation). From this an initial list of categories and common themes was created. This was a preliminary template for development through data analysis.

4.8.3 Initial categories, themes and structure for all age ranges

Themes with brackets indicate that this topic is more prevalent in this age range, but not necessarily exclusive to it.

1) Introduction to the age groups

- Evident differences in age group circumstance and priorities
- Sample overviews x three
- +65 – (Re)education and learning
- 40–50 – Family life and children
- 18–28 – Recent or current education and starting working life
- Introduction to the internet

2) Software and technical skills

- Formal education in retirement – introduction to digital, re-education (+65)
- Software – developing skills - technical process
- Learning from peers (18–28)
- Learning software by trial and error
- Software issues (+65)
- Confidence
- Technical attainment

3) Creating digital content

- Introduction to content creation
- First visual content is digital (and being directed away from creative as a child) (+65)
- Advantages of digital (40–50)
- Type of content (physical to digital and digitally created)
- When content is created (18–28)

- Creating content for pleasure and work (18–28)
- Digital Photography
- Introduction to the web and computers via digital photography (+65)
- Transferring from film to digital (+65)
- Observing and recording the world around them through photography (appeal, motivation) (+65)
- Advantages of digital photography
- Video
- Blogging
- Creating and managing websites (+65)
- Finishing or changing content

4) Sharing self-created digital content

- Pre-digital telecommunication (All)
- Definitions of social media (All)
- Online communication – internet as a communication tool
- Social media/Network Use – (use of e-mail +65)
- Digital v analogue – physical content v digital content
- Sharing through third-party creative initiation (+65)
- Collaboration
- Creating and sharing through closed communication groups
- Localism (+65)
- Online ethnography – observation of participants online content

5) Outcomes of creating and sharing digital content

- Influence of the internet on creating and sharing content
- Communication through creating and sharing
- Online/offline balance
- Meeting virtual friends in real life
- Web used to extent non-digital activities/hobbies (40–50)
- Self-promotion (18–28)
- Making money from creating content as a hobby (18–28)
- Negativity towards creating and sharing content, digital environment (40–50)
- Nostalgia for analogue (40–50)

6) Motivations

- Motivation for creating and sharing
- Enjoyment
- Satisfaction
- Hobby or paid work?
- Creating content professionally/paid for
- Feedback

These themes were subsequently adapted as the analysis developed and the scope of the research refined. For example, sections four and five were amalgamated, and some entries were lost as it became apparent, through subsequent editing and refining of data, that they were not relevant to the direction of research analysis.

4.9 Data Analysis

From inception I was aware of issues associated with this analytical process, namely that interviews do not give direct access to the facts or events and that interviews do not give information about the interviewees 'experiences' but instead offer indirect 'representations' of those experiences. "What an interview produces is a particular *representation* or *account* of an individual's view or opinion" (Rapley, 2004:182) (authors italics).

However, as previously stated, the accuracy of the content sharing element of this research was safeguarded through the ability to view content via the interviewees' online presence. Therefore, many of the claims they made about content sharing could be verified or questioned online through platforms and media sharing services, such as YouTube, Fickr or personal websites. Nevertheless this was not the case for experiential comments, personal views or claims about personal motivation. Consequently, a critical approach to responses was need when evaluating data.

Along with personal judgement I was able to evaluate the validity of respondents' claims through other means. As previously stated, through the listen-and-type transcription process I was able to elicit a deeper understanding of each participant. It was also clear on reviewing the transcriptions that there were some irregularities in a few of the participants' responses. This occurred when comparing answers to direct questions with comments given in open discussion. In several cases this appeared to be forgetfulness. None the less there were some examples were the credibility of interviewees claims were shown to be unreliable. These were often revealed during the more conversational portions of the interview where a respondent contradicts the answer to a predefined interview question. I gave an example earlier of an, interviewee who I found to have exaggerated some claims through visiting his online content platforms. There were also a couple of examples of respondents showing off and exaggerating the extent to which they had followers and the amount of online content. However this was a small proportion of respondents and their responses were born in mind when evaluating the data.

Data analysis began by initially employing a dual approach to editing, evaluating and interpreting participant data. Firstly, quotes and discussion points were taken from each transcription and attached to a relevant theme within the relevant age range,

using the categories and themes template above. This created a huge file of data that linked participant quotes directly to themes. Secondly, each question asked at the interview was linked directly to the response of the participant during interview. This gave an instant and accumulative understanding of the responses to each question from each age range. Using a duel approach meant that there was a file with all direct response to the interview question along with an in-depth file of responses to the key themes from the interviews. This proved useful when analysing general age range responses on the one hand and finding deeper information rich responses on the other. It was also an additional way of evaluating interviewees' consistency of response.

As the analysis chapters were written, an editing and re-editing process was employed using the most appropriate data and quotes that most encapsulated the participants' responses. This could be viewed as a macro to micro editing process that starting with the large sections of data representing a particular topic that was edited down to representative data. Common responses, statements and behaviours were clustered together within age ranges and the most articulate or representative comments used as evidence.

4.9.1 Names of participants

The names of participants have been changed in accordance with University privacy and ethics guidelines. However, one participant, Peter, suggested that, as his content was freely available on the web, he was comfortable with his name and website being referred to in this research.

4.10 Website repository

A website was created solely for the purpose of the project and is hosted by Posterous[4], which was a free web publishing platform. The rationale behind the choice of this hosting service was that the site can be configured to allow anyone to

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[4] The web repository was later transferred to Wordpress.com due to the acquisition of Posterous by Twitter in March 2012 and its service subsequently shutting down on 30th April 2013. However, by this stage all the content from participants had been uploaded.

Now available at: http://phdcontentcreation.wordpress.com

post entries easily. This converts content sent via e-mail into a blog-style post. Use of this service had three advantages. Firstly, it meant that all interviewees could participate without site registration. Content could be easily uploaded and then, after moderation, displayed on the site. Secondly, participants had only to e-mail an image, video or web link to the site without the need to log-in to the site, and therefore there was no need for log-in details and a password. This would have added unnecessary complications to the process and may have acted as a disincentive to the participant. Thirdly, by making the process simple there was no need to give a set of instructions to the participant, which could further decrease participation. Using the simple process of e-mail, something familiar to interviewees in all age range of this research, greatly increased the chances of involvement. Below are three examples, one from each age range, of participants' posts with shared content, links and comments.

4.10.1 Online examples

The site uses a blog-style template that has been customised for this project. The type font and colours have been designed to be visually simple and there are links in the right sidebar to all related web pages. The left sidebar gives a brief introduction and synopsis of the project. Posting to the site is through e-mail, which is then converted into a blog-style post by the web host's software.

Fig. 4.4 40-50 Participant content upload
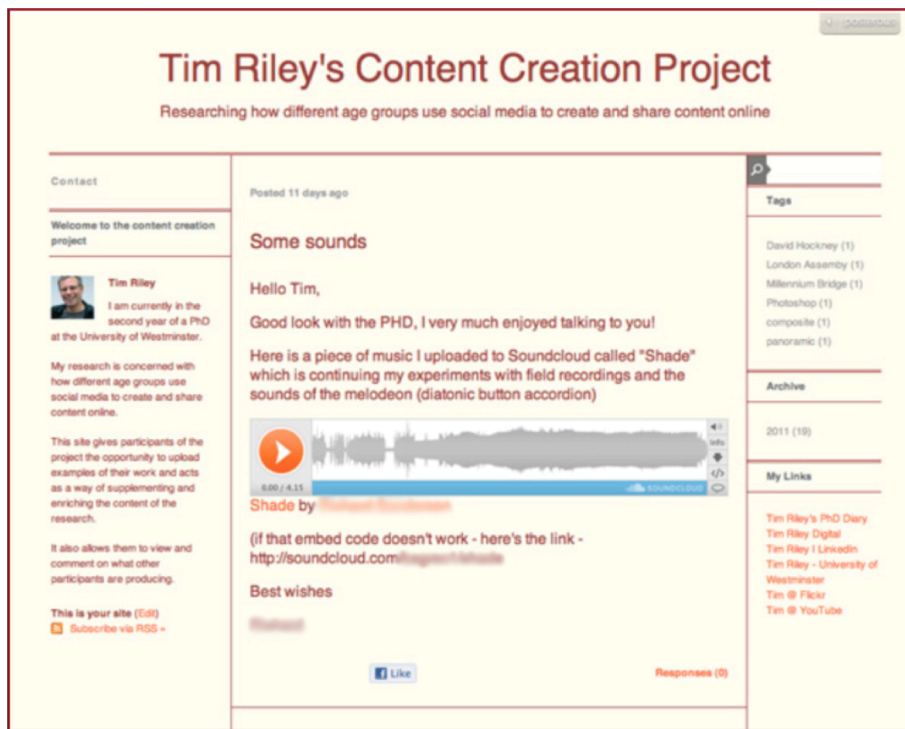
Fig. 4.4 shows a response from a 50-year male who uses social media to share, distribute and receive feedback of his self-created music and sound recordings.

Fig. 4.5 18-28 Participant content upload

This post was sent by a female in the 18–28 age range. She uses deviantArt extensively as a social network and to display digital dolls (left), remediated, scanned paintings and to comment on other members' UGC.

Fig. 4.6 +65 Participant content upload

The picture on the left was posted by a female in her early 80s, who was using images she had shot on her digital camera to create a composite image using Photoshop.

This chapter has been concerned with establishing and describing the methodology of this research. It has also given an explanation of the methods used to source the participants. What follows are four chapters of case studies from interviews given by participants, which are themed by subject. The following chapter will serve as an introduction to the age ranges and consider their relationship with technology.

Chapter 5 – Introduction to the age ranges: Participant engagement with technology

The aim of this chapter is two-fold. Firstly, it serves to provide an introduction and background to the age ranges and participants in this study and, secondly, it contextualises the participants against a broader background of research on each age range, with particular emphasis on adopting and using digital technology. The chapter begins by explaining the differing circumstances and varying priorities in each of the three age ranges. Each age group will then be discussed individually, starting with a broad overview from the perspective of data and statistics from government bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), along with papers of academic study. This will help situate the participants within a broader context. Following this, the twelve participants in each age range will be discussed defining both commonalities and differences. An examination will then be given of how and where participants learnt to use digital technology, along with the perceived ease or difficulties encountered. The rationale behind this is to enable subsequent chapters to be sequentially themed without a need to explain the backgrounds of each group. This is also to give some personal and historical background to the participants

5.1 Evident differences in age range circumstance and priorities

While every participant in this study has engaged in the practice of creating and sharing digital content, there are evident differences as to how this has been accomplished and achieved. As one would expect from a sample taken from ages ranging from 18 to 84 years, each sample age range had different priorities of life. Although these were many and varied, each group has an overarching general characteristic and preoccupation that is commensurate with their life stage.

- +65   Retirement and re-education.

- 40–50   Family life, children and work.

- 18–28   Recent education and learning technology.

Therefore, this chapter is intended to give a sample overview and commonalities associated with each of the age ranges. This is followed with a discussion relating to the characteristics most identifiable within each group.

5.2 +65 Introduction

The population in England and Wales is living longer and society is ageing (Office for National Statistics, 2012a). Although an estimated 6 million people aged over 65 in the UK have never used the internet (AgeUK, 2010) the amount of people in this age range who are using it is rising. Office for National Statistics data for 2012 shows that 62.4% of people aged between 65-74 and 27.7% of over 75s use the internet, and this has been growing year-on-year (2012b). Although this figure has been increasing there are initiatives in the UK, such as Race Online 2012, to raise these percentages. Particular targets of this campaign are the older, digitally excluded nonusers of the internet with a mission of narrowing the 'grey' digital divide. Some of the reasons for exclusion may be a lack of motivation or feeling too old to learn new skills. They may have a fear of technology and no e-literacy skills, or a disability. There may be security and privacy concerns, no access to IT, or they may simply be unable to afford to go online (Morris and Brading, 2007). Despite these reasons, there are still a number of older people that are 'digitally dismissive' 'refuseniks' of computers and the internet who are unlikely to be persuaded otherwise (Age Concern and Help the Aged, n.d.). Some are also unclear as to how digital technology can provide an alternative or supplement to personal contact, letter writing and using the phone (Hanson, 2009b).

Since the early days of the web, a polarised view of this age range has emerged. On the one hand there is the popular notion of the 'silver surfer' as the older 'tech-savvy' web user and, on the other, that of the fearful, or reticent nonuser. This has lead to an oversimplified perception of this age range. (Selwyn, 2004). This may have in part derived from early research of over-65s in the UK, which found that the internet was used less for researching hobbies, playing games and browsing for fun than younger

age ranges (Selwyn et al., 2003). Findings on the boundary between work and leisure in retirement showed that some retirees were hesitant to define their use of computer technologies as leisure due in part to the reskilling needed to use computers and the internet (Buse, 2009).

However, in 2013 the over-65s are a large and diverse group where use of computers and the internet is equally varied. Levels of skills, knowledge and ability are dependent on a number of characteristics, ranging from health, education and previous employment, to socio-economic reasons. Evidence has emerged that this age range uses the internet for more than just simple browsing. A report by AgeUK (2010) recorded that as many as 22 per cent of people aged 65 and over had purchased goods over the internet. This 22 per cent included 44 per cent purchasing holiday accommodation, 40 per cent buying books, magazines, and newspapers, 38 per cent purchasing clothes and sports goods, with 37 per cent ordering household goods. In addition, 20 per cent downloaded films and music from the internet, rather than buying them from a shop or receiving them by post. Statistics from this report also suggest that a higher level of computer and internet literacy is present in this age range than is commonly perceived, and their use of these technologies may be related to the usefulness of an application in their everyday lives. Raban and Brynin (2006) argue that although older people have a "diminished openness to experiences […] aging is not a one-dimensional process [and] it would be wrong to assume that only the young have learning curves, even if they move along these curves faster" (ibid.:43). Developing their findings from a 2002 eLiving survey, which looked at technology use in six different countries, suggest that "a large proportion of older people are ready to adopt new technologies and have positive attitudes towards technology" (ibid.:48).

The Office for National Statistics stated that 11 per cent of over-65s who use the internet have "upload[ed] self-created content to a website to be shared" (2013a). This is down from 22 per cent from previous statistics recorded three years earlier (2010:13). Although the report did not qualify as to what constituted 'self-created content', whether this was simply writing a comment on a blog or the more complex process of making a video, this is still a significant enough percentage. From the available data it is difficult to assess why there is a decline in numbers of creating

and sharing in this group, which could be due to a number of factors and needs to be born in mind when evaluating the research outcomes. However, the recent figure does suggest that, in addition to the consumption of services and purchasing, practices of self-production and self-publishing are being embraced by several members of this age range.

5.2.1 +65 Participant overview

The participants were selected using the criteria that they were over 65 and using the internet and digital technology to create and share content. Every participant in this study was in retirement. An obvious consequence and added benefit of retirement is the availability of more free time to indulge in leisure activities. Retirement has given the majority of the participants in this age range the freedom and opportunity to either renew an interest they had earlier in life, which work had restricted them from doing, or adopt new interests through re-education in universities, colleges or groups, such as the University of the Third Age (U3A).

None of the participants had previously worked in occupations that involved creative production or design prior to retirement. Five of the sample had worked in professional occupations and six in none or semi-professional employment. One described herself as a "housewife". Several had acquired computer knowledge and skills from their working lives or adopted digital technology after retirement as an extension of a hobby or interest. This provided the skills for them to extend their knowledge by specialising in specific computer or digital art courses, rather than embarking on general computer access courses, which enabled them to develop digital content creation skills.

Due to the participants' inclination towards the practices of creating and sharing content, they were generally drawn to technology or artistically focused subjects. Therefore, by definition, they could be considered relatively computer proficient. However, this proficiency was diverse throughout the sample. The research sample had been using the internet for a number of years prior to being interviewed and all of the participants were currently creating content at the time of interview. Seven of the 12 interviewees started using the internet in the first few years of the 21st century

(2000 to 2003) with two starting in the mid- to late-1990s, one in the late 1980s and one as recently as three to four years ago (see Fig. 5.1).

Eight of the sample finished their pre-employment education at secondary school level, with the remainder attending further or higher education. On retirement there was a high uptake in formal education through local colleges, with some taking higher education degrees in universities. Most chose to study visual arts subjects, such as digital photography and art, or digitally related software programs, such as Adobe Photoshop or Dreamweaver. Several had acquired new skills in a creative subject that also involved technical and software proficiencies. This enabled them to pursue creative activities that they were either discouraged from doing, or were not confident to embrace in their earlier life. Traditional sources of education are the preferred route to learning new skills and these respondents rarely use the internet to source learning materials or online tutorials.

Several of the participants' introductions to the internet, web and digital content creation came via involvement in outside non-digital activities and interests. Consequently, some learnt the basics of how to upload digital photographs, create blogs, and build a website through formal college courses, traditional books and manuals. Some used the skills they learnt in formal education to develop a 'trial and error' learning technique to become more proficient in their use of digital technology.

Of the 12 participants, half say that they started to create and share content in the mid-2000s with three starting in the early 2000s, two stating that is was a 'recent' activity, and one creating content in 2003 but not sharing content until a couple of years ago (see Fig. 5.1).

Fig. 5.1 +65 Participants' Adoption of Internet and Content Creation & Sharing
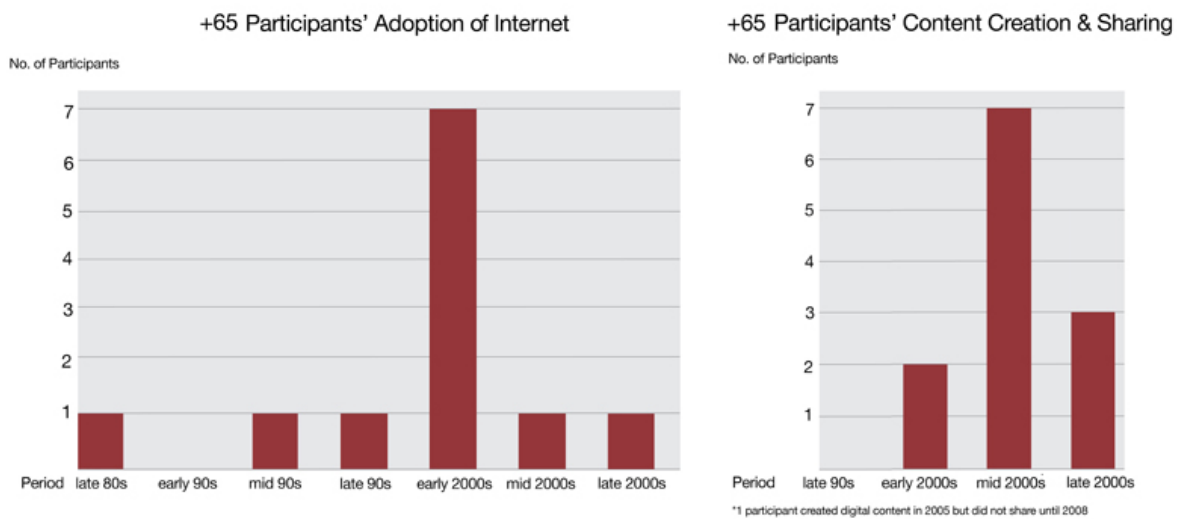
The first graph shows that over half started to use the internet in the early 2000s, while the second reveals that this age range began sharing their content in the mid-2000s.

5.2.2 (Re)education and learning

By and large, retired adults returned to education voluntarily and because they had chosen a subject or interest they wanted to learn as part of a lifelong learning activity. Lifelong learning is defined by the European Commission as the "lifelong, voluntary and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for personal or professional reasons" (Eurostat, n.d.). Learning after retirement has been the common feature that defines all the participants in this age range and is, obviously, unique from the other two age ranges. One must also be aware that all participants in this study were selected because they have previously and are currently creating and sharing their content on the internet; consequently, knowledge of computers and the web has already been achieved. However, it is notable that while not all had used computers in the workplace, all had embarked on some form of post-retirement education. Previous involvement with computers has made it easier for several to attend courses that give them specific skills. Therefore, this introduction continues by discussing the places where this knowledge and these skills were accomplished.

5.2.3 Formal (re)education in retirement – introduction to digital

As previously stated, reaching retirement age has the advantage of providing more free time to develop or enhance new skills for many without the pressures or deadlines of a working environment. With this comes a feeling of freedom, too. One participant, Bill, expressed a common view within the 12 retired participants, "When you retire if you don't do something you probably vegetate". This was reflected by the fact that all of the participants have been involved in some level of formal training since retirement and these were separated into three different categories; university, college, and distance learning. Five out of the 12 interviewees cited The University of the Third Age (U3A) as being of importance in their re-education. Although there was an inquisitive desire to continue or start learning after retirement, the main theme running through this group was the ability to rediscover and revisit a skill or interest they had discovered in earlier life that work had restricted them from developing. In most cases this was an aspiration to pursue areas associated with a creative practice, such as art and photography. These learning experiences have given them an introduction, no matter how rudimentary, into the digital domain.

5.2.4 University

Three participants entered higher education for the first time after retirement. Two of the interviewees completed a BA in Fine Art after working in a non-creative occupation before retirement. Both expressed how the experience was rather challenging. Mary, who had previously had a career in the prison service, found that she drifted into university education.

Interviewer: What was your motivation for embarking on a university degree course?

Mary +65:   I'd been involved in going to art classes over the years and never taken it seriously and then when I retired […] I thought it was rather nice to do an access course, and then I found out an access course [leads] to university. […] I did an A-level in Art and that led to me to apply to university and I did a part-time course. It was more of a challenge than I'd anticipated.

Prior to her degree, Mary joined a photographic group on Flickr taking photographs at different locations in London and uploading them, on a weekly basis. Similarly Peter, aged 85 at the time of interview, entered higher education upon retirement after working in the motorcycle trade until his early 60s. He reignited his interest in art by first completing a Foundation Art course, followed by Fine Art degree at university in 1990s. He explains this in one of his YouTube videos.

> I've always been interested in Art and whilst I've always visited galleries and museums I've never actually practised it until I retired from work about 25 years ago at the age of 60-something. And at that time I went to a local comprehensive where the art teacher there who let me sit in with the students […] to do my GCSE and then later the next year continued to do my A-levels and subsequently went on to university to do a degree in Fine Art. […] I really didn't really enjoy the degree course very much [as] it was a time of conceptual art [but] I continued and got my degree of course. (Oakley, 2012)

Peter's disappointment with his experience at university during the popularity of conceptual art indirectly pushed him in the direction of computer art and later he also learnt to make video using Movie Maker, the program packaged within Microsoft Windows.

Peter +65:   Having given up art [after my unpleasant experience at art college] I thought that computer art might be an interesting thing to do. I had seen people at university in the very early days of computer art and I thought that might be something to occupy myself and I learned quite a bit about Photoshop and graphic design and […] was using some of those skills to do family slide shows which I thought were fairly boring and thought that video and audio would help them. [I] had to investigate how to make a video, which I knew nothing about at all, but [Microsoft] Windows Moviemaker was part of [my] operating system so that was another skill that I learned and then, having thought I was fairly clever at being able to deliver video, I found YouTube. I can't remember how. I think I was sort of texting either somebody on Skype or on another website and, having found YouTube, I thought it was a wonderful thing to do.

What is remarkable about Peter is how he has developed all these skills since his retirement and used them to full effect. To this extent he was an obvious participant for this study. In August 2006 he started uploading self-created videos diaries of personal monologues to YouTube with an account named Geriatric 1927, after his date of birth[5]. He has since adopted the self-appointed title of 'Internet Grandad' (sic) and has become something of a celebrity on the platform. As of August 2013 he has developed a large following with 41,122 subscribers and 9,193,250 video views. Over the first seven years of making videos for YouTube, he has built an archive of 415 videos (as of August 2013) of which he posts, on average, a new one every week.

Similarly, Bill was drawn to use digital technology due to his interest in astronomy and Astro Photography, which he had developed in retirement. Astro Photography involves using specialist software and digital cameras to take photographs of outer space through a telescope.

Bill +65:   I did an astronomy course at University College London when I retired and I thought I really need something to do now. I was already quite into the Astro Photography bit. So I did the course [for] two years got my diploma and it was very good and I learnt a lot.

For Bill to continue his developing interest in Astro Photography it was essential that he purchased a computer.

Bill +65:   I didn't have my own computer until about 2003, in fact I'd been rather nervous of computers up to then, but because of my developing interest in astronomy I could see that I was going to have to use a computer [to continue Astro Photography]. So I just went and bought one without knowing much about what I was doing and taught myself and asked people about it.

Therefore, Bill's retirement interest was the driver that led to him to acquire a personal computer and his perseverance to learn how to use it came from his need to progress with his hobby.

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[5] See www.youtube.com/user/geriatric1927

5.2.5 College

Although there were a small number of participants who enrolled on non-digital courses, such as drawing or painting, the majority in this age range used local colleges to provide support and education of software and hardware. For example, they may learn the technical aspects of a digital camera and then associated software (e.g. Adobe Photoshop) and how they can be used to enhance or edit a photograph or in conjunction with the internet. Iris, aged 84 at the time of interview, began creating content around 2005.

Iris +65:   I started to go to the digital camera course first of all and the tutor there also taught Photoshop and said, "Why don't you come along?". So I did a 10-week course but at the time I was having my cataracts done so I lost quite a lot of time and I was finding it difficult to see. […] I went and [re]did [the Photoshop course] this year, [and] even though I'm three years older it sunk in more and I just seemed to understand it better.

However, some participants experienced limitations to the options available and felt that some of the courses they had embarked were either too easy or too hard. Many complained that there were not enough courses to cater for intermediate skills and many courses either taught the basics or were too advanced. Consequently, they were then left to learn by themselves.

Christine +65: I'd like to improve [my web design skills]. Because one of the things we were asking at college is can we have an intermediate course on Dreamweaver. We can create websites and so we want to be able to do much more things like video streaming and things on the web. […] The problem with the advanced one is that you have to go through a whole full-time course which we don't want that just to get the skills.

However, Carol, who attended a word processing course at college back in 1997, expressed a frustration with some courses, preferring to learn from peers online.

Interviewer: So where did you learn Photoshop then?

Carol +65:   In my little room upstairs (laughs). I really learnt it myself. […] I did sign up for a [Photoshop] course about three years ago, which was a

waste of money because it was so basic. […] I get books out of the library [and] I go onto the websites, forums. I'll ask questions if I don't know something. Usually someone comes back with the answer and there is so much on the web to actually learn. You can learn an awful lot and the YouTube tutorials are fantastic.

Carol subsequently learnt more advanced Photoshop techniques through a process of 'trial and error'. The combination of her earlier use of technology and use of the web helped her to develop self-learning methods through online forums and online resources such as YouTube.

5.2.6 Distance learning

Jane, a retired teacher, enrolled for online courses at the Open College of Art (OCA)[6] and found that this not only helped initiate her into digital photography, but also introduced her to the practice of blogging and its associated community.

Jane +65:   I did an OCA photography course and towards the end of that they were encouraging their students to do a blog as a learning record. I discovered blogging really as a way of communicating and recording my progress in photography, but also then I realised I could upload other stuff. […] I'd spent quite a lot of time searching for different people who have similar interests. Then I realised there was this whole world of mainly women creating stuff and uploading it onto their blogs. So then I started scanning [my drawings] and putting them on too.

In this example Jane discovered blogging and made all of her discoveries and connections online through a desire to communicate and share her content with others.

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[6] See www.oca-uk.com

5.2.7 University of the Third Age (U3A)

U3A is a UK-registered charity run by The Third Age Trust. In 2012, U3A celebrated its 30th anniversary and, as of August 2012, was made up of 858 affiliated local groups, with 293,733 UK members. Its website describes the organisation as, "self-help, self-managed lifelong learning co-operatives for older people no longer in full time work, providing opportunities for their members to share learning experiences in a wide range of interest groups and to pursue learning not for qualifications, but for fun" (The University of the Third Age, n.d.).

With the emphasis on learning for fun and not for qualifications, the U3A provides another avenue for gaining knowledge for this age range. Firstly, it provides access to a wide range of subjects, which are discussed and presented at weekly meetings. There are also classes that teach the technical aspects of digital technologies, such as cameras and creating and using blogs. It also provides a way of continued learning without the pressure of a working environment. Jane had been creating artworks on paper and wanted to know how to scan them and publish them on the web.

Jane +65:   When I gave up teaching I also joined the University of the Third Age, and I quite liked the fact that I was entering into a new learning period. So I think I called my blog "The Chronicles of a Third Age Learner". So really what that has been is logging my learning process.

U3A also provides courses and subjects that meet with the requirements of this age range namely the need to return to interests or talents they had embraced before they started work. Two examples of which are given, below.

Sheila +65:   I was very keen on art at school and I was very good at it, but I couldn't continue [with it] in my working life and, when I retired, I joined U3A art class and started painting pictures.

This is a theme that is common with many retired interviewees. Indeed, there are many within this age range that were deterred or discouraged from following artistic or creative paths earlier in their careers. This was either through parental pressure or institutional advice and, therefore, they chose to revisit these interests and re-

educate themselves upon retirement. Rediscovering previously held interests through education also offered them the prospect of recapturing their youthful aspiration, as well as the opportunity to socialise.

One interviewee with little knowledge of digital technology on retirement started taking digital photographs about six years ago after completing a digital photography course at her local college. Susanne bought her first computer and learnt Adobe Photoshop after using her first digital camera. She subsequently affiliated herself with groups, such as The Artists Collective, East Finchley Open[7] and the London Independent Photographer's Central Satellite Group[8], along with the Highgate Wood newsletter.

Susanne +65:   At the age of 16, [I] thought of going to art college but didn't do that. I did science instead and then I became a psycho-therapist, so I was very busy working and I didn't have any time to do art, but when I retired I had the chance to go back to an interest I had since my teens. And then I joined a club and it became a social thing as well.

Julie had used the internet since the early 1990s, but up until retirement used it mainly for research and search.

Julie +65:   When I was 14 I wanted to become an artist. But then my father was very afraid of that profession and put me in a chemistry school where I had a lot less time.

She now has three different blogs and uses Flickr for her photographs, and Dailymotion to upload video.

5.2.8 Previous knowledge of computers in the workplace

The two eldest people in this group, aged in their mid-80s, had retired before they could see or experience the use of computers in the workplace. However, some of the sample used computers in a work establishment before retirement. Two of the interviewees learnt to use web-authoring software at their pre-retirement jobs as an IT specialist and a lecturer.

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[7] See www.eastfinchleyopen.org.uk

[8] See www.londonphotography.org.uk/satellites

Christine +65: [I]n the 1990s, when I was lecturing at London Met[ropolitan University I began] to create web pages for WebCT and we also had in service training to use early versions of Dreamweaver. […] WebCT was a means whereby my lecture notes were put on the University server for students [to] download, and for students to upload their projects. Those were the sort[s] of things I was doing then.

Sheila +65: At work, I learnt how to update websites. To start off with I didn't understand what they were but at work I learnt how you updated them, so once I had taken on the job as webmaster I bought Dreamweaver, which I find to be very good, and I just started to use that. It started at work but it's continued since then. […] I think the reason I got online so easily is because I ended up working for IBM and I was so used to PCs and laptops and Windows, so I just sort of fell into it. I can understand [there are] a lot of people my age who are absolutely terrified of computers because it's not part of their culture but it was part of mine. So, I thank my lucky stars it was.

Sheila's observation exemplifies the advantages in learning computer skills at work and before retirement. This has a distinct advantage as it prevents them from having to embark on the steep learning curve of computer basics and makes it easier to take up more advanced and specific computer skills in retirement.

5.2.9 On-going software and technical skills – learning by trial and error

As we have seen from the earlier discussion, many of the participants in this age range have learnt digital technology through the lack of availability of correct courses for their needs, as in the case of Carol. However, there appears to be another consequence from this re-education and a previous knowledge on computers, and that is the ability and willingness to learn by trial and error. Once they have learnt the basics of digital technology through re-education, participants expressed that is was much easier and a natural step to move towards a trial-and-error approach to learning. Christine expressed, "I think as you develop knowledge you find it easier. I find it interesting I really think it's fun. It's fun to stretch your boundaries". Jane

believes that her previous experience working as a schoolteacher with computers and young children helped to overcome her anxieties about digital technology.

Jane +65: I think I'm reasonably literate on that sort of thing. I've taught myself the Apple [Macintosh computer] and scanning stuff. I had to find how to do it through trial and error. I think one of the things about being a primary schoolteacher teaching IT [is that once] you see the kids […] press every key together and they are all crashing and they all recover, you lose your inhibitions about making mistakes with the computer.

In Peter's case, the courses and classes incentivised him to go and learn the software that could help him achieve his creative fulfilment.

Peter +65: I did go to many classes to learn many things, but in the way of making videos I had to learn it through the help files that were offered in the software so that was quite difficult. […] On shelves behind me you will see dozens and dozens of videos on Photoshop techniques. So I've learnt everything myself either through help files in the programs or by reading and [watching] videos.

Carol found that learning on one's own was very time-consuming and absorbing. She found it also interfered with other non-digital activities.

Carol +65: Trying to find it out yourself takes hours and hours sometimes. I mean sometimes I can go in and sit on the computer in the morning and I come down at 7.00 at night. And there's too much to do, I've got too many other things to do.

Susanne expressed a less complimentary view of learning technology, "It's very nice to have the skills but it's very boring learning them". She felt that all digital learning and software tends to be a solitary act.

Susanne +65: Learning about Photoshop and computer matters in general is something I think you have to basically do by yourself […] because you can't really teach that in the group.

It must be noted that many of the members of this age range learnt technology as an unintended consequence of a hobby or an interest that they pursued in retirement. As a result, using digital technology is a means to an end and, therefore, a 'tool of the trade'.

Jane +65:   I'm fairly comfortable with [the skills that] I've got. I feel I'm under using the Apple [Macintosh] at the moment but on the other hand that's just a tool for me. It's not my raison d'etre. It's not what I'm about. It's about all the other physical things and this is just a means and a nice one.

Indeed, Jane's comments characterise several participants' views that the technologies they use as tools help them to achieve a desired outcome for their interest or hobby.

5.2.10 +65 Re-education summary

All the participants in this age range of content-creating retirees have engaged in some form of post-retirement education. Over half of the sample had learnt to use computers in their place of work, which lessened the need for entry-level computer education on retirement. Consequently, they found it easier to pursue a higher level of digital knowledge and skills. The other participants used education to introduce and help them to reach a level of computer and digital understanding, sometimes as a result of their interests, which enabled them to pursue their chosen or current retirement hobbies.

It must be noted also that, for the over 65s, acquiring skills to use digital technologies are often unintentional or as a consequence of adopting a new hobby or interest in retirement or the rediscovery of an old one. Learning to use computers and digital technologies has been a gradual and necessary requirement for them to pursue their hobbies and, in many cases something, as in the case of Sheila, which they "just fell into" or, like Mary, was a natural progression. In some cases this may have originated as a non-digital hobby but through the gradual adoption of technologies within these practices has become part of the process of engagement in the hobby.

Knowledge and understanding of technology varies greatly in the over-65s and is multi-faceted, as with all age ranges. However, what can be drawn from the participants in this study is that after intital introduction to software or online platforms several have developed high level digital skills through the adoption of trial and error learning. By making mistakes and learning from them they developed greater knowledge and understanding, which has lead to a higher level of digital literacy. This is a literacy that has shown both the early stages of a technical mastery of software an ability to research, identify and develop personal creativity. A participant such as Iris, whose perseverance to learnt Photoshop gave her the skills to experiment on her own, has used software to advance her creative skills. In this sense technology has been an enabler to suppressed behaviours.

All participants have shown to be intrinsically motivated to learn through their desire to create and share content, where learning and skill are sought for personal pleasure. This is commensurate with Csikszentmihalyi's concept of motivational "flow" (1990) and Amabile's concept of creative production. Carol described how she lost track of time so intently when she was involved in creating work on Photoshop. What the participants have revealed about adopting and learning digital technology and re-education in retirement has been fourfold.

1. Participants were self-initiated in their uptake of post-retirement education. This enabled them to acquire skills necessary to rediscover and explore interests they were unable to partake earlier in life. This may have been due to constraints of working, family life or through being discouraged at an early age by family members or institutions.

2. For some, post-retirement education helped extend or transfer physical world interests they were already engaged in, such as painting or drawing, to a digital form.

3. For some, introduction to the digital domain was an unintended consequence of education and came via an interest in subjects, such as photography or astronomy, where introduction to digital technology or software was necessary for successful completion and progression.

4. For some, knowledge attained from formal education has led them to adopt 'trial and error' learning as a way to gain a higher proficiency of digital technology.

5.3 40–50 Introduction

The 40–50 age range could be described as the group of the 'middle aged'. However, a recent study shows that opinion was changing on this issue. The Pearson-affiliated website Love to Learn, commissioned markettiers4DC to research older people's attitudes to age and learning. They surveyed more than 1,000 UK adults aged 50+ and found that the perception of when 'middle age' begins had increased and now starts at 55 and ends at 69 (Pearson PLC, 2012). Previous studies identified middle age starting as early as 36 (BBC News, 2012). Therefore, 'middle age' in the context of this research refers to the middle age range of the three age ranges.

Many in this age range have had access to the internet for several years, having spent much of their earlier life using it in the workplace. Nonetheless, little empirical academic research has been conducted into how UK adults of this age use the web, let alone create and share digital content. A questionnaire-based quantative research paper of 550 individuals over the age of 40 in the US revealed:

> middle-aged and older Web users are remarkably similar in (a) their amount of Web use, (b) their use patterns, (c) how they were taught to use the Web, (d) perceived Web problems encountered, and (e) perceived efficacy in using the Web (Morrell et al., 2000).

This statement must be viewed with caution due the proliferation of use and uptake of digital technology and the web during the years since 2000 and, additionally, a wider access to computers both in the workplace and at home. The paper went on to state that results from the questionnaire disclosed "[m]iddle-aged adults, however, perceived themselves as being more knowledgeable, efficacious, interested, and willing to learn more about the Web than older adults" (ibid.).

A report by Social Media Today stated that, by and large, women are more active and have more online friends when using social media than men (Singer, 2011). On average, in 2011, women aged between 40 and 50 in the major European countries (the EU5 – UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy) spent around five hours per month visiting social network sites, compared to men at around three hours. This was more

acute when looking at women aged 45-54 who "spend more than twice as much time on social networks as their male counterparts (5.5 verses 2.7 hours a month), pointing to a digital divide opening up – not between the young and old in general, but with men aged 45+ increasingly being left behind" (ibid.).

The rise of one-parent families and single-occupancy dwellings within in the UK (Government Office for Science, 2009) over the last few decades has directed adults towards seeking new ways of meeting potential partners and forming new intimate relationships. There is evidence that sections of this age range are prolific users of online dating websites (Hogan et al., 2011; Goehner, 2010). International research conducted by the Oxford Internet Institute found that 36 per cent of those interviewed aged between 40 and 69 found their current partner online. This contradicts the notion that social networking and online dating is primarily for the young. The proportion of 18 to 40-year-olds, who had started a relationship through the internet, was significantly smaller at 23 per cent (Hogan et al., 2011).

5.3.1 40–50 Participant overview

All of the 40–50 participants had been using the internet for between 10 and 20 years. Introduction to the internet was generally a gradual process developed through the workplace with the use of email, followed by the web. A large majority of participants found learning the workings of digital and online technology in a domestic setting a fairly natural continuation of skills they had learnt in the workplace. 'Trial and error' has been adopted as a heuristic learning technique as they became familiar with digital technology and the workings of the internet. Of the 12 participants three started using the internet in the late 1980s, two in the early 1990s, two in the late 1990s and five in the early 2000s. Every participant was using the internet by 2001 (see Fig. 5.2).

As all the participants had been using the internet for over 10 years before this study began there was a familiarity with the medium. Consequently, they felt they had been able to follow the evolution of the internet and the web more easily. However, this familiarity has generated negative views towards the digital domain and UGC within some participants. In some cases it is regarded as being of unprofessional or inferior quality in comparison to professional content consumed by them for the vast

proportion of their life through traditional media and broadcasting. One interviewee exemplified this by saying, "Everybody *thinks* that they can take a good photo". There was an overwhelming feeling within the participants that they tended to upload too much content in the early days of their online sharing of content. Later, they wanted to be more selective about the content they shared as the novelty value of creating and sharing content thorough networks decreased. Of the 12 participants, three started creating and sharing digital content in the last few years, seven started in the mid-2000s, with two in the early 2000s. Two were creating content as early as late 1990s (see Fig. 5.2).

There was strong evidence of some anxiety and disappointment with the digital environment in several participants. In some cases, this manifested itself as an antipathy towards the immediacy and ease to which digital artefacts are made and distributed. While many accepted that the web allows people's content to get noticed, shared, distributed and appreciated, some participants in this age range questioned the value of digital content. There was also an expression of negativity towards the ever-greater volumes of people creating content and the perceived competition this has brought. This has even led to some of the interviewees feeling anxious, insecure and 'depressed' at this realisation.

To many in this age range, creating digital content and the networked capabilities of sharing content has enabled them to see further than their traditional job titles. They now see themselves as having multi-faceted titles, which in some cases are different to their main profession or job. Most will have a job or role that they consider as primary but will sometimes include numerous other titles, such as artist, musician, video-maker, authors and webmasters as part of their life. This tends to be developed as their visual and/or audio web presence expands and diversifies.

Fig. 5.2 40–50 Participants' Adoption of Internet and Content Creation & Sharing
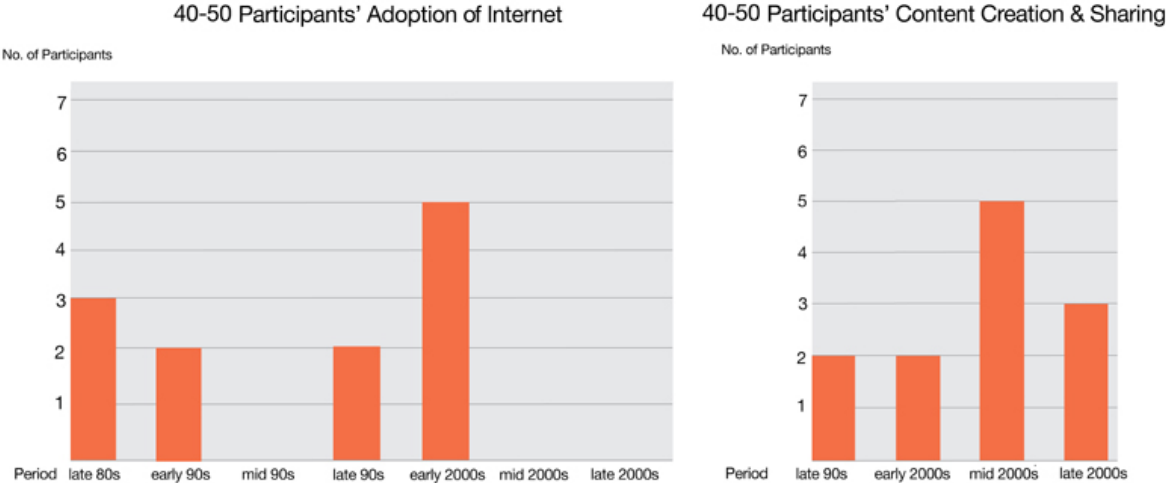
The first graph shows that internet adoption was relatively early, indeed three participants were using the internet before the invention of the web. This is consistent with the premise that this age range used of digital technology over a longer period of time. The second graph shows that two thirds started to create and share content around the time, so called, Web 2.0 technologies and services emerged.

5.3.2 The home, family life and children

Interviews with participants revealed that formal education was a distant memory for many in this age range. The majority of time was either consumed by working, caring for children and general family life. Technology plays a changing role for them in this environment. All of the participants had had some basic knowledge of computers in the workplace, and their learning progressed incrementally as the technology changed.

In previous decades, the television had been the focal point in the living room and the traditional British family sat and watched programmes together in the evenings and at weekends. As the computer has become more widely used, not just for communication and internet search and research but also the creation of digital content, family members had dispersed to use tethered desktop computers in different rooms of the house, which had the effect of fragmenting the family unit.

However, with the advent of wireless broadband technology and the increasing use of laptops and tablets, the television has a different role within family life. The following examples relate to two males with young children. Don, who had been using the internet at home for eight years since 2003, noticed changes happen in his own family.

Don 40–50:   I think television in the past was perhaps something that you sat down and watched but now I've got something I want to do. I don't know why that is but perhaps because I've got a laptop that I can sit at home and do it where ever. […] Now I don't have to physically go into an office anymore. […] I think with wireless it has enabled me to sit with the family and do what I'm doing [on the laptop] but still being there, you know. Television's on [and the] children are there, I'm still part of the family, whereas before I always had to be removed.

This is a point echoed by Richard who considered his laptop as an important part of family life and the television as more background.

Robbie 40–50: I'm probably not even watching [the television]. The computer has become part of the home but now, because of the laptop and wireless, it has become even more a part of it. Like for instance my children, one of them is only seven, he will come and use the laptop with me and we look at things it's far more of a tool for them [than] a television. […] I can hear myself saying something "Oh I want to watch something on the television. Oh no I'm going to do something on the laptop" but [the rest of the family] are in the same room. [My son will] go and look things up on the internet, which he finds amazing but it has become far more a part of the family.

Both Don and Richard's experiences show the importance and intergration of broadband and particularly wireless technologies in a family setting. No longer does the home computer user need to be isolated from the rest of the family. More importantly, as Don explains, this has given them "something […] to do" rather than sit and watch television. Certainly this example corresponds with academics like Benkler (2006), Shirky (2008; 2010) and Gauntlett (2011) who argue that we are moving from a 'passive' consumption of media to one of participation. The

implications from Don and Richard are that using the internet in both a physical sense, with their children, and as a activity can be, at times, more enjoyable than watching television and can be a way to enable real interaction with their children.

5.3.3 Caring for children

One of the main themes and considerations within this group was the impact of family life on their ability and availability to create and share content. Two male perspectives show the changing character of family life. One of the male participants remarked on how being a single parent impacted on his ability to create content on his computer because of less available leisure time. Tom has been creating digital content since the mid-1990s and lives at home with his two daughters, who are in their early teens.

Tom 40–50:   At the moment I don't get time [to use the computer for leisure] because I'm a single parent now, so lots of things that I would do as hobbies I don't get time for anymore. So I've got my work and I've got resting time and then looking after the children time and that's pretty much it.

The second example comes from the viewpoint of a self-proclaimed 'stay-at-home-dad'. Rich records his own music and has occasionally collaborated with other musicians located internationally. He has taken the role of childcare while his wife works, and this has meant that he has had to plan carefully the times when he can produce his music.

Rich 40–50:   I don't really have a specific time [when I make music and upload it]. It's just when the kids aren't surrounding me (laughs). I'm a stay-at-home dad so I'm looking after kids most of the time. So it's when I have some time away from them. So it's often evenings. It was last term afternoons as well because my daughter was at nursery in the afternoons, my son was at school all day so I would have the odd afternoon to get stuck in [to doing things on the computer] between housework and all the other stuff I'm doing.

Both of these male participants show the planning involved in caring for children and the ability to create content. One proved successful and one less so. While theoretical studies into creativity, online content creation and sharing emphasise the process, as described in chapter three, the practicalities of life are often overlooked. As Rich and Tom describe, they frequently possess the will to create and share content but are often restricted from doing so by real life everyday events. This makes their ability to perform creative acts less spontaneous.

5.3.4 Software, technical skills and learning by trial and error

Denis, a chaplain in a west London further education college, took hundreds of digital photos each month and shared them with photographic groups on Flickr. He was typical of many participants in this age range in believing that they were the first wave of people to be comfortable with computers.

Denis 40–50:   I guess I'm probably the beginning of the generation that is quite at home with computers. So they've never held any particular fear or worry for me, so I just get in play around and see what happens. […] I'm always developing my technical skills. I'm always looking to do new things, pick up new tricks.

Tom used to work as a paramedic and helped his colleagues when they had problems with their computers in the 1980s. This led to him to set up his computer technical services business. He expressed a view that he has had a natural attraction to technology and gadgets all of his life.

Tom 40–50:   I was always the kind of person that when I see something I want to understand how it works. I was taking tape recorders apart when I was I was seven. […] I've always had a natural affinity with computers. […] Basically I have to develop my skills because of my job. But, having said that, I find it no effort at all. I'm always aware of what's coming out, you know; call me a geek (laughs).

Several also found that the ability to explore technology and software was engaging. Ray, who produced YouTube videos of his amplifiers and guitar playing, enjoyed examining all the programs on his computer to see how to utilise them properly.

Ray 40–50: It literally is a case of investigating stuff, trying things out. You know when you get a Mac you get a suite of programs and you say well what's iCal, what's iMovie, you know. "Oh iMovie. Oh so I could use my stills camera. It takes video as well. What am I going to do with that?" you know. And that's what I'm like, I investigate and [I learn them through] intuition and initiative.

Two of the participants recognised that the process of learning software and digital technology could be taken further and stated their position on learning programming languages.

Tom 40–50: Obviously I could branch into other areas. I could, for instance, learn a programming language or something like that and make more money but I don't like programming, it's really boring. I quite like things the way they are.

Don 40–50: I do [find the technical process easy] but I can think of some things that that aren't easy. […] I'd always like to develop. I'd do some development as well. Languages I wouldn't mind getting more involved in.

Yet it is not always the technical side of learning that was the issue. Robbie expressed, "My technical skills are fine, I'd rather develop my ability to make better content". Nevertheless, not all participants conveyed their ease with the technical process. A number of participants found certain processes difficult and time-consuming. Fern, a language translator and artist, found the process of setting up websites demanding.

Fern 40–50: I think the [technical process of] setting up [a website] is not easy. If you want to start a website it's irritating. It takes a couple of days of pressing the wrong buttons and all of that but I think once it's set up it's not too bad.

Rich also emphasised the time-consuming nature of using online web media, particularly in his introduction to the web in the first few years of 2000s.

Rich 40–50: I found it incredibly frustrating and time consuming. I was very kind of stubborn and I wanted to do it. Lesser people would have given up

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I'm sure. I would spend a whole evening on a website and then press the wrong button and you'd lose everything and I would start again, whereas it's much easier now. Stuff like Blogger, which auto-saves every 10 seconds or something and you don't lose everything you've written. […] But yeah you learn through trial and error really. Just put stuff up and go "well that looks terrible" and you have to take it down and try again. I wasted hours and hours doing that.

One of the participants expressed her lack of interest and complete disinterest in technology although, ironically, all her content was produced for publishing on the web. Tracey is a political blogger who uses collaged images juxtaposed with written posts to make a comment on local issues in north London. She confesses to being technologically inept and often acts as a sort of art director when using her son to create the images she wants. Tracey uses the web and digital technology as a means to get her ideas published.

Tracey 40–50: I'm very, very easily bored by technological things. I don't want to know how something works, I want to be able to do it. If I buy a camera I throw the instructions away because I know I'll never read them. I want somebody else to tell me how to do it quickly. […] I'm not interested in how something works I just want it to work. So if I want to know how to upload images or change the fonts, it's normally a bit of a struggle for me but I'll do it if I really want it.

She was asked whether her self-professed ineptitude and boredom related to the type of technology that she'd grown up with, which had led to her inability to learn or care about digital or whether this was a result of her own disposition.

Tracey 40–50: Oh it's me as a person. I've got no patience. […] I am actually dyspraxic. When I was a child I couldn't do things, I couldn't follow instructions. I mean I don't drive I don't do sport or things like that because I find it quite hard to remember and to follow. I'm a reasonably intelligent person but certain things I can't do easily and so different technological things are difficult for me and I do tend to get quite easily muddled with things so I've learnt just to cut them out and find someone to explain it to me. Make life simple.

But for Tracey it was not just about her difficult relationship with technology, it was about what the technology represents.

Tracey 40–50: I'm just not interested in technology for its own sake, it's only as a tool. […] It's not the technology that interests me, it's the final effect. If I could get a really interesting or surreal image or something from a Box Browning then I'd use it if I liked it. […] I think [the fact that it is digital is] irrelevant really. I want something to be effective and I want it to look good. […] I think you have to move with the times but you don't have to be a slave to new technology just for its own sake. Everything should have a purpose and a function, and I think it's a particularly male thing to fall in love with technology and ignore the final end of what you want to do.

Unlike the majority of the participants in the age range, Tracey's comments show how people without natural aptitudes still manage to learn technology, no matter how rudimentarily, because it is a means to an end. The proliferation of digital media and the internet has had an impact on many of the participants' lives with regards to how they spend their free time. Robbie was asked what he had stopped doing in order for him to spend more time on the internet.

Robbie 40–50: I've stopped typing as much or maybe I don't read very much these days. I read more online than I do in print form. I haven't really read a book for more than four years. Five years ago I was made redundant and I decided that I would do all these things. I knew it was coming up because I got six months' notice and bought a guitar. I thought if I get bored I'll learn to play the guitar and I bought a lot of golf balls. I can't play the guitar and I never went to the golf course. I didn't get bored because I spent a lot of time online and not watching TV but communicating with people online while they're at work and I'm at home and then in the evening we'd meet up physically. So it's a real enabler of communication tools, social media. It's allowed me to live alone but not alone.

While some of Robbie's comments could be considered overstated, they exemplify several in this age range who became conversant with communicating via social media and saw a change in how they use their leisure time.

5.3.5 40–50 Summary

Family life is one of the features of this age range, and the computer and digital technology has become part of the home. The adoption of broadband and Wi-Fi in the family home has enabled portable devices, such as laptops, to become more prominent throughout the house. This has been particularly prominent in the living room, consigning the television to more of a background entertainment role. In some cases this has allowed participants the capacity to create and share content while interacting with the family rather than using a 'wired' desktop computer in another room in relative isolation. Caring for children has, in some cases, restricted or required careful planning for the practice of creating content and, therefore, the ability to create and share with spontaneity. The effects of technology on children were an issue on occasion. Two participants expressed differing views as to both the use and perceived effect of technology on their children, and concern was raised as whether they should be the subject of their shared content.

Formal education was a distant memory for many, and basic knowledge of computers was acquired in the workplace. This has allowed their learning to progress incrementally through investigation, and the adoption of 'trial and error' learning as digital technology has evolved. Many of the participants cite either their perceived natural affinity or ineptitude at learning technology. In the case of the latter, learning technology and creating and publishing digital content has been endured purely as a means to achieve ones personal creative goal. There is also evidence that some participants found the process of creating content 'frustrating', 'irritating' and 'time-consuming', and struggled to master certain complex aspects of the process.

What this last passage shows is the diversity of skills and knowledge within the twelve participants. Many suggest that the abilities that they may or may not possess are innate and are not part of some generational or social conditioning. This is at odds with the arguments of Tapscott and Prensky. Indeed several believe they were the first 'generation' to use digital technology and the internet, not the so called,

'millennials'. What is important, as Tracey, describes, is the desire and motivation to create and share, which is a area for explration in chapter 8. What the participants revealed about their home, family life and children has been fivefold.

1. Broadband and Wi-Fi assisted some participants in functioning as a closer family unit, particularly in the evenings, as they were less isolated than before when tied to the 'home office'.

2. Television had a lesser role among many content creators, although there was evidence that the TV still plays a 'winding down' role.

3. Participants are old enough to remember analogue technology and have experienced the introduction of the computer. For several, this has helped - not hindered - their learning of computers and digital technologies.

4. Many learned to use digital technology in the workplace where they were introduced to the internet.

5. Participants without perceived natural aptitudes to learn digital technology persevered, sometimes at a rudimentary level, because they are motivated to express themselves creatively and it is a means to a creative end.

5.4 18–28 Introduction

The Office for National Statistics (2013a) report shows that adults aged between 18 and 24 create and share the greatest amount of content on the web than any other adult range. Indeed, the report shows that in the UK this age range produces over half of all self-created content uploaded to web. Although the type and definition of the content is not defined, it is reasonable to assume that this self-created content is wide ranging from simple text-based comments and messages to more sophisticated media, such as videos and designing blogs and websites.

In the US, Pew internet conducted a survey of 830 respondents aged 18 to 29 in a report entitled *Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next* (Taylor and Keeter, 2010), in which it describes this age range as "Confident. Connected. Open to Change". It reports that 74% of the sample believes new technology makes people closer to their friends and family and "makes life easier" (ibid.:26). In this case, the survey asks the

more specific question of how many respondents had "posted video of themselves online" (ibid.:25), which, at 20% of the sample, is considerably higher than the next highest age range - 30-45 at 6%. The report also reveals that 'millennials' use technology and the internet to connect with people in new and distinctive ways. This enables them to be in constant and regular contact with friends through text messages, instant messaging, email, social networks and VoIP (Voice-over-Internet Protocol).

Manuel Castells asserts that "communication in the new technological framework is multichannel and multimodal" (Castells, 2009:130) and that the rise of mass self-communication has delivered a "culture of autonomy". He particularly views younger users as having the ability to take charge of communication practices. Castells points to research carried out by Tubella Casadevall, Imma, at the University of Catalonia, Spain in 2007, where a focus group of 18–30 year olds was observed using communication technologies. The research revealed that this age range was connected to the internet on average four hours per day, watched less television than the average viewer while simultaneously being connected to the internet. Most importantly the research noted that:

> They are not passive recipients of messages. A significant sub-group is also a producer of content. They remix videos and upload them, download and share music and films, and create and participate in blogs (Castells, 2009:133).

The research also showed that this age range belied the notion of 'prime time' by managing their communication throughout the day with multitasking being a normal activity through different means of mediated communication.

5.4.1 18–28 Participant overview

Statistically, this is an age range with a far higher use of the internet and level of content creation and sharing on the web than the older age ranges. 18–28 participants tended to communicate mainly within their age range and had multiple peer networks. Therefore, they were able to learn, share, get technical help and solve software problems through peer recommendations, suggestions and links. An environment evolved, therefore, where information was disseminated at a fast and

regular pace. This age range grew up in a transitional period of change, from analogue to digital technology, and therefore, was able to learn and use them simultaneously, which in several cases has helped their understanding of the transformation of making and distributing media and speed of production.

What is clear, however, from the 12 participants interviewed is the varying levels of computer education, literacy and accessibility, which has both helped and hampered development of content creation and sharing. While many participants in all age ranges struggle to some extent with learning new technology, this age range adopted technology as a matter of necessity and compulsion but not necessarily ease. It would be incorrect to assume that all the people interviewed in this study have a natural affinity with and effortless adoption of technology. Of the 12 participants, five started using the internet in the mid- to late-1990s and the remaining seven in the early 2000s (see Fig. 5.3).

Several participants in this age range had a blurred distinction between UGC that may lead to them earning money. To some of them, making money was a by-product of making and sharing the content. Indeed, two participants made money unintentionally out of their online content. Several recognise that online communication is not just about reaching an audience but an active online community with a symbiotic relationship. Consequently they found it completely natural to link their numerous web accounts together. However, there was a clear understanding that, although they may be able to make money from what started as a hobby, being employed to make visual/audio content in a formal capacity may spoil the enjoyment of creating content for themselves at their own pace and in their own time. Only three participants started creating and sharing content before 2005, three in 2005, and the remaining six evenly spread out until 2010 (see Fig. 5.3).

Participants who had been creating content the longest were more inclined to develop the quality of their content with production values that emulated and mimicked professional standards. This was particularly apparent when shooting video. Several of the interviewees had had an online presence on picture-sharing sites, such as deviantArt[9] for over 10 years. These are often viewed as digital diaries or scrapbooks of their earlier life and were considered by them as transitional

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[9] See www.deviantart.com

platforms to other networks. As they grew older, participants cultivated their online presence and shared their content in a more considered way and on more advanced platforms. However, there was also another level of content creation and sharing that was less considered and instant, which tended to be communicated through their network of friends. Self-promotion is a natural activity for several in this age range. Many see the value and necessity of self-promotion and are aware of the tools to accomplish this. The participants aged 18–28 were less concerned with time spent online and offline as they generally considered these to be part of the same experience, and several interviewees expressed that the digital world had been absorbed into their physical everyday life.

Fig. 5.3 18–28 Participants' Adoption of Internet and Content Creation & Sharing
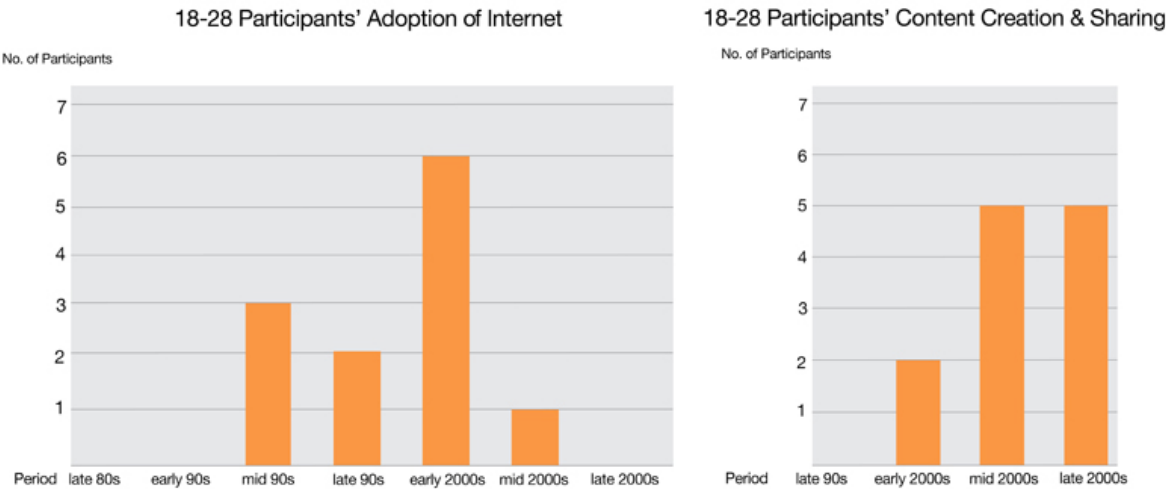
The youngest age group of participating adults in this study clustered within a 10-year period from mid-1990s to mid-2000s. Several were introduced through school projects and some were late adopters. The second graph shows how the 18–28 age range started to create and share their content from the mid- to late-2000s.

5.4.2 School – Recent education and learning technology

In 1987 the UK Government's Department of Education and Science introduced the national curriculum into UK primary schools which was rolled out to secondary schools in the early 1990s as a "body of knowledge, skills and understanding that a

society wishes to pass on to its children and young people" (Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2009). Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that all participants in this age range that were educated at secondary school level in the UK, were taught to the standards of the national curriculum. However, as the subsequent examples illustrate, there were varying levels of resources and cultural differences throughout the sample. The following comments by three women describe the differing experiences when introduced to technology at school. Nancy, who at the time of interview worked in 'the beer industry', has a large following for her fashion blog on YouTube. She had an untroubled introduction to computers and the internet. Her school had good computer resources and she also considered herself to have a 'natural aptitude' for learning technology.

Nancy 18–28:   I've always used [computers] since school, since I was about 13. […] Back in school they used to put you on a computer in an IT lesson and they would teach you the basics of [Microsoft] Word and everything else like that, and they would teach you stuff like how to make your own website and HTML. […] I've always been a bit of a computer geek. I loved things with computers. You know I liked making music and opening up new programs and trying to teach myself [Adobe] Photoshop.

This is contrasted by Sarah, a primary school teaching assistant, who draws cartoons traditionally on paper and then scans and uploads to her website. She felt that the lack of resources during her secondary education hampered her knowledge of computers, along with the cultural attitudes of the environment of where she grew up.

Sarah 18–28:   Where I'm from [a small rural village in central England] we had just one computer for the whole of the 6th form. We had to share it between… I don't know how many there were, but back then where we lived, computers were secondary. You were meant to marry a farmer or go and work in a factory, it wasn't an important thing at all. So I've really struggled with computers but just clawed my way through. YouTube is really good for watching videos on how to do things and that's the saving grace for me really. And I just learn bits from everyone I meet at work and I go "Well how do you do that?"

and I'm still terrible really (laughs) at scanning and everything comes out blurred and I enter the wrong size. You just have to keep going.

Mandy confesses that she was disinterested in learning about computers and technology at school. Her attitude changed when she started creating her own blog and promoting her comedy collective on the web.

Mandy 18–28:   I was never very technologically advanced [at school]. I wasn't really interested in new things for a long time. It would have been around the year 2000. […] I changed completely. I used to just either have no interest in it or think that it wasn't very important and then suddenly I've just realised in that last few years what it can do for you and advertising you. Before that it took quite a few years [to catch up]. I am quite slow with things I think because I was probably being a bit stubborn but then once I thought "Oh, that's quite interesting" it all completely changed and I became interested in all of it.

These three examples serve to demonstrate that there are many different reasons as to the level, ease and enthusiasm for embracing computers and digital technology. Along with the varying quality of facilities and localised priorities of their schools, one of the reasons for these different reactions to learning new technology may also be cultural. Mandy expresses a view that challenges much academic discussion attributed to this age range's enthusiasm towards digital technologies, this being her early apathy and the perceived inconsequence of digital media and the internet in her life. It is clear from Sarah's educational experiences that self-discovery of online learning materials like YouTube helped fill the knowledge gaps that she forewent during a traditional secondary school education.

Along with introduction to computers and software a large portion of the participants were also introduced to the internet and the web at school. Two male participants spoke about the transformative effect the internet had on researching homework projects. They both experienced a moment when the transfer of research began to shift from the physical libraries (or CD-ROM encyclopaedias) of the school to the multitude of resources available on the web. Ross, who now co-edits an architectural blog, believes his introduction to the web 'expanded' his mind.

Ross 18–28:   I was [introduced to the internet at] secondary school. We (our family) didn't have the internet at home to begin with. It is something that I used exclusively within school. I think that must have been when I was about 15 years old when it suddenly became an extension to using encyclopaedias in the library. Suddenly there was this great resource occurring on a computer that you could go to and begin to look at the first few websites. […] It coincided with the start of GCSEs and basically the need to find more information that the library didn't contain at school. It was interesting because it was the start of a whole new world opening up. One of the first websites that came to my attention […] was artencyclopedia.com. It meant that you could start to look up more artists than we had access to in the books and that the art teacher had. […] And I really started to expand my mind. […] I've always been curious to find out about more things than one source can give you.

Carl, a primary school teacher who started making YouTube videos relating to his teaching specialism, phonics, as a hobby, had a similar experience.

Carl 18–28:   Back in about 1995 [the internet] first had a presence at school. […] Around the late 90s I'd been really keen on using the internet to find information primarily and to communicate, because all I'd been used to was a rather bog-standard PC with a really poor modem quality and also finding information through Encarta encyclopaedia was quite limiting especially when you're completing your homework at school.

Indeed, this age range of participants is aware of a time before the internet but, as many were pre-teen when its introduction occurred, found it a natural medium to adopt. Damian, a digital photography student, found this to be the case.

Damian 18–28: [The web has] not always been there. I can remember when we got our own family computer when I was maybe 12. It's always been there since then [and] I just fell into the habit.

Above are three primary examples of participants in this age range experiencing the transfer from analogue and traditional learning practices to the internet and digital technologies. These were practices that relied on the learning of software and the need to develop technical skills.

5.4.3 Software and technical skills

Other than school, very few of the participants had any formal training in software or digital technology. Some of the university students were given basic software introductions, but generally the most common process of learning and problem solving by participants in this age range was through the web or digital media. Darren created both digital and non-digital art and had been learning software since an early age, and was comfortably aware that learning software is an on-going process.

Darren 18–28: I've found [learning software] easy. I've always been quite good with computers so I'm always up for learning new software. I find that once you know the core basics of how things work it's all the same names rearranged in the software. So it's quite easy to get my head round. [I'll keep developing my skills] because everything is adapting, everything's changing. You need to be on top of it.

Indeed, Damian considered learning to use online media being less about learning and more a natural procedure that he found 'just happened'.

Damian 18–28: The online side of things [I found] very easy. I didn't really think of it as a learning process. It's just something that has developed I guess. And then with the linking from Tumblr to Twitter to Facebook that was almost an accidental process. There wasn't much effort at all put into physically attempting to learn these things, they just happened.

Although Andy was given some basic software instruction at school and later at university he too found that the process of sharing was a much more of a natural process.

Andy 18–28: In terms of creating a photograph, I did photography as part of my GCSEs and that is where I learnt how to create photographs […] I don't think you really learn it. You go on Flickr and there's a big

upload button and then you upload it up (laughs). Nobody's ever taught me how to do that and I don't think you need to be taught really.

Many of these practices are heuristic and experience based methods of problem solving, such as trial and error.

5.4.4 Learning by trial and error

By far the most common process of learning in this age range was through trial and error. However, this was often done in combination with and through many other mainly online practices and services, such as internet searches, social networks, forums or through communication with digitally mediated online peers. Participants often looked no further than the internet to help solve technical problems. Fay was a university student who had been producing visual content and a member of many online communities like deviantArt since she was a child. She typified several in this age range by learning the majority of her digital technical skills from the internet, and realised the value of online forums and searches.

Fay 18–28:   The best place to go is the internet. […] I mean there are a lot of things that you can do through Google. If I don't know something I'll Google it before I ask anyone else because often someone else has had the same problem. […] If you have some knowledge people don't keep that kind of knowledge to themselves anymore, they put I on the internet for other people to find. When my computer broke I didn't know why, so I went and trawled the internet and go, "Oh my mother-board's dead" so then you can go, "Well how can I fix that?" […] I'm now a bit loathed to go to a computer company to find out why it is broken when I can find that information myself.

This has also instilled an air of confidence in Fay although she understood that, from software and coding perspective, this way of learning had disadvantages by leaving gaps in her knowledge.

Fay 18–28:   If I want a website I design it first and then if I don't know how to build it I will go out and learn how to build it. I don't learn stuff for no

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reason. So that is why I've got huge holes in my knowledge because everything I've learnt is because I had a reason to use it. […] It's all been learned through trial and error. I've never been on a computer course or to a computer class. I've never done anything like that. I mean generally I'm usually quite good with computers but I think it has become also without the fear. It's just some code. If I try it and it doesn't work then what's the worst that can happen? – It doesn't work.

Nancy was a participant who had no formal video production training. Since August 2010 she has had a YouTube channel, which hosts her self-created fashion and beauty videos. As of August 2013, she had 14,459 subscribers and 719,361 views of her 173 videos.

Nancy 18–28: [I'll be] editing a video and [my family] will go, "Well how are you doing that?" and I'm like, "I just play around with the iMac and I've kind of figured it out for myself". […] I've never been on one of these training courses to actually learn anything, I tend to pick things up fairly quickly […] and it's a lot of learning from other people as well. I didn't go to any lessons to learn how to edit videos I just played about with it [until] it looks nice. […] I find it simple to use but that's because you can just self-teach yourself. It does have a little tutorial beforehand that shows you how to do things and what iMovies can do for you.

In addition to a trial and error approach to learning, she also uses her online social networks for technical help and for web services suggestions.

Nancy 18–28: Especially on Twitter if I need an image hosting website and I can't find one if I just ping out something I'll get 10 replies really quickly from all these different places. So obviously that is how you are learning as well.

Carl, who similarly self-taught in video production, has published over 400 self-made videos to his YouTube channel since July 2006. By August 2013 he had amassed 5,282 subscribers with 8,783,359 video views.

Carl 18–28:   [I learnt how to make the videos] all by myself just tampering and having a go with it and I think that is a generational thing as well. We're used to just exploring Windows to see what happens when you delete that load of system files and then your computer doesn't work and then you have to restore it. All those things I've gone through where you've had to reformat your hard drive because you've made a mistake and you know not to do it again and that's true of everything.

He believes that many of the skills that he learnt from using analogue technology, such as video cameras and analogue tapes have made it easier for him to transfer to digital. Carl also believes that experiencing the early digital and online technology while growing up has been beneficial to learning.

Carl 18–28:   People my age just coming up to 30 now are the people that have grown up with analogue technology and we were the ones who also saw the dawn of webcams and instant messaging. You'd think it was all the youngsters the 14, 15 year olds, but it's not it's the people who are 25 to 30 who were first wowed by the instant messaging and "Wow, you can speak to someone straight away" or a text message. So I think that this group of adults now are quite adept with technology and finding things out for themselves.

Learning by trial and error and learning from friends has also been a common dual process. Darren considered his friends as influencing his learning but was also influenced by what he sees businesses producing online.

Darren 18–28: You see your friends [creating and sharing content] and think, "I should do that as well" and you see corporations and big studios doing it and think, "that's the way to do it. Let's try and get to their level". And it's cheap and easy. But I learn a lot from video tutorials now. I learn a lot from them sharing their digital content.

As Mandy explained earlier, she overcame her initial reticence and fear of using digital technology and web media and has now embraced the web and its associated

technologies. She developed a trial-and-error approach to learning with the help from her friends and colleague.

Mandy 18–28: I learnt the basics like with most things I tend to learn the basics sort of fairly slowly and it takes me quite a while to understand them but then I tend to do things and figure stuff out for myself until I can do them much better on my own. […] [I learnt digital editing] through just doing it. Steve (part of her comedy collective) was the one who learnt how to do it first and I went over to his [house] and he gave me a few pointers. Basically you just have to figure it out for yourself [through] trial and error.

Mandy explains how this approach came about.

Mandy 18–28: I find [learning digital technology] easy now, yeah. I just sort of look around and look at everything and learn by doing. Before, it would just confuse me. […] Because that's the thing, I used to be scared of doing something wrong because I'd think, "That's it, I've broken it". But now if you do something wrong you can just click 'undo' and try something else so it's easier. […] I think that was a breakthrough because then I tried doing more stuff. [Before] I think I'd still got that in the back of my mind that it's a tangible thing that can break. But now I'm getting to understand that it isn't.

Mandy's last sentence reveals something that is common throughout all of the age ranges. The fear of breaking something can be a barrier to learning in the digital domain and one that needs to be overcome in order to commence the digital, computer and internet learning process.

5.4.5 18–28 Summary

While all age ranges struggle to some extent with learning to use new technology, be this hardware or software, this age range appeared to adopt technology as a matter of necessity and compulsion, and not necessarily through awareness or familiarity with the digital technology. Their main form of learning is through trial and error although there was a high level of knowledge sharing through online media sharing

platforms, particularly YouTube. The first place several participants looked for help with learning new technology and solving technical problems was not conventional books or college/university courses, but the internet. This has given them a level of independence and a 'culture of autonomy' from conventional learning establishments and practices.

The instances given above indicate that participants place less reliance on formal education with regard to learning digital technology. Initial introduction in a school setting appears to be important as a starting point for further self-initiated, self-motivated learning. Evidence of this is shown in different forms. Again, as with the previous age range, some participants regarded themselves to having a 'natural aptitude' towards the use of technology. Meanwhile, others were discouraged from using digital technology through a combination of cultural reasons, lack of resources or disinterest. In Mandy's case this was due to a perceived irrelevance in her life, which may have been subconsciously suggested though her learning environment.

Some participants in this age range displayed characteristics consistent with the concept of the 'digital natives', such as using the internet as their primary source of information and learning. Some found the idea of training courses an anathema and a culture of exploration prevailed in several of the participants. The result of this learning process was that they tended to learning the basics of what they needed to know rather than having a comprehensive knowledge of software programs.

While these were expressed as positive experiences it should be not be assumed that all participants' conformed to these characteristics. Conversely, and significantly, several participants found the adoption of digital technologies less easy or were indifferent to them. This was often due to either a lack of access to and importance placed on the learning of digital technology and the internet in some schools or disinterest and a perceived lack of relevance in their lives. Nonetheless, in the latter cases this changed as they became aware of the self-publishing reach of sharing their content online.

What participants in the 18–28 age group revealed about their recent education and learning technology has been fivefold.

1. Varying levels of computer education and accessibility exist in secondary schools, which has both helped and hampered development of learning digital technology to use computers.

2. Adopting learning by trial and error was the most common way for the participants in this age range to learn technology. This includes participants who struggled with or were apathetic to technology and the internet at school.

3. Several solved software problems through peer recommendations and use different forms of online services like internet searches, social networks, and forums, or through communication with digitally mediated online peers and friends.

4. Several found using social media, video/picture sharing sites and linking numerous web accounts as a natural practice that did not need to be formally learnt.

5. Several considered growing up during the transitional period of change from analogue to digital had given them greater understanding of digital technology.

5.5 Age ranges graph overlay

To give further comparisons all three graphs have been overlaid. The graphs of participants show only slight variations (Fig. 5.4). There are clusters of participants from all age ranges. This shows the common period for introduction to the web is the early 2000s and content created for shared on the web corresponds with the introduction of Web 2.0 technologies and services in the mid-2000s (see O'Reilly and Musser, 2006).

Fig. 5.4 All Participants' Adoption of Internet and Content Creation & Sharing
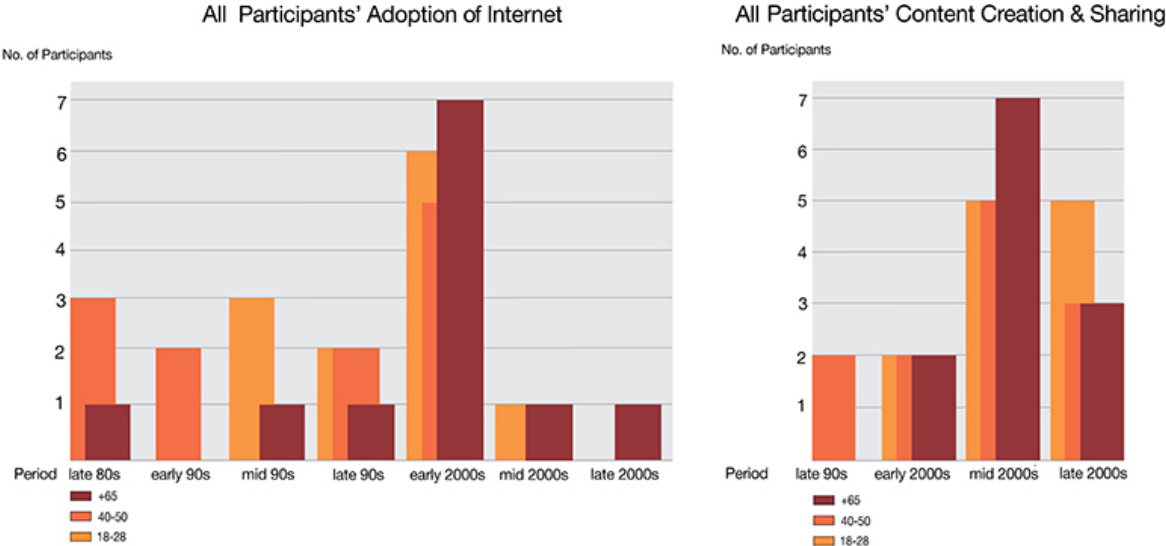
Participants with the widest spread of usage were the 40–50 age range which, as the interviews show, has been using the internet for the longest period of time. A common theme within all age ranges is the way participants began by using the internet as an information tool before progressing towards using it as communication and publishing platform by the mid-2000s.

5.6 Conclusion

The primary objectives of this chapter have been to introduce to the age ranges, both generally and specifically, and discover the different ways participants' engage with technology. A summary of each age range with specific attention given to the respondents participating in the research project was given, which acts as both a primer to later chapters, and to give a background to the broader demographic of each age range of participants. The focus of enquiry has been to emphasise their use and adoption of technology, both in digital and in relation to analogue counterparts. This has covered both formal and informal education, whilst also considering the distinctive traits of the majority of participants in each age range. At the conclusion of each age range analysis a number of points have been provided that synthesise the outcomes of participant interview analysis.

Whilst there a individual characteristics that define each age range their also commonalities to all, which are irrespective of age. Participants from all age ranges

expressed that they possessed 'natural' abilities while others, a particularly ones in the 18–28 age range, were initially timid, sceptical or disinterested with the affordances of digital technology. This helps to give a clearer picture of the diversity of learning styles and perceived competences or lack them within all adults, including the younger adults. It goes some way to dismiss as a misrepresentation and over-simplistic characterisation of adults, as expressed by Tapscott and Prensky. The image portrayed here, in the mid 2010s, is more diverse and multifaceted, based several criteria. One of these is the role of formal and informal education in contemporary society and the willingness for adults to explore other avenues of personal learning in the pursuit of expressing and sharing some self-expression through different forms of vernacular creativity. There are also cultural reasons for not embracing digital technology and the internet, as Sally-Anne and Mandy expressed. However, as with both of these examples, several participants became interested in engaging as a result of feelings of personal necessity via their hobbies and interests. In so doing they found ways of overcoming their perceived lack of technological aptitude or skills.

It is clear from some of the response and through the ability to verify some of the content discussed online that participants of all age ranges are creating sophisticated digital artefacts that require multimodal collections of media. Examples of this were Tracey's and Iris's Photoshop montages. High levels of technical competence were achieved by several of the participants, however it is difficult to ascertain whether a critical understand has been developed and this may be revealed when discussing the practices of content creation and sharing and their motivations for creating this content in the following chapters. The next two chapters look at how the participants have used their technical skills to create and share digital content followed by a chapter on motivation.

Chapter 6 – Creating digital content

6.1 Creating digital content

The previous chapter focused on each group's introduction to digital technology and the internet, and examined where and what had influenced their learning. For the over-65s, the emphasis was concentrated on their retirement and their incentive to be re-educated. The 40–50 age range was concerned with work, family life and children, and the 18–28s still had a connection to their recent education, early stages of their working life and learning new technology. By way of continuing the study, this and the following chapter take a closer examination of how these different age ranges create and share content on the internet.

This chapter is directly concerned with how participants create digital content and explores how adults use digital technology to create content, be this directly through digital tools or remediated from an analogue technology, such as video, or physical artefacts, such as drawings. The aim of this chapter is to discover the content creation practices of the participants. Each section details participants' engagement and response to different practices, and the technologies they have used to create their content. Although the structure and topics are similar for each age range there are variations within each of the age ranges, as one might expect with a wide age range of participants. As with the previous chapter, each age range will be discussed and comments given individually with key observations drawn and comparisons made in the conclusion at the end. It should be noted that while the sharing of digital content is the subject of the next chapter, there are some practices of creating content within this chapter that include an element of online sharing, such as blogging, as these are inherent to the practice.

The chapter begins by examining salient themes that immerged from the data analysis. These are provided as supplementary topics relating to subjects in the literature review, namely, but not exclusively, digital content creation and creativity.

Following this, each age range will be discussed, closing with summary and analysis of the chapter.

6.1.2 Age ranges and digital content creators

Earlier in this project, discussion was given to the relevance and significance of the phrase 'digital generation' (and similar terms) with regard and relevance to this research. One of the main characteristics attributed almost exclusively to the 'digital native' and 'digital generation' is that of user-created digital content (Tapscott, 1999; 2008; Prensky, 2001; Palfrey and Gasser, 2008). Palfrey and Gasser (2008) claim that digital content creation is the "key feature" of the "first generation of digital natives" and a new social practice of adolescence. However, as this research addresses, UGC and content creation are inclusive of all ages range and have been adopted, as statistics show (Office for National Statistics, 2013a), by a significant amount of people born before the digital era.

While much academic discussion about digital content creation is dominated around children and young adults (Buckingham, 2008b; Livingstone, 2002; Facer and Furlong, 2001), there has been little research conducted into the content produced by the wider populace. Livingstone (2004) argues that content creation is a key area of literacy for building "skills in analysis and evaluation" (ibid.:5) and opens doors to new uses of the internet, where citizens have the right to self-expression, self representation and cultural participation. Furthermore, academic research directly relating to online content creation and interaction between different adult age groups is minimal. Existing research tends to have been quantitative, survey-based research, not qualitative.

Hargittai and Walejeko carried out a study entitled *The Participation Divide – Content creation and sharing in the digital age*, which examines the frequency of content creation and sharing among a highly wired group of young adults. It:

> Explore(s) the extent to which young adults create video, music, writing and artistic photography, as well the prevalence of sharing such material online (Hargittai and Walejko, 2008:239).

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However, although content creation and sharing is the starting point for their research, their paper is specifically concerned with the relation between educational background and participation levels of online skills among young adults.

A research project by Karahasanovic et al. (2008) conducted three separate studies into "elderly people's user requirements" for co-creation and UGC in Norway. They defined "elderly people" as "people who are 50 years and over", but ambiguously "distinguishes between different age groups [of] people in this overall category" (ibid.:656). The outcome of these studies showed that this age range "rarely participate in online communities and share audio-visual UGC. However, they embrace some aspects of the new media [and] are very motivated to contribute with UGC, given the right circumstances" (ibid.:655) although, confusingly, they identify the right circumstances as "working with AV content". The participants in this study showed particular interest in digitising old analogue material and were motivated to contribute with content that documents the history of their neighbourhood. Participants especially found enjoyment through sharing their content in an offline context, too. The research findings identified that:

> elderly users are […] recognizing computers and online communities as valuable social environments for communication [and] are slowly learning to recognize the affective, personal integrative, affiliative, and creative aspects of online communities and user-generated content sites. [However] it is important they be able to use the new technologies easily and identify their worries about using them (ibid.:668).

Karahasanovic et al. concluded that the social value of the 'proxy technologies' was undeniable for the process of bonding and bridging, and increases social capital. "As with other age groups, online communities and communication proved to be a significant ice-breaker for social interaction" (ibid.:668). Their research maintained that there was "a gap between digitally literate users and the elderly, *a generational divide*" (ibid. authors' italics). This implies that digital literacy is unattainable by retired people.

6.1.3 Engaging in content creation

Shao's (2009) analytical framework, referred to in chapter three, was designed to explain why individuals engage with user-generated media, uses a three level structure: consumption, participation and production. He suggests that internet users follow these three steps of activity before they create content and share their content. Initially, they seek information and entertainment from user-generated media, such as YouTube and Flickr, as consumers or lurkers of the platform.

> After breaking through some barriers, individuals participate through interacting with the content and other users. Such interaction can help them build and maintain social connections as well as virtual communities. Finally, people come to produce content (2009:15).

Drotner and Schrøder claim the recent worldwide increase of digital participation and content creation indicates that "users operate as active and engaged citizens and consumers, freely voicing their own concerns and shaping their futures [with a] deep seated notion of individual freedom of expression" (2010:4). They describe digital content creation as a "means to an end" with a "future-orientated competence formation".

> [It] is at odds with established discourses to do with creativity, with learning and with media. Creativity has traditionally been defined as an individual ability with which, for example, gifted individuals such as artists and scientists are endowed. Today, this ability is seen to potentially include everyone, and it is defined as a social demand and a means of economic innovation. From being an inborn gift for the few, creativity has become a collective competence to be nurtured by virtually everybody and with digital content creators as a key lever (ibid.:3).

This statement links the creation of content of 'ordinary' people to a form of vernacular, everyday creativity as discussed in chapter 3. Before moving to the participant data analysis some further discussion is need to explain the nature and composition of a digital artefact, which supplements the previously discussed topic of remix culture in chapter three.

6.1.4 Multimodality, multimodal communication and text

A consideration when discussing digital content creation is the relative ease to which digital resources can be accessed from a digital storage device via the internet, or remediated through a scanner or analogue conversion software. The freedom to copy afforded by the digital domain enables production and remixing of content by, "cutting, pasting and combining semiotic resources into new digital and multimodal texts, which is achieved by downloading and uploading files from different sources" (Erstad, 2010:64). This could be considered a form of remix, digital bricolage or multimodality, where content is created or assembled from diverse locations.

Multimodality is a term that has been advanced over the last decade to consider changes in society with particular regard to new media and digital technologies (Kress, 2009; Bezemer and Mavers, 2011). Multimodality focuses on the premise that learning involves more that words and language and includes the analysis of all forms of communication. It derives from the social semiotic research of Halliday (1983) and is particularly concerned with the integration and interaction of two or more semiotic resources. Bezemer and Kress describe a mode as a "socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning" (2008:171). An example relevant to content creation, therefore, would be an image.

> Image has resources such as position of elements in a framed space, size, colour, shape, icons of various kinds—lines, circles—as well as resources such as spatial relation, and in the case of moving images, the temporal succession of images, movement (ibid.)

Multimodal communication can be applied to all forms of communication. Speech, language and other forms of non-verbal communication, such as gesture and posture, are performed simultaneously when humans communicate. This may be done in conjunction with visual images and sound using of objects or media that help provide different ways of communication and self-expression (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996).

6.1.5 Multimodal texts

As previously discussed, this research focuses on visual and/or audio content created by users in a non-professional capacity. Some of this content may consist of multiple forms of digital objects, such as photographs, pictures, videos and audio content. These could be websites which contain audio clips alongside the words, or film which uses words, music, sound effects and moving images (OpenLearn LabSpace, n.d.). Multimodal texts pre-date digital, but the process can be made easier through the use of digital technology. "A single binary code could be used for representation in a variety of multimodal compositions to appear in combinations of speech, music, text, graphics, still or moving image" (Lundby, 2008:8). Multimodality enables semiotic transformations and through the process of digitalisation,

> different modes have technically become the same at some level of representation, and they can be operated by one multi-skilled person, using one interface, one mode of physical manipulation, so that he or she can ask at every point: "Shall I express this with sound or music", "Shall I say it visually or verbally" and so on (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001:2).

Therefore, multimodal texts in the digital age are difficult to define due to, what Manovich describes as, new media objects consisting of independent parts which consist of smaller independent parts, down to the smallest, such as pixels, 3D points or characters (2001). Indeed, the concept of remixing digital data, or "mashable" data, as discussed in chapter three, becomes less definable.

Hull and Nelson argue that multimodal composition is not simply "additive art" where images, words, and music are juxtaposed to increase the potential meaning of a text. "A multimodal text can create a different system of signification, one that transcends the collective contribution of its constituent parts" (2005:225). Lankshear and Knobel (2006) argue that it is important to understand multimodality and digital remix are different types of narratives. These are the type of narratives inherent in many forms of digital content including digital storytelling.

6.1.6 Digital storytelling

Knut Lundby describes digital storytelling as "mediatized stories" and "self-representational stories in new media" (2008:1) and is a bottom-up user-generated media practice produced by amateurs. However, a differentiation has been made between bottom-up 'amateur' productions on sites, such as YouTube and Flickr that create their content independently, and institution-led projects where content is produced by non-professionals but under their guidance and supervision (ibid.). Examples of the latter are projects from the Californian-based Center for Digital Storytelling (Lambert, 2006) in the early 1990s and the *Capture Wales* project from the BBC in Wales in 2001 (Meadows, 2003). Joe Lambert, founder of the Center for Digital Storytelling, makes the distinction between media produced for broadcast and digital storytelling or "conversational media [that] would not easily stand alone as broadcast media, but, in the context of conversation, it can be extraordinarily powerful" (Lambert, 2006:17). He argues that digital storytelling is a form that increases understanding across age groups and generations (ibid.).

Couldry describes the process of digital storytelling thus.

> People who have never done so before are telling personal stories through digital forms, storing and exchanging those stories in sites and networks that would not exist without the World Wide Web and which, because of the remediation capacity of digital media, have multiple possibilities for transmission, retransmission and transformation available to them (2008:373).

The Center for Digital Storytelling conceived seven elements of digital storytelling:

1. Point of view – What is the main point of the story and what is the perspective of the author?
2. A dramatic question – A key question that keeps the viewer's attention and will be answered by the end of the story.
3. Emotional content – Serious issues that come alive in a personal and powerful way and connects the story to the audience.
4. The gift of your voice – A way to personalize the story to help the audience understand the context.
5. The power of the soundtrack – Music or other sounds that support and embellish the storyline.

6. Economy – Using just enough content to tell the story without overloading the viewer.

7. Pacing – The rhythm of the story and how slowly or quickly it progresses (Robin, 2008:223).

Jean Burgess' research into digital storytelling directly links the process to vernacular creativity through remediation into a digital media context.

> Digital storytelling can be understood not only as a media form but also as a field of cultural practice [and is] explicitly designed to amplify the ordinary voice. It aims not only to remediate vernacular creativity but also to legitimate it as a relatively autonomous and worthwhile contribution to public culture. This marks it as an important departure from even the most empathetic 'social documentary' traditions. Digital storytelling in this form balances the ethics of democratic 'access' with an aesthetic that aims to maximize relevance and impact (2006:207).

Her workshop for the Kelvin Grove Urban Village Sharing Stories (Klaebe, 2006) project involved 'elderly' participants. She noticed they adopted a very different style of expression with an emphasis on facts and detail, "linear temporality, an almost entirely referential use of images, and a journalistic tone" (Burgess, 2006:208). By contrast, younger participants used images instinctively and metaphorically with a preference for colloquialisms of everyday speech where personal and emotive themes were more prevalent. Burgess came to the conclusion that when 'ordinary' people have the opportunity to create content for public consumption they relate it to their personal experiences (ibid.). Having discussed the themes relating to digital content creation, this chapter now proceeds to the qualitative research.

6.2 +65 Creating digital content

Chapter five described how the adoption of digital technology by the over 65s participants was self-motivated and part of a personal (re)education process. Learning institutions played a role in introducing them to the digital domain, which helped develop their technical and digital literacy and in some cases introduced and encouraged them into the practice of content creation. One of the primary modal

forms of digital content creation embraced by all 12 participants was digital photography.

6.2.1 Digital photography

For five participants, digital photography was the first time they had been introduced to 'creative' photography (photography other than family photos and holiday snaps). Two of the female participants revealed that losing their husbands through death or divorce was one of the contributing factors for adopting photography. Digital photography had been enthusiastically embraced for its ease of use, immediacy and advocated for its relatively low cost compared to its analogue/film counterpart. Therefore, it was the gateway technology that gave this age range greater freedom to create digital content. Julie was typical of these participants as she found the instantaneous process of using digital photography and creating digital content encouraged her to upload and share online with others, a subject covered in greater depth in the following chapter.

Julie +65:   When I discovered digital photography [it] changed my life because you could directly see what you did and put in your computer, and then I wanted to put it in my blogs and I discovered I could put it on Flickr, too.

While these advantages were similar for each age range, the over-65 participants were the most vocal in discussing the merits of digital photography. This was consistent with their recent introduction to digital content creation tools and practices. As the preceding chapter discussed, several of the participants developed an interest in digital photography through the adoption of hobbies in retirement and in some cases this was a rediscovery of a youthful aspiration. All participants found that once they had embraced the digital domain, going back to analogue was inconceivable. Susanne illustrates this directly by explaining that her interest in photography purely extends to the digital format, which in turn introduced her to computers and the internet.

Susanne +65:   I'm only in photography because of digital technology. I wouldn't be doing it otherwise. It wouldn't be of interest to me.

Asked why this was the case, she suggests a freer, extemporaneous and less restrictive way of use.

Susanne +65:   I'm not a control freak like the traditional old-fashioned photographers who decide whether the picture is going to look a particular way. I enjoy the camera surprising me and being spontaneous. I see the result and say, "right, that's interesting, I hadn't planned that. I'll change what I'm going to do because here is an effect I like that I didn't intend or expect". So I wouldn't be doing photography if it weren't for the capacity of a digital camera to show you the picture and allow you to take as many shots as you want.

For Susanne, adoption of digital photography afforded her with spontaneous and serendipitous qualities along with the facility for experimentation easily and freely. This led directly to her involvement in a creative process and self-expression. She also disassociated herself with the controlled photographic (film) practices of the past. Susanne expressed that digital photography was the enabler for her self-created content. This supports the notion that digital photography is a gateway technology in the creation of content for this age range. Initially this view might appear technologically deterministic, since the new technology forms new practices and behaviours. However, as previously stated, several participants in this age range (including Susanne) were denied the opportunity to take-up creative pursuits in earlier life. Therefore, digital technology (as well as more available time in retirement) has facilitated the motivations and creative aspirations that they were denied. Put simply, digital tools allow for new or supressed behaviours but they don't cause them (see Shirky interviewed in Aitkenhead, 2010).

The majority of the sample had used Adobe Photoshop, or other photo manipulation and editing software, which enabled them to edit their photographs through a single a computer interface (see Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001), and provided additional resources such as image resizing and retouching (see Bezemer and Kress, 2008). Editing digital photographs takes two different forms. Firstly, due to the digital format's affordance to cheaply store a greater quantity of photographs, the process of choosing and editing down the most appealing and appropriate photograph is increased through creative decision-making. Secondly, in choosing the picture or

pictures from the full set of photographs, they can enhance and manipulate their photographs for aesthetic purposes.

Several participants found learning this kind of software influenced how they took photographs, adding a pre-planned creative thought-process to their practice. Photo-manipulation software also gave certain participants the freedom to go beyond the simple chromatic level changes available and adopt compositing techniques like layering. Indeed, Julie, who has 35,000 photos on Flickr, 'plays' with her photographs by editing them together, which encouraged her creative instincts.

Julie +65:   I like to use Photoshop to play with my photos to make them better and to [composite] them together. […] Usually I go out and I take 150 photos and put half on Flickr.

Julie used Photoshop to remix her own content and construct new images and meaning from her images. Similarly, Bill cuts out sections of his photographs and combines them with other graphic techniques, such as creating speech bubble captions and adding text.

Bill +65:   My recent [joke photo was of] a cat sitting outside a barn and then adding a caption underneath, "Never mind all this astronomy, what about another sausage", which I think is quite amusing. […] The other thing I do is to take someone's head and put onto something out of context then you can put a caption on it.

Bill typifies several participants in this age range who had initially learnt digital skills for a specific interest or hobby, as in Bill's Astro photography, but through that medium found other ways of expressing themselves as a form of vernacular, everyday creativity (see Burgess, 2007; Gauntlett, 2011). The majority of participants had never created their own visual content prior to retirement and have moved from being solely content consumers to content creators as well (see Shirky, 2010).

Participants were asked whether adopting photography had made them view the world differently. Several indicated that becoming involved with digital photography had encouraged them to more closely observe the world around them and record and remember events.

Mary +65:   [Photography] is a good way of recording events, which you may forget. It makes you look at people and what's around you with a much sharper eye.

Julie +65:   I discovered the world differently when I begin [taking photos]. I walked without looking around before. And the photographs somehow opened my eyes to the things that I can see. […] A lot of the time I express myself through photos.

By recording events around them in their daily lives, participants were effectively producing photographic image sequences that formed a visual diary of personal expression. In this sense, participants were socially and culturally producing content that derives meaning in their lives and communicated via the internet to their family, friends and online communities (see Bezemer and Kress, 2008).

6.2.2 Video production

Video production was performed regularly by two of the over-65s sample. One of the participants had learnt the process by transferring from analogue to digital and used the medium primarily to edit holiday videos into chronological sequences before sharing with her family and friends. Peter, as we have seen in the previous chapter, had no previous knowledge of analogue video technology, and learnt all the skills to create his videos informally through help files, books and videos. The videos predominantly comprise him speaking to camera, either telling a story about his life or talking about a topical subject. His YouTube channel is a record of his life through historical personal vernacular narratives.

Peter +65:   All of my early videos told stories, little anecdotes about my life as a child in World War Two. It would seem that young people love to hear about it. They were little bits of history that aren't written in the books. They were the most popular thing I've done.

Peter's videos exemplify the bottom-up self-representational stories that define digital storytelling, as identified by Lambert (2006) and Lundby (2008), that are presented in the vernacular. However, an interesting difference is that his stories are produced without aid from an institutional mentor, and are relatively unplanned, script-free and

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unrehearsed. Although Peter's content creation could be considered untypical of the age range, he is similar to a number of participants who are engaged in multimodal communication and vernacular creativity through online platforms, such as blogs or the building and maintaining of websites.

6.2.3 Blogs and websites

One-third of over-65 participants contributed to or maintained a blog at the time of being interviewed. One, however, encapsulated the beneficial discovery and an unexpected introduction to community and sharing that accompanied having a blog. Jane had been creating drawings on paper for many years but was introduced to blogs via a photography course. She found the introduction to digital technologies a transformative experience.

Jane +65:   I discovered blogging as a way of communicating and recording my progress [on the Open College of Arts photography course] but then I realised I could upload other stuff. Then I discovered there was this whole world of mainly women creating stuff and uploading it onto their blogs. Then I started scanning [my physical artwork] and putting it on [my blog]. I started [blogging] and eventually people started finding me and becoming followers and commenting, and I looked at their blogs as well.

Jane represents several of the participants who found that remediating their non-digital content to a blog opened up new experiences and widened self-expressive reach. Three of the female respondents learnt to build, manage and create content for websites as a hobby because of an interest in or membership of an organisation. They had complementary computer skills that were acquired in their working lives and post-retirement education, with web authoring skills learnt through formal college courses, books and manuals. Diana created and maintained two farmers' market websites using web authoring software and online tools, and added her own digital photos taken at the markets. The other two website creators, Sheila and Christine, had similar experiences. Sheila built and managed a Geological Society website, which involved the uploading of images and text from members along with her own photographs. Christine managed the day-today requirements of a west London

allotment site and used her and other members' photographs to illustrate the site. The three people represented here used many different skills and recourses to produce their websites. Although this was multimodal in its content it was also an altruist act that helped to build a local and localised community and embraced basic collaborative practices.

6.2.4 +65 Summary

Digital photography was described comprehensively as being easier than its analogue counterpart. While this process was certainly recognised in the 40–50 age range, it was more acute within the over 65s sample. For these participants, digital photography was the gateway medium into the practice of digital content creation and, in several cases, personal creative practice. Most notable is how, through the low barrier to entry, instant access to images and low cost, this practice was adopted by all participants. The ability to upload digital images directly to their computers indirectly introduced them to picture editing and photographic manipulation software, such as Adobe Photoshop, through the desire to self-edit and change their photographs. Use of software of this type made this sample more aware of the possibilities and complex processes of editing and changing photographs, which would otherwise have been dictated by the original analogue film exposure, film stock, film processing company and original composition.

What is clear from the sample of participants is how they not only embraced the digital domain but were also enthusiastically productive when creating their own digital content. While much content was produced through digital photography, participants have shown the ability to edit and composite images as remixes of their own content. Manipulation of images was such that they were able to produce more complex and compositional content though layering, compositing and combining images. Therefore, respondents in this age range were able to embrace, explore and experiment with photography and stimulate restrained creative desires. In several cases, digital photography increased the over-65s' ability to use their imagination and experiment in creating conceptual images and, as with Susanne, afforded unexpected and serendipitous elements to emerge in the artistic process. This may,

in part, be due the level of free time in retirement and the suppression of previous creative activities in earlier life, as indicated in the preceding chapter.

The over-65s' enthusiasm and ability to create digital content presented by the participants in this study was wide ranging. This is contrary to the image projected by Karahasanovic et al. (2008) of an age range preoccupied with digitising historical documents. Digitally literate (and illiterate) people are from all groups, and the ability to be digitally literate is not confined necessarily to younger age ranges (see White and Cornu, 2011). While this is a small and specialised sample of retired individuals, their responses question the notion that retired individuals are disinterested in engaging with the digital domain to create content and that there is disconnect between them and digital technology, as suggested by Tapscott (1999; 2008) and Palfrey and Gasser (2008). Several participants in this age range were introduced to photography via digital for the first time and this had the effect of making them more aware of their surroundings and stimulated them to record events. These took the form of photographic sequences that resemble non-linear narratives of their lives. This may not represent the concept of digital storytelling by its strictest definition of multimodal content and video format. However, it does represent an implicit self-expressive personal story and form of vernacular and everyday creativity. As discussed in chapter 3 this is creativity that is of value to the individual and for participants the transfer to digital domain has encouraged the embedding of creative practice in their lives irrespective of whether they share their content with others online.

Peter provided a different take on the concept of digital storytelling through his YouTube videos. His videos were essentially unrehearsed, unscripted, camera static, dialogue pieces with minimal or no editing. While it could be argued that Peter was untypical of this age range, his use of multimodal texts to create his content was similar to several other participants who found creating a blog and populating it with their photographs was a very important way to explore their self-expression, tell a personal story and progress as creative individuals. This had the unintentional consequence for several participants of coincidentally engaging with a wider demographic of web users and some with niche online communities. A typical example was that of Jane, who found that she began to use it as a learning platform

for showing and experimenting with her digital and non-digital visual content, and, through that, found an online community of like-minded people.

6.3 40–50 Creating digital content

Introduction to the digital domain, as described in chapter five, was integrated into the lives of the 40–50 age range as a more gradual process. This is because, in the workplace, analogue technologies and practices were replaced with digital ones, along with the adoption of digital devices at home. Digital knowledge and introduction to the internet through employment played a major role in enabling the adoption of digital content creation activities. However, a reoccurring theme within this age range was that the content they created was primarily for their own creative self-expression, and sharing their content on the web was, in many cases, incidental. Robbie exemplified this, maintaining, "I don't take photos especially for sharing on the web" and Fern stated categorically that, "I don't create for the web, I create for myself".

While all participants used digital photography as a matter of course, there was generally less emphasis or discussion about this practice during interview. The sample demonstrated a broader diversity of digital practices and digital production than in the over-65s and often used more than one digital mode to create their content. A greater amount of physical drawings, photographs and analogue media, such as 35mm film and video, was also remediated. Having access to digital technology at home or away from the workplace brought about a new context for creating visual content. The process of digital remediation and online dissemination of shared content was more widespread within the majority of participants.

6.3.1 Digital photography

Unlike the over-65s, all participants had used film photography in some form, be this for recording personal events or for creative self-expression. Therefore, other than the advantages of ease of use and instantly viewable content, there was transfer and integration of previously learned skills and knowledge into the digital domain. Denis echoes several participants who suggest that their reason for taking photographs did

not change after adopting the digital format. For him, the real innovation is not merely the speed and ease of digital photography, but the ability to share online.

Denis 40–50:   When I discovered Flickr it seemed a very interesting way of sharing and showing my photographs with people rather that just having them sitting in a shoebox or on a PC […] but putting photographs on the web is not my prime reason for taking photographs. It's actually about being attuned to seeing things in everyday life that are interesting subjects that could be turned into a good photograph.

Denis typified several of this age range, as, although he was enamoured with his ability to share his photographs, the primary reason for taking them was to record his everyday experiences in a creative and imaginative way. Although his content was digitally produced, he was using the same decision-making skills transferred from the pre-digital era. While the technical process had become faster for him through the advent of digital technology, the process of everyday creative judgements remained the same.

Kate characterised a number of participants having only recently transferred to digital photography. She had been taking 35mm film photographs since she was a teenager and, at the time of interview, had just begun the remediation process of transferring 35mm film negatives to digital files/data.

Kate 40–50:   Originally I got [my photographs and negatives] back from the developers and I'd look through them, put them in a drawer and not show them to anybody. I've just digitised some of them and found some absolutely excellent, beautiful photographs. Some of them I've put on the web.

For Kate, remediating the photographs from her past helped to re-discover and revisit her pre-digital creativity. This enabled her to build an historical narrative of her life. Denis and Kate are examples of how this age range have taken both practices and content from pre-digital era and successfully transferred them to the digital domain, with the advantage of being able to exhibit their content online to a wider 'audience'. Denis and Kate were using image sequences from the past and the present in the

form of personal narratives and creative self-expression to form implicit stories about their lives.

6.3.2 Video production

The majority of the sample practised forms of video production, but two participants provided the most insight into the practices of this age range. Ray created videos specifically for the internet. He plays improvised electric guitar through a variety of old valve amplifiers and uploads them to YouTube.

Ray 40–50:   I record a video in one take. So immediately I'm straight onto the computer and audio mixing. I'm rapid and that's part of the joy of it for me. I probably do one or two a month. It's not precious in the slightest and very spontaneous.

By contrast, Kate was making videos in the form of personal stories since 1986. In the 1990s she bought a computer and made the transfer to Adobe Premiere, a video editing software package.

Kate 40–50:   I realised I've [inadvertently] been making content for the web since the 80s, but only recently thought about putting it on there in the last few years.

However, remediating her content for the internet made her re-evaluate the original decision-making process of her earlier videos. She has subsequently shortened the length and made re-edits before uploading to the internet. Her conviction was that this redaction process had helped her engage with a newly found online audience. Although the re-editing process had been undoubtedly influenced by the videos Kate had viewed on the internet, she still maintained her videos were not specifically created for the internet.

Kate 40–50:   I think my filmmaking is now much more audience-orientated in that it's more 'acceptable'. It's a more finely tuned film, but I don't think I'm making something especially for the web.

Kate and Ray demonstrate two different aspects of creating digital moving image sequences. Firstly, Ray created content for the sole purpose of uploading it to the

internet. His content was unplanned and spontaneous with no particular regard for narrative but created through the need to show his skill as a guitar player and for self-expression. Kate, on the other hand, planned her original videos carefully and, through remediation, adapted them to meet the requirements of a new audience on the internet. Her videos were historical records of her pre-digital creative life remixed for the digital domain and presented to an online audience. Both these participants developed an understanding of the need to create content suitable for the medium of the internet. Kate edited and redacted her videos to suit an "online audience", and, for Ray, the speed and spontaneity of production enables him to produce and share content regularly without concern for high production values. They were both telling personal stories, Ray implicitly and Kate explicitly.

6.3.4 Blogging

The adoption of commercially hosted blogging services over static personally created websites are the preferred online publishing medium for participants. Several considered the ease of set-up and relative flexibility of blogging as the best online publishing option for personal expression of their ideas or opinions. Some used it as a personal archive or repository, or for recording stages and stories of their lives, or as a way of exhibiting new material, such as music compositions or artistic renditions. In common with several participants, Tracey was introduced to blogging by a friend and began using pictures and montaged illustrations to enhance and add humour to her stories. Tracey took a curatorial role when creating visual content for her blog by remixing content she finds on Google Images. However, inspiration for the style of her montages came from an earlier pre-digital stage in her life.

Tracey 40–50: I have an older brother who introduced me to *Private Eye* and its satirical imagery and content when I was growing up. So I like to use [this type of] imagery in my blog to make a point.

Tracey exemplified several participants who brought cultural influences and ideas from their pre-digital life into their digital content. Several participants were inspired by the idea of producing a blog that was a personal record of their lives and, in the case of Tom, an aide-mémoire to the periods in his life, which he considers creative.

Tom 40–50:   I just keep [my blog] quite simple. It's pictures, it's quotes and lyrics and poems and views I have about certain things. […] The blog is about a particular time and place in my life when I was doing a lot of writing, music and pictures. I'm glad it's up there because it was a particularly creative, productive time in my life.

In this sense, Tom was producing a non-linear historical narrative of his creativity and a record of content. This reminded him and shows others of a time in his life when he was producing content that expressed his creativity.

6.3.5 Music composition and sound recording

As discussed previously, music composition and sound recording can be integral parts of video production. However, sound and music recordings are also stand-alone digital artefacts. Along with his self-proclaimed "stay-at-home-dad" status Rich described himself as a musician and a phonographer.

Rich 40–50:   I'm interested in phonography which is field recordings, so I've recently started contributing to a [phonography] website. I've recorded the local river (laughs) and sent them an mp3 of it.

He also composed and recorded his own music and performed live in a band. He used digital software and recording equipment to create audio recordings and prompt user feedback.

Rich 40–50:   I certainly upload one [sound recording or music composition] a week in the case of one website. If I've done a gig then it tends to be more spontaneous. I might put the recording of the gig up or if I'm working on a new composition put a 'work in progress' up on Soundcloud and see what people think of it.

Through this process, Rich was able to share and receive a critique on his content from three different types of audio content; the music compositions recorded directly on his computer, his field recordings and his live recordings.

6.3.6 40–50 Summary

This is a life stage all but ignored by previous academic internet research with regard to content creation. Therefore, little comparison can be made to this sample of participants and preceding research. What this research has revealed is that 40–50 participants have benefited from a gradual introduction to digital technology through the workplace, self-learning and access to computers and software in the home. Issues of this kind need greater consideration in the debate concerning the skills and attributes of the "digital generation" and their differentiation from "digital immigrants" (see Tapscott, 2008; 1999; Prensky, 2001; Palfrey and Gasser, 2008). Many in this age range had been using digital tools alongside analogue tools for many years and some longer than many "born digital". Therefore, the significance of digital content creation tools was less remarkable to them than the over 65s. Indeed, many had been creating content with narratives and stories of their lives using both analogue and digital technologies. Here are examples of the vernacular everyday creativity, which, until recently, have been hidden from view. Photographs stored in boxes or drawers and videos cassettes collecting dust on a shelf were remediated. What is different here is the acknowledgement and realisation of the redactive and reediting necessary to meet the expectations of an online 'audience'. This is evidence that individuals in this age range are aware of the alterations needed to content to suit the medium. In this circumstance an understanding of the immediacy of the medium, which results in a more direct approach, such as shorter videos. This age range have an awareness too of the potential of the internet to share their content with a greater amount of people, online communities and networks, irrespective of location - the subject of the next chapter.

As previously stated, digital technology has allowed several participants to make technical adjustment and artistic improvements relatively easily and instantly compared to many analogue technologies, and this has impacted positively on how they perceive their development. Two of the most notable technologies were photography and video. However, Denis represented a large portion of the participants who recognised that, as the example of digital photography shows, the technical process and knowledge needed to use a digital technology may be faster

and easier to use, but the creative decision-making process of choosing a subject to photograph were unaffected by the transfer to digital technology.

As previously described, a blog is a multimodal medium and was used by several participants as a way of recording their thoughts, or as repositories for creative practices in their lives. Tracey demonstrated how access to online visual resources gave her the ability to act as picture editor, curator and art director of her own online publication. Ross's use of music and sound online services helped him share and receive feedback on his content through the network effect of having a potentially large and specialised community linked to his profile. Kate demonstrated how the process of remediation and redaction helped this age range re-discover and re-evaluate their previous work and share it with an "audience" that had not been previously available. Ray was one of only a few participants who created directly for the internet. However, a large portion of the sample maintained that they create digital or non-digital content primarily as a process of creative self-expression, and that publishing and sharing on the internet was valuable but less important.

6.4 18–28 Creating digital content

Several of the 18–28 participants had been using the web for many years prior to interview. Some had been creating and sharing content through commercial web services for as many as 10 years and, therefore, the majority of participants were well acquainted with digital technology. Photography was ubiquitous and habitually produced, often created on a range of devices or via different software packages. All of the respondents were engaged in the production of more than one type of media content, however, they were not necessarily multimodally combined. Four of the participants engaged in traditional, non-digital drawing, illustration and painting, which were integrated into their online and digital activities. Video production was more prominent and diverse in content and use than the older age ranges. For several participants, content was created with the sole purpose of being published and shared on the internet. Consequently, there was a higher level of multimodality, and creating content *for* sharing was more prevalent. Several displayed a blasé, nonchalant and carefree attitude to creating and uploading content, which in some

cases was less considered than the older groups. For some, creating and sharing content was part of the same process.

Andy 18–28:   It is just really fluid when I create content. […] I don't curate it. I'll take the photo and it'll go up immediately.

Damian 18–28: I don't actively try and create content. Anything that seems appropriate I share online.

Fay 18–28:   I always get the urge once I deem my drawing or digital artwork finished to post it online.

The transfer from analogue to digital was less prominent within 18–28 participants range than older age ranges. Having grown up during the transition they often learnt to use both digital and analogue technologies side-by-side. This enabled many to grow up using a mixture of analogue with digital technologies. Carl was a case in point, who used both analogue videotape-recording camera and digital software packages on his PC when he was in his teens. He felt that his peers, many who have been using both technologies to make content, had found the transition to digital technology easier than other ages.

Carl 18–28:   I think people of my age are quite adept with digital technology and finding things out for themselves. […] We're used to exploring technology and software to see what happens.

This continues Carl's claim from the previous chapter that people in their late-20s were the ones who experienced the transfer from analogue to digital technologies in their early teens. Consequently, they were able to directly compare and contrast the two types of technologies before they had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with either. Based on this small sample of 18–28 content creators, there is evidence to show that growing up during the transfer from analogue to digital technology may have helped – not hindered – their understanding of digital media. Indeed, for participants in this study at least, they may be the people who were equally, if not more adept, with digital technology and its uses for creating content than someone born into a predominantly digital environment.

6.4.1 Digital photography

All of the participants cited digital photography as one of their main ways of creating content. The vast majority of the sample were unsurprisingly introduced to photography as a digital format. Digital photography, as for all age ranges in this study, was the foundation medium and technology that lays the base for other forms of digital content to be produced. This is not only because of its relatively low skills base, but because it introduced participants to software packages and encourages the development of computer skills, as previously seen with the older age range. Several participants commented on the concept of a completed digital artefact. Dan described this in relation to his digital photography.

Dan 18–28:   I have a lot of trouble knowing when a series or set of photographs is finished because it doesn't really make much sense nowadays, because in a few years you can go back to it and change or re-blend it and a lot of artists are remixing or re-editing old content by themselves.

He sees the potential for continually evolving content as a positive characteristic of digital artefacts.

Dan 18–28:   It's a beautiful thing of our times that things are not just as they are at the beginning and they are just continuously evolving.

Several in the group echoed Dan's view, believing that "finished" digital content was a paradox and that digital content by definition was continually fluctuating and changeable.

6.4.2 Video production

Video production featured prominently throughout the sample. Yet two of the participants produced significant amounts of self-created videos for publishing and sharing on the internet. Both of them worked full-time and create their content in the evening and at weekends. What differentiates them from the two older age ranges is that their content resembles personal "branding" of themselves through their interests and hobbies. This mirrors a trend of young people in their early-20s who are building global fan bases through their YouTube channels (2008). They produce highly

personalised, personable and professional quality videos on subjects ranging from make-up and style, fashion, animation, music and personal life stories (vblogging), and they all generate income through the YouTube's Partner Program (Cheshire, 2013), which will be covered in the next chapter.

Both participants produced content for their own YouTube channels and gained success in attracting a substantial amount of subscribers and views. This has led them unintentionally but receptively to earn money through the YouTube's Partner Program (YouTube, 2013). Carl's introduction to the internet began in the mid-1990s when he used it purely for researching school assignments, but, as previously stated, he had been making videos using analogue and digital video production technology since he was in his early teens. This early experience helped him better understand the video-making process.

He started making videos for sharing on the internet in 2006, after qualifying as a primary school teacher and taking a phonics (the blending together of small units of sound to read words) training course.. In the late-2000s, phonics was undergoing a resurgence in popularity among educators due, in part, to the publication of *The Rose Review* (Rose, 2009). It suggested that early childhood reading is primarily affected by the teaching of phonics. Carl used this as the inspiration for his videos, which led him to start filming and editing phonics videos in his spare time for both his personal pleasure and as an educational resource.

Carl 18–28:   When I moved to London I was supply teaching and that was an opportunity to create and upload most of my content. […] I make the content myself. I edited it myself, filmed it and set up the camera myself. I then add music, add the intro, add the outro, render it and upload it to YouTube all myself.

Carl used many different modes to make his videos, which were produced as if they were a children's story. He wears a costume and speaks with a child-friendly voice, and uses images and text to make his videos.

Conversely, Nancy's route to creating content came from an interest in make-up and cosmetics, and, after she'd been on a make-up course, started learning how to make personal videos, which would show her applying different types and styles of make-

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up. She described herself as having a "natural aptitude" for learning digital technology and found that much of the analogue technology passed her by.

Nancy 18–28:   I never used to make videos or take photos [before I started making them for YouTube or my blog]. I started watching people on YouTube and it was just a case of thinking "I can do that". I literally bought a [digital video] camera to do this because I wanted people to watch good-quality videos.

Her reason for making videos encompassed a need for "being in the spotlight" and regarded herself as "being a bit of a showcase person". Her channel could be considered part of a user-generated make-up and beauty genre of tutorial channels on YouTube. Many of the young women who produce them have high volumes of viewers and subscribers and make significant enough revenue through YouTube's Partner Program for them to earn a living (YouTube, 2013). The continuing success of these channels is dependent on a constant stream of new content.

Nancy 18–28:   I try to record roughly three to four times a week [even though] I work full-time. A lot of people [with make-up channels] on YouTube actually don't [go out to] work because of the money that they make from YouTube. I make videos not to earn a living, but because make-up is what I want [to do as a career] and because it's a personal interest of mine and I actually enjoy doing it.

Although Nancy was at ease with the video production process, there was a great deal of preparatory work, which involves visiting trade shows and being given free samples from suppliers and make-up manufacturers. In this sense, Nancy viewed this as a quid pro quo relationship with cosmetics companies. The manufacturers and cosmetic brands gave the samples for free in return for a favourable review, and the video makers and content creators receive free and regular products to help create new video broadcasts. On top of that, there was also a lot of planning needed before starting the video production.

Nancy 18–28:   I plan all my videos from start to finish otherwise you can sit in front of a camera and talk for hours without even realising. A lot of people say a 5-minute presentation is a long time, but when it's just you and

a camera and you're talking it can go on for ages. I've had videos that are like 40 minutes long that I then have to edit them down to 10 minutes.

The need for Nancy to make her videos in the evening or weekends due to her full-time job has brought about a shift in the way she used her leisure time.

Nancy 18–28:   Why waste time sitting at home watching television and doing nothing of an evening when I can do something that I actually enjoy?

Development of their own YouTube channels has introduced them to the value of attracting followers and building an online audience for their content. In this regard they were creating *for* sharing online, and have become adept at using different modes of media and developed levels of media understanding through learning and experience using digital technology. They have also observed other user's aptitude, use and delivery of media artefacts, which has driven them to make a conscious effort to deliver professional levels of production.

6.4.3 Creating and managing websites and blogs

Respondents in this age range made little differentiation between websites and blogs. Indeed, the terms were used interchangeably. None of the 12 participants made websites using traditional software, such as Dreamweaver or used HTML code, but all of the participants had at least one personal website or blog. They all used online blogging services, which hosted their content, such as Tumblr, Blogger or WordPress. The main emphasis was less about definition of the platform but more about their online presence. Mandy was typical of this age range, in that she has more than one website/blog, one being a collaborative website for her comedy collective, where she makes and publishes comedy videos with colleagues.

Mandy 18–28:   [Our comedy collective website] is purely for the things that the three of us do together, which are our film sketches. I tend to write a lot of stories on the site, as well as add videos and pictures, like when we went to the Edinburgh Fringe.

The other was a personal website where she uploaded photographs, videos and journalistic pieces.

Mandy 18–28:   I put videos and photos on the home page because I think they kind of fit with the writing style that I have which is really informal and sometimes a bit silly, and I decided that if you're going to do something like freelance writing you need to have a constant base for things.

Mandy's use of websites/blogs demonstrated the link between personal content and the early stages of collaborative projects that characterise this age range.

6.4.4 18–28 Summary

One of the most immediate and noticeable differences between this age range and the two older ones was that the creating and sharing of content were very much part of the same process. Data from the participants revealed that digital media and technology was more embedded into their lives and that several created a more diverse range of digital content than the older participants. While there was a practice throughout of creating and sharing content in a more casual and less considered way, a large proportion were creating content *for* sharing. This was planned and measured professionalised content intended to equal and match similar online content, as demonstrated by Carl and Nancy. They suggested that their creation of digital content was changing how they spent their leisure time, moving them away from media consumption to the creation and communication of media. Their videos evolved from hobbies and interests in their daily lives to form personalised multimodal stories which acted as 'conversational media' (see Cheshire, 2013) through their network of online channel subscribers. While they are scripted and use different modes of media, they differ from the conventional definition of digital storytelling in that they became more commercially orientated and career-focused through the popularity of their channels and the financial incentives offered by YouTube. This is a subject covered in the next chapter. This poses the question as the whether this move to more commercialised and 'professionalised' content creation has a baring on their motivation to create and their self-expression. Are they still creating for themselves or to increase their audience? Does this mark a shift from intrinsic to extrinsically motivated content creation? Can this still be considered

vernacular creativity once they have adopted commercialised practices? Motivation, and this point, will be discussed in chapter eight.

An interest in traditional, non-digital drawing, illustration and painting pursuits was a common practice throughout all participants irrespective of age. Accordingly, there were a significant number of 18–28 participants who still had instincts to create physical content. Although they remained committed to the enduring qualities of physical, non-digital content, the difference was that participants in this age range were more inclined to naturally integrate the practice multimodally into the digital content-creating process. Physical and digital practices and artefacts were created alongside each other, mixed together and assimilated. Therefore, the creation and use of physical content had not been lost through the proliferation of digital and online tools but more integrated into the process. A large portion of the sample considered the idea that digital content and artefacts were ever 'finished', a paradox due to the ease with which they could be changed and remixed.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter's focus has been concerned with the process of digital content creation and its alignment with creativity. Much of the academic and media discussion cited in chapter three made synonymous associations between the practices of creating and sharing, as though these two actions were part of the same process. While this might be partially true with regard to the younger age range, several of the older age ranges used the digital domain to create content and express themselves creatively due the comparative ease of process compared to its analogue counterpart. Therefore one of the initial outcomes of this chapter has been to identify that not all digital content is created for sharing. This is particularly the case with digital photography, where the ease of image production and the opportunities for experimentation, through image manipulation software, has added another level creative thought processing previously unavailable in analogue photography unless, that is, one had access to a photographic darkroom.

This chapter also identified that digital content creation takes on many forms. Shao's (2009) three-level structure of consumption, participation and production implies a consistent route to the production of self-created digital content. However, as

respondents have shown, this route is often more diverse. On the one hand there are participants, such as Nancy, who follow this structure by watching videos on YouTube and are enthused to make videos themselves. On the other hand, there are participants, such as Carl, whose creation of content pre-empted their introduction to the internet but, when introduced to the internet, sharing their content online was a natural and fairly immediate action. There were also several participants from all age ranges, but particularly the 40–50s, who remediated and redacted analogue and physical content onto the internet, which forms a different route than Shao's structure. In addition, several respondents produced digital content but did not share it or decided, as with the case of photography, to make some editorial judgment over what should or should not be shared.

A difference was identified between the way that technology has been adopted by the 40–50 age range and the over-65s. All of the 40–50 age range of participants had experience of using film photography where they had developed creative decision-making processes that they transferred to digital photography. Several of the over-65s were either unfamiliar or had had little or no experience of film photography and, therefore, had little previous experience or knowledge of the creative decision-making process of selecting subject matter. Several over-65s linked the ease of use of the technology to the ease of deciding what subject to photograph. However, when the need for instant reviewing of photographs for incidental experimentation, as in the case of Susanne, digital photography had immediate reflexive properties.

Another revealing observation from this chapter was that a large proportion of all the participants were engaged in implicit examples of storytelling. Examples of this could include a sequence or collection of photographs or through the uses of multimodal media on blogs. These were ideas that expressed personal narratives and events that form examples of implicit non-linear stories. In this regard, the seven elements of digital storytelling, as proposed by the Center for Digital Storytelling (2009), implies a production framework. This is inconsistent with the free-flowing nature of vernacular creativity and participants in this research. Setting rules or guidelines in this way restricts and interrupts the freedom to instinctively create content. It also reintroduces an institutional aspect to the process of vernacular, everyday creativity.

As this chapter has revealed, digital content can be created in many ways and often for different reasons, which may not always be for the intention of sharing. There are examples from participants in all age ranges that engagement with digital tools has changed the way they spend much of their leisure time. For some, it is the ease of using digital technology compared to its analogue counterpart and, for others, particularly the over-65s, it has enabled them to access tools that help them express themselves creatively. This has seen a move away from passive pastimes to active practices of content production. Carl and Nancy are two examples that exemplify a 'making and doing' culture, as expressed by Gauntlett (2011), where creating content for publishing on the internet occupies much of their leisure time and where more passive leisure activities, such as watching television, are less dominant in their lives. Although their comments are anecdotal from interviews, there was enough evidence through the volume of videos they uploaded to the video sharing websites to substantiate these claims.

In dedicating this chapter to the practice of digital content creation this study has been able to link the transfer of vernacular, everyday creative practice to the digital domain but not necessary to sharing on the internet. Although, as previously stated, in some instances the two practices, creating and sharing, are inextricably linked due to the online nature of the content, as described with the 18–28 age range. Consequently, the next chapter will focus directly on the sharing of digital content on the internet, which has the networking affordances to offer greater modes of communication and content sharing opportunities.

Chapter 7 – Online communication: sharing self-created digital content

7.1 Sharing self-created digital content

In previous chapters, discussion was given to how participants in this study were creating audio-visual content prior to them publishing and sharing it on the internet. Through the process of digital transfer, some participants were introduced to digital content creation tools via non-digital hobbies, such as photography or video making. In a large portion of cases, creating content was not necessarily afforded by the technology – rather it was facilitated from a previous held desire to participate in a particular creative practice. This resonates with the comments of Rheingold, who describes the use of digital tools for the communicating and sharing of ideas.

> The power of sociality stems from human not technological attributes, but tools are created in order to leverage human attributes; any tools that can help humans overcome barriers to cooperation works because it augments an essentially human skill such as persuasion, education, or collaboration (Rheingold, 2012:20).

Rheingold's comments reflect a wider spectrum of thought that the internet and digital tools expands and enhances the ability for people to communicate. This chapter, therefore, continues with an examination of the practice of participation and online sharing.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the practice of sharing digitally self-created content. It will consider how each of the age ranges of participants shared content on the internet. In order to give some background context focus will begin with a brief background into the participants' pre-digital telecommunication. This will lead directly into the practice of online communication and sharing and follow the previous chapter's narrative of addressing each age group individually with comments before concluding with analysis of findings. This chapter begins with additional topics that

arose from the participants interview stage and are intended as supplements to the issues covered in chapter three.

7.1.1 Sharing self-created content creation and multi-literacy

Digital literacies were discussed at length in chapter three and inform much of the discussion concerning content creation, but it is necessary to extend the notion of literacy practice to include social and cultural practices in different settings (Erstad, 2010). Lankshear and Knobel describe literacy as "Socially organized practices that make use of a symbol system and a technology for producing and disseminating it (2007:236). […] Literacies call us to generate and communicate meaning and to invite others to make meaning from our text in turn" (2007:4). While Erstad proposes that we "look at literacy not as something static but changing over time" (Erstad, 2010:63). This is particularly poignant within the digital domain.

Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt et al., argue that practices of online content creation, sharing and consumption are a "critical part of digital media literacies. […] In a contemporary informatising society, acquisition of media literacy is a part of socialisation" (2008). They propose a set of questions "not sufficiently represented in [their] survey" that involves practices of 'audio-visual' content creation.

> Along with the emergence of web environments focussed on creating, consuming and sharing visual and audio-visual content, further research should be carried out to gain more knowledge of the audio-visual aspects of multi-modal literacies (ibid.).

They also propose questions connected with content creation on a wider social scale, which addresses whether "cultural participation and content creation facilitate empowerment and democratic social […] participation" (2008:4).

7.1.2 Vernacular literacies

A study of a community in England by Barton and Hamilton linked literacy to a more general understanding of the social practices of the community, and emphasised how "vernacular literacies" (2008) are embedded in people's everyday lives. A key feature of vernacular literacies is, "voluntary and self-generated, rather than being framed

and valued by the needs of social institutions" (Barton and Hamilton, 1998:253). In *Redefining Vernacular Literacies in the Age of Web 2.0,* Barton and Lee analyse users of Flickr.

> People are making public and giving greater circulation to activities, which previously were local and where people could regulate access and use. […] [P]eople using Flickr have become reviewers, commentators and evaluators of their own and others' work. […] The distinctions between dominant and vernacular and between global and local become blurred as the vernacular becomes more important, and there is more interaction between the local and the global (Barton and Lee, 2012:282).

They argue that vernacular literacy practices on Flickr are learned informally and change regularly, and that learning was an enjoyable, positive activity.

> Sometimes this was undertaken deliberately and at other times it was something they observed retrospectively. Such informal, self-generated learning not only helped generate new practices but people also changed and developed their practices as they learn to do things on Flickr. Such changes can be transitory and rapid (ibid.:296).

Vernacular literacies inform the practice of sharing self-created digital content on the internet with regard to the interaction between users and the information and knowledge they gain from each other as a consequence.

7.1.3 Loneliness and the internet

One issue that has been debated since the early days of internet is whether the internet helps to counter feelings of loneliness or whether it heightens them. The outcomes are not conclusive due to the diversity of activities available to the user. McKenna and Bargh established that the internet helps users remain in contact with "family and friends who live far away and they can make new friends through newsgroups, e-mail listservs, and chat rooms" (1999:256) and that loneliness has proved to be a strong factor for the formation of online relationships. Shaw and Gant (2002) found that increased internet use was linked to decreased levels of loneliness and depression and increased levels of self-esteem, and Oldfield and Howitt (2004)

found that loneliness was less likely for those who spent more time sending and receiving emails. Cotten et al. conducted a study into retired adults and loneliness, and concluded that encouraging retired adults to use the internet to communicate with others "help[s] to enhance social contact and decrease[s] loneliness" (2013:9) Morahan-Martin and Schumacher state that,

> the internet provides an ideal social environment for lonely people to interact with others. Not only does it provide a vastly expanded social network, but also it provides altered social interaction patterns online that may be particularly attractive to those who are lonely (2003:662).

Coget et al. (2002) considered their findings 'counterintuitive' and 'surprising' as their research contradicted several other research. They found that there was a "significant correlation between online socializing and loneliness" (2002:193). Whitty and McLaughlin argue that the internet represents:

> a safe, low-risk social environment for lonely people. […] Participating in chat rooms and playing games online, were exemplars of social aspects of the internet. Others were potentially isolated activities (e.g., downloading music). However, each of these activities could be substitutes for engaging in face-to-face interactions. (2007:1443).

They also found that there was a significant relationship between high levels of internet usage and loneliness and argue that this is time that could be better occupied for more "psychologically beneficial interactions offline" (ibid.:1436). Concern was also expressed that "internet use was causing disturbances in [users] daily functioning" (Morahan-Martin and Schumacher, 2003:659).

7.1.4 Next generation users

Much of the previous research in this chapter has been concerned with the characteristics and motives for sharing digital content. An Oxford Internet Survey (OxIS) by the Oxford Internet Institute, *The Internet in Britain* in 2011 (Dutton and Blank, 2011) considered how users in the UK have changed since 2009 (Dutton et al., 2009). The report was prefixed with the title *Next Generation Users,* which they define as long-term trends in patterns of use emerging across all age groups, not just

teenagers. They described next generation users as internet users who access the internet from multiple locations and devices and who use at least two out of four internet applications (either browsing the internet, using email, updating a social networking site, or finding directions) on their mobile device. Or internet users who fit two or more of the following criteria: they own a tablet, own a reader, or own three or more computers. "By this definition, in 2011, 44.4% of internet users in Britain were next generation users" (ibid.:5). However, the report states that, "age and lifestage are related to next generation use, but primarily in the degree that people who are retired or of retirement age are much less likely to be Next Generation Users" (Dutton and Blank, 2011:6,7). The survey reports that next generation users are "as much as 25 percentage points more likely" (ibid.) to produce, publish and share content than are first generation users, who focus more on consumption than production.

> They are also more likely than first generation users to post pictures and videos, post messages on discussion boards or forums, and post stories, poetry or other creative work (Fig. 7.2). For more demanding types of content, such as maintaining a personal website or writing a blog, next generation users are almost twice as likely to be producers than first generation users (ibid.).

Fig. 7.2 Next generation users by content production
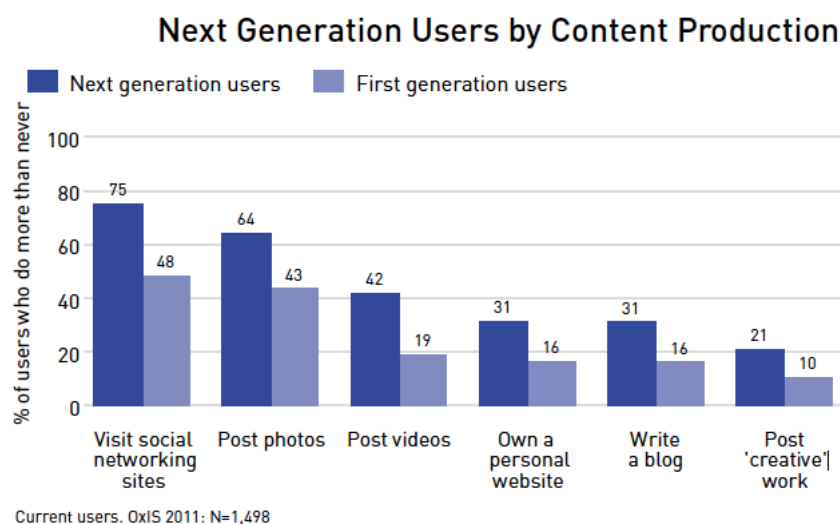
(Dutton and Blank, 2011:4)

The use of the term 'creative' work in this survey and the graph above are undefined and confusing due to the inclusion of 'photos' and 'videos' in Fig. 7.2, which, if self-created, could be considered as 'creative' work. The report concludes that the next generation user is, "creating a new level of access to the internet and the Web that supports active patterns of information production and the integration of the internet into everyday life and work" (ibid.:7). However, in this context it is hardly surprising, as access to or ownership of the latest technology would give them greater freedom to create and share their content.

7.2 +65 Sharing self-created digital content

7.2.1 Pre-digital telecommunication

As might be expected, it is the oldest age range in this study that has noticed the greatest distinction between today's digital communication technology and the telecommunication of the pre-digital age. Certainly, this is the age range that was the most reflective about the advancement in communication technology. Sheila emigrated to Australia in 1960 as part of the £10 migrant scheme established by the Australia Government to increase population and address a labour shortage. Sheila gave an account of how difficult it was to make a telephone call to the UK in the early 1960s.

Sheila +65:   After I'd been [in Australia] for about six months I decided I was going to ring my mother, and I had to go to the post office and book a time slot to ring her, and I had to write to her and tell her to be at home to expect this phone call. And then I rang her and I had three minutes to talk to her and it was so cumbersome, so difficult.

By contrast, Sheila, whose daughter is currently living in Australia, says that today could not be more different. Speed of delivery and response has increased and she now has multiple modes of communication available.

Sheila +65:   Now I'm in the position with my daughter in Australia, we email all the time, she's got a Facebook page with photographs and I can go and see what she's up to and it's just instant. I just think it's wonderful. It makes the world smaller.

Indeed, the perception of the world getting 'smaller' is a common theme with regard to digital technology and the internet. This belief has also been impacted by the considerable decreasing cost of using telecommunications and the increasing diversity and frequency at which one can communicate.

Carol +65:   It has made the world a lot smaller place whereas before people were unreachable. I'm in touch with people abroad far more now. [Sharing my content] helps me keep in touch with people an awful lot better. You can now share your photos and chat with them on Skype all the time. It's lovely. I think it helps relationships and helps friendships a lot more. In the old days I'd write them a letter once a month.

Carol's observation was typical of the perception of 'closeness' afforded by digital communication in a majority of this sample and this is in keeping with the research of McKenna and Bargh (1999), which suggests that the internet helps users remain in contact with friends and family. This notion of 'closeness' has also helped to alleviate feelings of loneliness for a number of participants, particularly those living alone, which is discussed in the following section.

7.2.3 Online communication through sharing content

One of the benefits deriving from the introduction and development of digital and internet skills for the over 65s has been the ability to connect and communicate with like-minded people online, irrespective of physical location. Participants were asked whether creating content and sharing it through online media had helped communicate with other people. Peter lived alone and communicated regularly with many subscribers to his YouTube channel. He spent much of his time communicating with some of his 40,000 YouTube channel subscribers. Peter developed friendships from all around the world through his online presence and responses to his uploaded video content. He, therefore, conducted most of this communication through online media.

Peter +65:   I think it's absolutely wonderful because through YouTube I have made many, many genuinely nice friends. And it's nice through the medium of Skype to be able to communicate.

Seven of the 12 participants were living alone when the interviews were conducted. They spoke of how using online communications and sharing their content helped them to feel less alone. The following quotes are examples of how two people regard the use of online media to help combat loneliness. Julie, who lives alone, considers that since she started sharing her content with other web users, her feelings of loneliness have been reduced.

Julie +65:   I am less alone and I can share what I create and I can discover other works and they can discover me and I can pass it on.

Sheila considered her friends being divided between those who still used traditional and slow forms of communication, such as postal mail, and others that communicated with her via the internet.

Sheila +65:   I'm retired. I live on my own [but] I just feel closer to people. I've got some friends, complete luddites, they won't get on the internet or anything and I have to snail mail them. And I don't keep in much contact with them. But other people, who are into all this new technology, I'm in contact with them every day. And you don't feel alone. You just feel as if the whole world's there and it's there for the taking.

Indeed, Sheila made a clear differentiation between the perceived technological deficiencies of her offline friends and regular communications made with online friends that made her feel 'closer' to them. The inference here is that digital technologies were being used ever more as her primary form of communication and one to which she had become more reliant. Similarly, Peter did not feel lonely because of the correspondence and feedback he received. He felt he has been "adopted" by his followers and subscribers as a virtual manifestation or substitute for a close relative.

Peter +65:   I have been adopted as the 'Internet Grandad' (sic). They see me as an old person with a calm attitude and I remind them of either their

parents or their grandparents who may have died or they never had a good relationship with them.

He was uplifted by the large quantities of positive communication he received from his YouTube channel. Therefore, the time and effort needed to create and share content and reply to messages occupied much of his time.

Another issue of importance in retirement was health and its associated links. Health was a concern with some participants, either through personal health issues or through restricted mobility brought about by their own or their partner's illness. In some cases the internet had been a lifeline to the outside world or, as Jane described, 'another world'.

Jane +65:   The two things [retirement and the internet] came together. I don't think I would have done anywhere near [as much in retirement] without the internet. That was my door to the world. My husband had a stroke 14 years ago and we were a bit limited in our range of outdoor activities so I don't get out perhaps as much as I would like, so I'm very much at home. This is very much a window to another world.

Reponses from participants indicate that using the internet to communicate helps alleviate loneliness. More importantly for this research, responses suggest that sharing self-created content provides a starting point for discussion and for further interaction with people from outside their close family and friends. Several respondents who uploaded their content to networked sites, such as YouTube, Flickr and Blogger, found they had been introduced to wider social network of people with similar interests. Through comments and discussions of their content and being introduced to other people's content accordingly they were able to build a network of like-minded people, which made them feel less alone.

7.2.4 Social Media – Definitions of social media

Each one of the 12 over-65 participants was asked for their definition of the term 'social media'. For the majority, the general concept of communicating over the internet with a number of different people via a range of online platforms was

understood. A small portion thought this was restricted only to closed platforms, such as Facebook, that were exclusive to friends or people they chose to communicate with.

7.2.5 Use of social networking, and video- and photo-sharing sites

Although several members of this age sample use social networking sites such as Facebook to communicate with family and friends, several found them trivial. The majority considered Twitter as too basic, and the few that did use it only did so to announce that their new content had been uploaded. Several shared their content via personal sites or through networked blogging services, such as Blogger, or through picture- and video-sharing sites, such as Flickr and YouTube. These online platforms and services helped participants connect to other users with specific interests. For some, Facebook was used as a secondary sharing platform for announcing and publicising content from their primary uploaded site (other than pictures of family, etc.) to their friends. Several felt that Facebook was a distraction from their core activity of creating and sharing content. They found they were inclined to use it less as they developed 'creative' or 'content sharing' networks that were specific to their interests. Jane was typical of several participants aged over 65 as, since sharing content via her blog and Blogger community, she used photo-sharing sites much less and, through exploration, found her niche area of creative output.

Jane +65:   I don't use Flickr so much these days because I'm a bit of a purist. Since I've gone on to doing lots of other things [on the internet] my photography has [been in the] background. It's become a tool rather than the main creative force. My blog is my main outlet and I try to do that once a week.

By contrast, Julie, who lived in many European countries before residing in the UK, used Facebook as a way to connect and link her friends from around the world to her three blogs, Flickr and video content.

Julie +65:   Nowadays, I always share [on] Facebook because in England I have some faraway Flickr friends who are on Facebook and I link my content from the blogs and from Flickr. I don't use Twitter, it's too

short. I like to speak (laughs). Sometimes I use it to let them know [I've uploaded a] video [to video-sharing site Dailymotion].

Julie's Twitter comment evokes a wider expression of negativity in several participants towards platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, where the impression was one of superficial phatic communication.

7.2.6 Preference for personal website over social media/networking sites

The majority of participants preferred to use their own personal or 'community' sites, for example farmers' markets or allotment sites, to upload and share their visual content. Sites, such as Flickr, were seen by several to be only relevant for sharing photos that related to family events, such as weddings. Diana and Christine both managed sites that were intended to serve a local community and, therefore, did not see the relevance of networking and sharing outside of a local boundary. They used the internet to practise a form of localism. This took the shape of informing the local community about events being held by their organisation in the local area, and consequently viewed their site as irrelevant to visitors located outside their vicinity. Often their sites or organisations were affiliated or associated with other locally based organisations and associations and, therefore, localised website content and news items were given priority. They used the internet as a way to distribute local information and stories to a local community.

7.2.7 Creating and sharing through third-party creative communities and networks

Jane described earlier how, through her education, she became involved with blogs and found a community of bloggers who had common interests and shared similar visual content. However, there were several examples where being involved in online communities through online initiatives and formal gatherings helped this age range create and share. Some participants indicated that they preferred to be directed in how and where they create and share their content. For example, several people in this sample were inclined to get involved with projects devised by online media hosting services or organisations where creation and sharing are necessary for

participation. One of the respondents, Mary, sometimes struggled to self-initiate themes for her photography.

Mary +65:   I have to have a reason and a theme [to create and share my content]. I'm on Flickr fun project, which anyone can participate. A new instruction is given every Friday morning and you've got until Thursday night to get that work on that subject. The theme is street photography and I put up one photograph per week onto Flickr. So I take some photos then I edit them to decide which one is the best one to submit.

Mary's need to have a set brief may have emanated from her recent higher education Fine Art degree where, although her pieces were conceptual in practice, they were linked to a formal creative brief. Mary generally took photographs for her internet projects with a friend, thus adding a social aspect to the experience. This too was important for Susanne. Indeed, meeting people socially and face-to-face was a prerequisite of sharing her photos on the web. She was involved in two content-sharing groups that both had an online presence, whose members were localised and were able to meet face-to-face. Firstly, a local artist open house group, which brought together artists from her local area and enabled them to present their work through temporary galleries set up in a network of members' houses during two summer weekends. Secondly, Susanne's content was shared through her involvement with a London photographic group. Susanne was encouraged to create and share her content by the social aspect of meeting photography group members in a physical location. Although Susanne is a reluctant web user she still sees the value for connecting individuals with similar interests, albeit within a defined area.

Susanne +65: The big thing about the web for me is that it allows you to establish a network across the whole of London, which enables people who have met once to keep in-touch, meet again and get together in a group and do things together, and between actual face-to-face meetings we can share pictures on the web. [It's] about meeting other people and being given instructions to go and take photographs. I would then discuss them with different [group members] and see what they've done. It's a social thing.

Jane found that her physically created and uploaded content was used in the act of sharing and collaboration through her blogging community. Although they never meet physically, this act helped develop comment and feedback.

Jane +65:   Every month about 20 of us create [physical] postcards, which we sent to another person and they scanned and shared it on the blog called 'Postman's Knock'. So then we had a group of people who all looked at other people's work and joined in and comment on what we'd done.

Mary, Susanne and Jane's experience of this type of online activity are prime examples of online community activity that are vernacular in origin and where participators become reviewers, commentators and evaluators of their own and others' work (see Barton and Lee, 2012).

7.2.8 +65 Summary

From the telecommunication of the pre-digital age to the digital communication technology of today, it is clear that the over 65s have experienced the most change. This was manifested in participants conveying a feeling of the world getting 'smaller' where previously 'unreachable' friends and relatives were replaced with a perception of an online 'closeness'. Others expressed how sharing their content and communicating with friends and communities on the internet helped elevate feelings of loneliness, and through the effects of ill health can be a 'door to the world'. From this perspective the use of digital technologies to share content on the internet can arguably be viewed as an empowering medium for this age range. Not only does it enable the reconnection to pre-retirement interests or discovery of new ones, as discussed in chapter five, it also makes inclusive communications possible from positions of relative physical isolation. Additionally, and crucially, the sharing of self-created content for these participants has aided in developing communication from outside of their close and established social network to encompassed like-minded individuals from a wider spectrum of localities.

For some participants the internet had enabled them to connect with a wider online community through interest initiated from their shared content. Two respondents

amassed a large and international community of followers and friends through sharing their videos, photographs and personal blogs. Some discovered that joining an online creating and sharing community encouraged the dissemination and critiquing of their content. Several in this age range used online communities and services that engaged them in pre-set creative activities, which could be described as commensurate with commercially styled creative briefs. This practice and activity was two-fold. Firstly it lead to several offline face-to-face meet-ups or discussion groups that then became social activities. Secondly, this led to involvement in online content creation group activities where everyone was encouraged to participate. This became a self-generating learning environment, which led to developing practices, skills and ideas (Barton and Lee, 2012).

While the debates as to whether participants regard personally created and shared content as being exploited by the networks continue (Jenkins et al., 2013; Fuchs, 2014), as discussed chapter three, no conclusive evidence can be drawn from this age range. However, it is clear from the previous participant responses that the sharing of self-created content on the internet give positive benefits to their lives, as highlighted below.

+65 Sharing content

- Helps combat loneliness.
- Helped connect participants to local and non-local communities and special interest groups.
- Helped connect physically to local interest groups.
- Helps bring closer ties between friends and community, and links health, mobility and knowledge.

7.3 40–50 Sharing self-created digital content

7.3.1 Pre-digital telecommunication and online communication

As most of this age range had used digital technology to create and share digital content for many years, during interviews there was a tendency for respondents to be more expressive about the integration of digital communication technology into their current lives and less reflective about their pre-digital communication. As previously stated, Denis had been taking photographs long before digital cameras were widely available. He characterised several participants in that his photographs were rarely seen outside of his small circle of friends. His ability to share and receive feedback from a wider community in a digital context has helped put his photography into a wider context and encouraged him to progress as a photographer.

Denis 40–50:   Before the web it would be very hard to get any kind of exposure or show work to other people. As a result of sharing photographs on Flickr I realised I had a particular style of photography, too. I hadn't thought about it before. That's because the web has given me exposure for what I'm doing. I think it's that interaction with other people that has encouraged me to think, "Yeah, actually I'm not bad at this, but I could be better".

Early access to the internet in the workplace enabled several of the participants time to become accustomed to the workings of the internet and gain knowledge of how to use it. Rich typifies this.

Rich 40–50:   I would say I was a fairly passive consumer of the web for about two years (2000/1). I was just using it to read things. It was just like a big encyclopaedia really. It was quite a while before I made myself visible on it.

Robbie noticed that his visual presence on the internet had increased exponentially over the last few years from a position three years ago where "there was almost nothing".

Robbie 40–50:   I'd just be emailing a few photos around or putting them on a website and I used to share the odd holiday photo there. […] These days I'm a big user of Flickr with a pro account and, rather than publish

everything I produce, I crop and adjust them [in Photoshop] and make into something a bit more meaningful.

As the previous quotes demonstrate, for several in this age range the move to developing an online presence and for sharing their visual and/or audio content on the internet was a significant moment. Denis epitomised this age range's reflective and reflexive process of online self-expression that was established through his interaction other Flickr users. Participants expressed their ability to change and develop their practices in reaction to online conversations from other users.

7.3.2 Online communication through sharing content

For several participants, integrating online practices of communication into their lives had become a multi-faceted experience. This has surprised some and given conviction in their work to others. For Ray, publishing his guitar-playing and amplifier videos on his YouTube channel was manifested in many different and unexpected forms of communication and user engagement. There was a realisation that he had created a niche 'audience' for his videos, which in itself was diverse. Ray viewed his YouTube channel as 'multi-levelled' and "about different things for different people", which brought about a reassessment of the meaning of his videos to his audience.

Ray 40–50:   Some people see [my YouTube channel] as a chance to hear an amplifier at high volume in the context of a song. Others see it as a chance to hear an original piece of improvisation. I didn't realise the value of sharing my playing. The channel started off being about amps, now it's about my playing as much as it is the amps.

He drew self-assurance and validity from communicating and receiving feedback from strangers who have watched his videos and left comments.

Ray 40–50:   The feedback has been amazing and the reactions to my playing have been so strong that it took me by surprise. I've had people that just keep watching the videos because they love them so much. […] Instead of shying away from any desire to feel that you're quite good, you get genuine feedback from people you don't know.

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Although Tracey's blog was more localised in its subject and reach than Ray's, her experience was similar. She initially started blogging for herself and often 'forgot' that other people were reading it. However, she became more pro-active at generating an 'audience' by linking to, and leaving comments, on local newspaper websites and blogger's sites.

Tracey 40–50: To my amazement it was fairly easy to get a wide audience. It was like a snowball effect because you become aware that actually you're not [sharing your content with] one or two individuals, you're [sharing with] a wider audience and that affects the way you do the blog.

This realisation of an audience impacted on her through the recognition of "a sense of influence" of which she was still coming to terms.

Tracey 40–50: It gives you a weird form of power, which I don't know is a good thing or a bad thing really.

Frank spoke in more general terms about how he communicated with his online 'followers' and 'audience'. He believed the relationship he developed with them was greater than that of purely sharing and getting feedback.

Frank 40–50: It's a bit like fishing. You share something; you upload it and people 'bite' or comment on it. So it's a bit more like a relationship than just sharing content.

Rich extended the practice of sharing his own music with others via the improvisation website, Improv Friday[10]. Through online discussions he collaborates with other musicians using the uploaded music of the day.

Rich 40–50: I meet up with other musicians on the website. As well as talking about the music, people then remix the tracks or mix the tracks together that people have done over the course of the weekend. […] I've made or collaborated on a good piece of music and get some feedback from people saying they've enjoyed listening to it or they pass it on to other people, then that's very satisfying.

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[10] See http://improvfriday.com

What all these examples show is when participants make their content available online they were often surprised by the outcomes of their interaction with other users. Ray's reflections are similar to several participants, who describe how connecting with other internet users though their shared content has increased conviction in their abilities. This communication with other users has developed into more of a relationship rather than the simple act of sharing their content, and one that can lead to opportunities for collaboration. For a few of the participants, this extended to a feeling of influence and power.

7.3.4 Social media – Definitions of social media

As with all participants in this research, each person in this group was asked to give a spontaneous unprepared definition of social media. The phrase most repeated by respondents in this age range was that they felt it 'empowered' social communication, which was unrelated to work. Several also suggested that social media was closely linked to their non-digital everyday life and that it was a way of forming friendships and communities 'offline'. Ray and Tracey, who both use social media platforms to communicate and promote the content on their sites, stated vigorously that they thought social media was not only empowering for themselves but also for society as a whole.

Ray 40–50:   I would describe social media as the ability to express yourself and create your own programming. It empowers people to communicate with each other.

Tracey 40–50: It's a useful tool. I think it has changed society hugely. I think it has empowered a lot [of people] in society.

The following examples show how several participants in this group relate social media to non-digital activities. In the first two instances, Rich and Frank suggested that social media relates closely to their non-digital everyday life. Indeed, Frank maintained that this practice of communication is nothing new and has evolved only by the use of technology.

Rich 40–50: I suppose I would define it as an electronic extension of your ordinary life.

Frank 40–50:   It's a new word for something that people have done for a very long time, only that they are now doing it digitally. Social media is not new; it is something that people have done in the pub for centuries.

Several felt there was a link between the digital manifestation of social communication on the internet and building communities in the physical world. Fern thought social media is not only "the creation of online communities but ones offline as well". Her suggestion was that as connections and communities are forged online, they then also lead to non-digital everyday life ones. Robbie considered social media to be more geared towards, "social life rather than work life".

Robbie 40–50: It's a communication and sharing tool, collaboration tool perhaps for friends more that for work.

In Tom's opinion, it is the 'nature' of the internet that encourages people to communicate with each other and that social media is "probably about 70 to 80% of everything on the internet". He views this from the angle of the online forums and the comments that appear from everyday visitors on sites, such as BBC's news page or The Guardian. To him, these are more interesting than the actual news story.

Tom 40–50:   We've become accustomed now to looking at comments. The comments are the best bits.

Spoken from the perspective of content creators who shared their content online the majority of the participants revealed that they thought their ability to share their content with other everyday users was empowering.

7.3.5 Use of social networking, and video- and photo-sharing sites

All of the participants had joined a commercial social network, video-, photo- or picture-sharing site and the majority used more than one. One of the most prevailing observations to come from the data was that participants made clear differentiations between the various features of each social media platform. There was an understanding that, although they had different uses, they could be integrated and linked with one another. Frank had a very well defined awareness of how he uses his social networking sites.

Frank 40–50:   I use Twitter and Facebook a lot and Instagram but I use them in different ways. I know everybody that I'm friends with on Facebook. It's a quite personal closed and deliberately family orientated platform. On Twitter I'm very open. This is more my professional face in a way. I have new followers everyday [but] I don't check who these people are anymore. I guess Instagram feeds into both of those and you can take photos of any old crap and it looks good because they've got lots of filters.

However, he was careful not to 'over share' his content.

Frank 40–50:   You have to be careful not to be pimping your own stuff all the time.

Although all participants who had joined Twitter used it to link to their published visual or audio content, several thought it to be more immediate and direct. This was due to them being restricted to 140 characters, which gave a less convoluted message. Tracey liked the immediacy of sharing her blog posts and pictures with both her followers and the wider Twitter community. But she also used it to communicate her thoughts relating to the subject matter of her blog.

Tracey 40–50: I like the challenge of Twitter because I'm a very voluble person so it's quite hard for me (laughs). I like the challenge of having to put something pithy in a short Tweet and have fun with that.

As discussed earlier, media-sharing websites, such as YouTube and Flickr, have been used to directly upload and share participants' content. However, often social networks were used as a way of linking their content and potentially engaging and communicating with a wider 'audience'.

7.3.5 Creating and sharing through third-party creative communities and networks

Unlike the majority of the over-65 participants, the majority of the 40–50 age range were less restrictive about the amount and location of people they connected with and expressed a desire to share their content with as many people as they could attract on the internet. As demonstrated above, they were happy to consider all forms of media sharing and social media sites to do this. Rich, as cited earlier, had

engaged in collaborative music projects through the Improv Friday site and this led to him producing a downloadable music album with people he'd met online.

Rich 40–50: We all met on a music improviser's site […] and you immediately gravitate towards the musicians that have a similar style to you. […] It was a global trio, Jerome, a Frenchman in Paris, and Lee in Dunedin, New Zealand. We sent each other wav files and built up pieces of music until we had a 60-minute album. I've never met these people but we've talked about doing another record together.

This example provides an insight into collaborative content creation practices that some of the participants were engaged and is an example of vernacular activity with a global reach. Each person brought vernacular activities and practices to the creative process.

7.3.6 40–50 Summary

As previously discussed, the amalgamation of old and new technical skills, knowledge and practices has been a gradual process over many years for the 40–50s. One of the consequences has been participants' inclination to communicate more spontaneously as digital technology is integrated into their lives. In most cases when pre-digital communication was discussed it was related or compared to their digital communication experiences. Noticeable responses from the 40–50 age range, in comparison to the majority of the over 65s, was their willingness, enthusiasm and openness to build a visual online presence, and to publicise and share their content beyond friends and family.

A large proportion of participants described how they had moved from consumers of the internet to content publisher on the internet around the early- to middle-2000s. This is consistent with the rise of Web 2.0 technologies, as described by O'Reilly and Musser (2006). As we have seen from the previous chapter, much of the 40–50s content was either remediated analogue content or physical artefacts, such as drawings. Several of the participants, therefore, were not creating digital content *for* the internet but rather publishing remediated content *on* the internet.

The use of social media platforms to display their content was a place for self-expression that, in several cases, became extensions of their physical and social life. This is not new behaviour, as pointed out by Frank, but through the affordances of the digital domain has enabled a shift in emphasis away from passive reception of traditional media to more personalised and self-expressive communication.

There was evidence from several of the participants of the confidence that was attained from sharing their content on the internet. A number remarked how feedback from people viewing or listening to their content encouraged them to continue creating and sharing. This was particularly the case when communication came from a stranger, as this gave more validation than that of comments from friends. For the 40–50s, this was an easier and faster way of connecting with a wider range of people than they had been accustomed prior to them using the internet. Participants found that there was a self-perpetuating element to creating content that was encouraged by the comments and communications of others. This is another example of the benefits to sharing self-created content that may outweigh the negative aspects of the digital labour debate, which is a dominant topic of the second decade of the millennium. Participants, therefore, consider the positive characteristics of sharing in theire lives to be as follows.

40–50 Sharing content

- Helps develop the concept of creating/generating and maintaining and audience.
- Helps attain a sense of influence (through being an active part of an online community).
- Social media elicits as a sense of empowerment.
- Encourages the remediation of or digitalisation of non-digital content for sharing.

7.4 18–28 Sharing self-created digital content

7.4.1 Pre-digital telecommunication and online communication

The 18–28 age range of participants were in their early- to late-teens when social media web applications were in their infancy, and media-sharing services such as YouTube were new to the web. This was a transition that introduced the internet into their lives alongside television. Indeed, one could describe participants in this group as audience becoming users, users becoming creators. Damian, who was 20 years old at the time of interview, acknowledges that there was a time in his life when the internet was not there, but finds it difficult to remember his life before.

Damian 18–28: I can remember when we got our own family computer when I was about 12. It's always been there since then. I just fell into the habit of using it.

For Ross, this introduction assisted in presenting his ideas to wider and more specialised individuals where their feedback helped develop his thoughts.

Ross 18–28: It's so easy now. If I think back to before these things were possible it wasn't easy for someone like me. I wasn't able to bring my ideas to other people's attention. But to create a website that's about me in London and to read visitor's comments is something that makes me really happy and pleased.

The gradual transfer to and knowledge of digital online platforms and applications was characterised by Nancy, whose discovery of YouTube gave her the freedom to share her content without a media gatekeeper.

Nancy 18–28: I can't even tell you [how I found out about YouTube]. I think a lot of people were going "have you seen this video on YouTube?" and I'm like, "What is YouTube?" I loved the thought of YouTube. I'm sitting behind a camera and I can do what I want and put it out there and no one can stop me.

Most participants in this age range were still able to remember their life before they used a computer and were able to access the internet and, as the above accounts show, were naturally and quickly introduced to the customs and workings of the

digital domain. This gave them an awareness of the opportunities for self-expression to a wider public.

7.4.2 Online communication through sharing content

Several participants gave examples where they had left a digital archive of their childhood and teenage content development online. This early adoption and acceptance has lead to a more diverse usage that the other two age ranges. Early online social networks and media-sharing services, such as MySpace[11] and deviantART were dominant platforms in the sample. Damian had already been proficient for over eight years in sharing and uploading content to media-sharing websites by the time he had started university.

Damian 18–28: MySpace is a time capsule for me. I've left it as it was when I was 15. It amuses me every now and then to go and check up on it. It's nostalgic really but I don't use it in any practical way[12].

Fay started first using Neopets[13], a virtual pet website, before she started secondary school but still has her Neopets profile. Neopets was launched in late 1999 and aimed at pre-teen children to create and own virtual pets. Her introduction to the internet also became her first introduction to online communities, and this had a profound effect on the way she viewed her online profile and activity.

Fay 18–28: Generally what I do online is community based. I've never been a fan of keeping a static website that just has pictures on it and nothing else. I like to be interactive with other artists. […] It's the network and the community that I like about the internet.

Fay became involved with a number of online communities, such as deviantART, where she was a moderator for one of its themed communities. She was also involved in creating pixel art, which is a form of digital art, created through the use of raster graphics software where images are edited into simplified pixelated rasterised

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[11] See: myspace.com

[12] In June 2013 MySpace re-launched and deleted all previous accounts See: Lomas, N. (2013), *MySpace Punishes Its Few Remaining Friends By Vanishing Their Blogs* [Online]. Tech Crunch. Available: http://techcrunch.com/2013/06/12/bring-the-blogs-back/ Accessed 5th September 2013.

[13] See: www.neopets.com

images. Her introduction into 'creative' and 'art' communities came from networking with people who shared similar digital content.

Fay 18–28:   I automatically got a rapport with people who are illustrators [through my pixel art illustration] and you get this immediate association. […] People are much happier if they have a network with other artists than some random person that they know.

For several participants, creating, uploading and sharing visual content regularly was an important part of maintaining their engagement with other users through the comments and interaction this generates. Fay highlights this by explaining that while the immediate sharing of her newly created content was of primary concern and, although she was aware of the time differences of the locations of her 'fans' and 'followers', this did not affect the rapidity of uploading.

Fay 18–28:   I call it an 'art vibe'. I get really excited about what I've created and the first thing I want to do is to show everyone. So I just create it and upload it.

For several participants, online communication with other users derives from acquiring subscribers to their content platforms. 'Subscribers' in this context could be considered to be similar to the term 'follower' as it infers an interest in the users content or subject matter. Although a follower or subscriber can leave comments and can engage in a two-way online conversation many refrain from this activity, particularly on sites like YouTube. Generating genuine subscribers and feedback has caused an issue for some participants. The perceived inappropriateness of interests and motives by some 'followers' often irritate some content creators. At the time of interview, February 2012, Nancy had around 9,000 subscribers to her YouTube channel, but each of her weekly videos achieves around 2,000 views.

Nancy 18–28: There's no way 9,000 people watch my videos. With YouTube, a lot of the young girls join it and want to [build their subscription numbers] and ask if "If I sub you, will you sub back to me?" but it doesn't mean that they watch your videos. I don't do that. […] That is how you get 9,000 subscribers but only a maximum of about 2-3000 of them

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actually want to watch a beauty-related video. So there is the problem.

Similarly, Mandy, who has a personal blog about writing and pictures, found that some of her comments and communication from apparent followers bordered on being spam. She complained that some people were just putting a hyperlink to their own site without meaningful comment.

Mandy 18–28: I get a lot of people who follow [my blog] because they are genuinely interested in my writing, photographs and videos. That tends to be seen as a networking thing. But I get quite a lot of people saying, "This was good, read mine" and posting a link. That's just like spamming. It's not like a personal thing and it doesn't seem like there is some genuine interest there. That really annoys me. But if someone takes a genuine interest then you're more likely to take a genuine interest in them.

Indeed, this was demonstrated personally through the act of the author of this thesis commenting on her content and asking for an interview for this project via her blog posts.

These examples are typical of the participants in this age range. Having used fledgling media-hosting site, such as MySpace, deviantArt and Neopets, while they were growing up had given them greater familiarity with the concept of online networks. This led them to seek out niche networks of users and fellow content creators appropriate to their particular artistic styles and genres. They were able to make differentiation between users who used appropriate communication relevant to their interests, as opposed to merely phatic or extraneous comments. In this regard, this age range was more critical in relation to their followers and subscribers, and became selective and wary of some of their motives.

7.4.5 Social media – Definitions of social media

When asked during the interviews to define social media, the 18–28 participants had a far broader knowledge of the many elements attributed to the term. As described above, many in this age range had been integrating social media into their lives since

childhood. The following example characterises a section of participants who either considered themselves shy or unpopular. When asked for a definition during her interview, Fay started by describing her experience at secondary school, which she considered isolating. She found it difficult to make friends because of her perceived lack of social skills and high level of internet activity, and this led to her being bullied and ridiculed.

Fay 18–28:   Social media is something that pulls on people's need to be social. It has given people who are not popular in real life the chance to have friends and enjoy interacting [online]. A lot of people said to me, "It's pathetic that you only have friends on the internet". But they are the friends who are interested in the same sort of things that I am because I found them via a site that I'm interested in.

Fay's description of her school days links to the subject of loneliness through her feelings of isolation. However, as she indicates, her content creating and sharing activities through media-sharing platforms on the internet have enabled her to connect with like-minded people who share similar interests. In this case, the lack of face-to-face and physical communication is not important to her. What matters most is the connection with compatible and receptive people.

7.4.6 Use of social networking, and video- and photo-sharing

The majority of interviewees expressed a preference for keeping their social network and media- sharing web profiles open. Over half had created Facebook 'pages' in which they encouraged friends and followers to 'like' the page, a trend exclusive to the 18–28 participants. Respondents used a wide range of social media and were promiscuous in their use of social networks and online media-sharing platforms.

Fay 18–28:   I'm creating stuff to share. I don't limit anyone from viewing anything that I've created.

Using social media this way was considered the best approach for networking and promoting their content on the internet. The following two examples show the utility of the platform and the unexpected events that can occur from the simple practice of sharing one's own content.

Darren 18–28:   Facebook has kind of revolutionised my sharing. When I first started using it I wanted to see photos that everyone was putting up there of my 21st birthday (laughs). Then I took loads of photos of my work and put them on there. I had an album called "Give me a job", which was just purely of my sketches. From that I got some musician friends wanting album covers.

Initially, Ross had been sceptical about Facebook before he joined around 2007/8. However, since then, his view of uploading content to the internet changed after he started sharing his photographs, an experience that led to meeting his fiancée.

Ross 18–28:   I think Facebook made sharing more mainstream and a bit of fun. I started using it four or five years ago and that was the first time I'd shared content online. At the time of joining Facebook I started going to a lot more music gigs and took photos with my digital camera. It was kind of fun to share gig photos with people in the website forums. In fact, that was how I met my fiancée through sharing a photo in a forum on Facebook and her being a fan of the same band, The Editors.

For this age range of content creators, Twitter is used as a way to link to their uploaded content and widen the sharing process. Carl drew the comparison that "Facebook is for friends that you don't really talk to. Twitter is for strangers that I do talk to." However, the use of Twitter had a mixed reaction to its use. Some couldn't see the point of it, while others found it a promotional tool that complemented the act of sharing their content.

Fay 18–28:   I use Twitter a lot but less to upload stuff, more to share my content with people I'm networking with and say "Look I've just drawn this".

Carl 18–28:   I find that Twitter is fantastic as a marketing tool and finding like-minded people who are interested in the same things as you. It's such a communicative tool where you can build a relationship with like-minded people.

As discussed in the previous chapter, two of the participants in this age range, Carl and Nancy, had been engaged in creating content *for* sharing on YouTube for a

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number of years. Their uploaded content has had considerable success at gaining subscribers and video views on YouTube. Carl had produced 15 'really basic' educational phonics videos at home in his spare time. Initially they were just to show to his friend's children but, in 2006, he uploaded them to YouTube and gave links to the parents in his school through a newsletter. About six months later the links had been disseminated throughout the web and he had received over 50,000 views for his videos.

Carl 18–28:   At this point Google invited me to become a partner and they started putting adverts on one of my videos and I was making about 2p to 5p a day. Over the course of five or six months I must have made about 250 videos and, in May 2010, Google gave me a Google advertising channel for all of my videos. So from just clicks on the videos I get a monthly payment from Google, whilst at the same time getting messages from all over the world and people saying things like, "We love your videos. It's helped my daughter who has got dyslexia" or "I'm an adult teacher teaching foreign languages and it's really helped me in my teaching". So it's had a really vast reach overall.

As stated in chapter five, by August 2013 he had amassed 5,282 subscribers with 8,783,359 video views on his YouTube channel. For Carl, earning money from his YouTube channel was an inadvertent and unintended outcome. His motive for sharing his content was not monetary but to communicate his ideas and video style to wider communities on the internet. This was shown in his desire to create a schools version, from which he makes no money. Indeed, there is a hosting cost to him for providing the service. Carl's motivation for creating and sharing his content will be discussed in greater length in the following chapter.

Nancy's experience of sharing her content on YouTube matches many of Carl's. However, her focus is similar to several other females of a comparable age (Cheshire, 2013), which is directed more towards building a career out of an interest in make-up. Since the interview took place, her make-up and beauty YouTube channel has increased from around 9,000 in January 2012 to 14,459 subscribers and 719,361 video views in August 2013 with a total of 173 uploaded videos.

Nancy 18–28: Friends and family are amazed that I put myself out there on the internet with my face with no make-up on to do a make-up look. I like doing these kind of things and showing people what I can do. I like to make content that I'd want to watch so I try and make it relevant to other people. So that is why I like being on the creative side of things, showing people what I can do on a computer with a camera, taking photos and branching out in different areas.

This age range demonstrated a greater understanding of the importance of defining their online personality. This was true even for self-proclaimed technophobe turned online enthusiast, Sally-Anne, and initially reluctant digital content creator Mandy, who expressed this as, "a kind of personal advert".

Mandy 18–28: Once your personality is on [the web] the more people are going to know who you are. So it's just a way to express more of your personality through your content.

There was evidence that the relation between creating content and being online was becoming blurred and an awareness of building their online presence through their created content. The use of social networks and media sharing platforms had inadvertently introduced several in this age range to more commercially minded behaviours though the act of self-promotion.

7.4.7 Mobile phones

The mobile phone is being used increasingly to create and share content using applications with built-in and in many cases standardised un-editable pre-set filters with cropping facilities. The most popular at the time of interviews were photographic applications for creating 360º panoramas and stereoscopic views along with the photo-sharing community platform Instagram[14]. With speed and little effort, content was being created and uploaded casually and abundantly via handheld devices by several in this age range. Darren considers this has "opened a completely new world of sharing". For him it is the sharing and dissemination aspect of publishing his content that appeals.

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[14] See: instagram.com

Darren 18–28: I think it's probably the way forward. You can connect Instagram to Twitter, Facebook, Posterous and even Flickr and all these photo apps provide a sharing capability now. You put it up and within about a few seconds you get loads of replies from your image. Not only that these apps are coming with all these filters that you can make your photos look cool.

This comment reveals a different type of content creation and sharing behaviour emerging, one that is more casual and relies to a greater extent on the features of the phone application and less on the imagination or vernacular creativity of the users. Although this practice was more prevalent with the 18–28-age range, there is likelihood that this will permeate all ages in the coming years.

7.4.8 18–28 Summary

The 18–28 participants were in their early- to mid-teens during the transfer from analogue to digital technology. This was a period of substantial growth in the adoption of the internet and broadband services in the UK and the development of Web 2.0 applications. Several of the participants felt that they had become accustomed to transferring from analogue and digital technology during this period through changing formats and devices. The majority of participants had been using the internet for over 10 years. For a large proportion, using the internet began with the creation of a visual online presence, in contrast to the older groups who tended to use the internet firstly as a research tool. This has resulted in several of the 18–28 participants having a digital archive and record of their childhood online, and therefore accustomed to having an online presence and using the internet to build a network of friends, followers and subscribers.

There was generally a dual approach to their content sharing. On the one hand there was a widely held imperative for them to achieve wide-spread exposure for their content but at the same time an awareness of the need to connect to people with related interests. In this sense a greater understanding of the notion of self-publicity was achieved, which was aligned to the notion of creating content *for* sharing, as identified in the previous chapter. Indeed, several regarded creating and sharing

content as part of the same process and they acquired an understanding of the freedom and control over what they publish online.

Descriptions of social media use by 18–28 participants were derived from a more experiential and varied online engagement with sharing their content. Social networks tended to be open in most cases, and several of the respondents considered networking and connecting to online communities as an important part of their online communication. 18–28 participants uploaded and shared visual content regularly and openly to maintaining regular engagement with other users. In some cases, much of the sharing was instant and less considered where the processes of creating, editing, publishing and sharing of content were administered from a mobile device without need for a laptop or desktop computer or installed software.

Both Carl and Nancy were examples of how acquiring relatively large amount of followers on their YouTube channels led to them generating income through the YouTube partnership program. In both cases this was an unintentional and unplanned outcome, and was a consequence not a motive for sharing their content. For them, sharing content remained the ability to communicate their ideas and interact with an online community. However, this reflected how several of the participants were driven inadvertently to commercially orientated practices via self-promotion and self-publicity, a subject discussed in the next chapter.

In several ways some in this age range were drawn in to the capitalist infrastructure of internet companies, as referred to in chapter three. Carl and Nancy show a different side to the digital labour discussion and the polemical views of Jenkins and Fuchs. By signing up to the YouTube partnership program they were given a small financial reward for sharing their content, one of which increased the greater their involvement became. Overall the benefits to this age range were as follows.

18–28 Sharing content

- Contributes to defining their online identity personality.
- Helps self-promotion and exposure.
- Helps realise the value of creating for sharing.

7.5 Conclusion

While several of the findings are more specific or prominent to a particular age range of participants, it must be stated that many of the findings are present in all adult respondents. What is clear from analysis of all age ranges with regard to sharing content online is the extent to which vernacular practices are appropriated. These practices are being learned naturally and informally and are subject to re-evaluation as deeper engagement with the digital domain is advanced. Sharing digital content has the potential to give once-local vernacular practices a wider and potentially global reach. One common theme is the ability to connect to location-independent niche communities of vernacular practices and creativity. Conversely, several over-65 participants demonstrated the link between the localised use of online tools and the connecting of people to physical face-to-face activities. Online technologies, therefore, have afforded the transfer of vernacular practices to a global network allowing conversations and knowledge transfers that were once constrained by physical location to a global network. This has encouraged the attainment of digital literacy through vernacular practices and encouraged a greater cross-fertilisation of ideas and thoughts.

While discussions on the effect of the internet on loneliness are varied in conclusion (Cotten et al., 2013; Whitty and McLaughlin, 2007; Morahan-Martin and Schumacher, 2003; Shaw and Gant, 2002; McKenna and Bargh, 1999), the outcomes from this small sample of retired internet users indicated that online communication through content sharing contributes to the alleviation of loneliness. This was not exclusive to the over 65s – we also saw that an 18–28 participant revealed how connecting to like-minded communities on the web had helped overcome social isolation at school. In addition, the sharing of self-created content has aided the development of online and physical world friendships that are engagingly beneficial and transcend phatic communication.

For the 40–50 participants, using different forms of social media to create, share and promote content and communicate with other web users was perceived as eliciting a level of empowerment unavailable to them in a pre-digital world. This led to a sense of influence due to the reach of social media platforms and the audience they have acquired. According to Webster (2013), 'empowerment' means to enable and

promote self-actualisation and links to the reasons given as to why people create and share content and is consistent with what Shao (2009) considers the self-expressive drive to share their content. Growing up during the transfer from analogue to digital technologies has benefited several of the 18–28 participants through comparisons, and helped them grasp the value of building networks and developing online identities. Several engage in both instant and considered acts of content sharing.

What participants of all age ranges in this study have shown is that sharing their content on the internet has been beneficial to them and a natural progression from the restrictions of physical location-based activities and practice. One of the findings from the Oxford Internet Survey report (Dutton and Blank, 2011) implied a correlation between device ownership and content creation and sharing by 'next generation users'. However, for participants in this study, digital technologies have been the enablers not the initiators of creating and sharing content and, as the next chapter will illustrate, the motivation to create content and share was not driven by the available technology or multiple iterations of it.

While none of the participants directly expressed concerns about the exploitation of their content through commercially driven online platforms, there was a widespread acceptance and acknowledgement of the social benefits of sharing their content on these platforms. Indeed the issue is clouded by the appearance of a financial model (YouTube partner program), that gives a small level of financial remuneration and incentive to the content creator continue to share their content. Nevertheless, one cannot make the assertion here that participants were unconcerned with the exploitation of their content, merely they chose not to discuss this in the interviews.

The chapter has established that in general there is personal value to sharing self-created content online. This could be from a social aspect or connecting to niche or mutually beneficial interests or practices that are not reliant the face-to-face physicality of the non-digital world. The next chapter moves from discussing the content and practice of creating and sharing to the motivation and drive for engaging in this practice, the background of which was discussed in chapter three.

Chapter 8 – Motivations for and outcomes of creating and sharing digital content

The two previous chapters have characterised how individuals have used digital technology and the internet to actively engage in the practices of creating and sharing their content. This chapter addresses the subject of motivation and related outcomes. During interviews, participants were asked directly what motivates them to create and share their content. One of the consistent motivational factors represented in participants of all age ranges was of not only receiving feedback from both friends and family, but also a wider demographic. It must be noted that participants expressed that they received very little negative feedback, and this was reflected in the positive effects and responses from each age range.

The objective of this chapter is to examine the motivation for creating and sharing content on the internet and consider the outcomes of these on participants. In chapter three a background to the subject of motivation was given from a historical and theoretical perspective. This will help further examine many of the themes that have emerged throughout the previous two chapters, some of which are specific to certain age ranges and some that are common throughout. To contextualise these themes, the chapter begins with supplementary topics that have emerged through analysis of participant interviews, which extend the discussions in chapter three. This includes additional material relating to creativity, also discussed in chapter three, and motivation plus studies directly relating to the motivations for self-created and user-generated content.

One of the main topics raised concerning motivation in chapter three was the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The original premise for selecting participants for this research was that they were all creating and sharing content outside of a professional framework. This activity appears to be intrinsically motivated. However, it is clear from the previous two chapters that some participants, particularly in the 18–28 age range, were moving towards and became engaged in

some form of professional and commercial content creation and sharing, which might have changed their motivational drive.

8.1.1 Creativity and motivation

Amabile (1996) identifies the importance of intrinsic motivation in creative endeavour and highlights the impact of specific social factors and intrinsic motivation on creativity. She describes creativity as a convergence between intrinsic or self-motivation, domain relevant knowledge and abilities and creativity-relevant skills. In this context Amabile is referring to a teacher/pupil relationship were relevant skills are taught. Her argument is that western cultures places great emphasis on talent, skills and hard work yet they make up only two thirds of the creativity formula with intrinsic motivation as the remaining third. "Creativity intersection" is an organisational model that encourages innovation in individuals and an organisational environment.

The model uses a Venn diagram of three interlocking circles to represent each of the three constituents of creativity (domain-relevant skills, creativity relevant processes, and intrinsic motivation). She illustrates that the areas of overlap between the elements represents "the area of highest creativity for individuals and highest innovations for organisations." (1988:157).

8.1.2 Motivations for self-created and user-generated content

Daugherty et al. (2008) approach motivations for creating UGC from a functional perspective using Katz's typology (1960) that any given attitude serves one or more of four distinct personality functions: utilitarian, knowledge, ego-defensive, and value-expressive functions. The utilitarian function recognises that people are motivated to gain rewards and avoid punishment and they create UGC primarily for reasons of self-interest. Conversely, the knowledge function identifies that people are driven by the need to gain information to organise and understand their environment. Content creators therefore would produce UGC because it helps them comprehend their online environment and/or ultimately themselves, because they feel a sense of 'intrinsic wisdom'. The value-expressive function allows people to express or enhance their image to the wider world. Therefore, creating and sharing content feels

inherently gratifying and fosters self-esteem because individuals become members of an online community that shares the principles they consider important. The ego-defensive function addresses how individuals defend their self-image and is characterised by how they protect themselves from internal insecurities or external threats. This would manifest itself by enabling UGC creators to minimise feelings of self-doubts and maximise a sense of belonging, or even reduce negative feelings about not contributing (2008:17,18).

Stoeckl et al. (2007) conducted a study to find the *Motivations to produce User-Generated Content,* which revealed that enjoyment, information dissemination, contact and personal documentation were users' highest motivating factors. Leung takes a more specific approach, examining the gratifications, civic engagement and psychological empowerment of users producing user-generated content. Her study addresses how the gratification of online content creation, UGC and offline civic engagement influences the three components of psychological empowerment (i.e. self-efficacy, perceived competence and desire for control). The study found that:

> obtaining gratification from being recognized and being able to articulate views, thoughts and experiences through content creation online are important determinants in affecting a person's perceived empowerment (Leung, 2009:1344).

This study attempts to draws a link between non-digital civic engagement and online content generation, but concedes that "no significant bivariate relationship was found" (ibid.:1342). However, she states that as users become more accustomed to interacting with media online they become aware that this generates an audience for the content they produce.

As previously stated, Rafaeli and Ariel argue that altruism is one of eight motivations 'Wikipedians' have for contributing to Wikipedia. The remaining seven are:

2. Social engagement via the collaborative dynamics of Wikipedia.
3. Exercising various knowledge, skills, and abilities.
4. Promoting their current or future professional career.
5. Protecting one's (Wikipedian) ego by sharing knowledge with those who do not have this knowledge.
6. Enhancing one's ego through the public exhibition of their knowledge.

7. Fun.

8. Ideology for contributing to Wikipedia as a variant of open-source application (2008:261).

Several advertising and marketing companies have produced research data to establish the motivations for producing UGC for the benefit of maximising industry understanding of the practice. One of the most extensive was produced by *The New York Times,* which published a study using three research methods: ethnographies, focus groups, and a quantitative survey of 2,500 medium- to heavy-social sharers. This study investigated their 'motivations for sharing' and revealed that primarily sharing is part self-fulfilment and part relationship building. It is argued that people share for a total five reasons:

1. To bring valuable and entertaining content to one another (94%).
2. To define themselves to others (68%).
3. To grow and nourish our relationships (78%).
4. For self-fulfilment (69%).
5. To get the word out about causes they care about (84%) (Customer Insight Group: New York Times, 2011).

Shao (2009) argues that self-expression and self-actualisation drive the need to produce, publish and share their content.

> Self-expression refers to the expression of one's own identity, especially one's own individuality. It assumes that people have a need to present their 'true' or inner-self to the outside world, and to have others know them as they know themselves (Shao, 2009:14; citing Goffman, 1959; McKenna and Bargh, 1999).

Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt et al. refer to sharing media online as both a "means for practicing one's creativity [and] as a tool for self-expression" (2008). Self-expression can be achieved though the activity of blogging or uploading content to a photography, video or social networking site as an act of self-representation to potentially large numbers of either friends or unknown individuals. "Sometimes [self-expression] is explicit through self-disclosure, and sometimes it is implicit through choices of topic, words, illustrations, and style" (VanLear et al., 2005:8).

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As well as self-expression, Shao (2009) defines the practice of producing content as a exercise in self-actualisation. Self-actualisation rests at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), referred to in chapter three, and describes the need for human beings to express creativity, pursue knowledge and fulfil potential. It also includes the ability to make an impact, find meaning, have new experiences and be happy and fulfilled. Trepte defines it as "working on one's own identity and reflecting on one's own personality" (2005:170). Pedraza claims that, "self-actualization is set to grow across socioeconomic levels, geographic borders and cultural boundaries" (2013) in the next few years. Although much of the motives for self-actualisation are considered subconscious online production can initiate behavioural goals, which can manifest themselves as seeking recognition, fame or personal efficacy (Rheingold, 2000).

8.1.4 Digital altruism

Throughout the last two chapters there have been examples, particularly in the over-65s, of selfless acts of content creation cited for the greater good of society. This was seen in the cases of websites and content created for the benefit of the community. Therefore, the subject of altruism is an area that needs further examination before proceeding to participant analysis. Auguste Comte coined the term 'altruism' (Gane, 2006) to describe the selfless act of giving without expectations of reciprocity. Altruism is an unselfish regard for or devotion to the welfare of others, both natural and moral, and is opposed to egoism or selfishness. While the concept of altruism has been interpreted in different and often conflicting ways in the fields of psychology, sociology, ethnology and ethology, little research exists on digital altruism. Studies have been conducted into the motivational factors that contribute to the incentivising of individuals to participate in Wikipedia (Nov, 2007; Rafaeli and Ariel, 2008) and of open-sources software (Raymond, 2001; Lakhani and von Hippe, 2003), however, the latter are from the perspective of organisational structure and volunteering. Rafaeli and Ariel suggest that one of their eight motivations for contributing to Wikipedia is to "express values of altruism by sharing their knowledge with others" (2008:261). Lakhani and von Hippel posit that motives for contributing to the open-source movement include altruism, incentives to support one's community;

reputation-enhancement and reciprocal benefits from helping others (2003:924). However, opinion is divided as to whether contributing to open-source projects are acts of altruism (Lancashire, 2001; Haruvy et al., 2003).

Howard E. Gruber, a pioneer in the psychological study of creativity, analysed altruism from different perspectives. He considers the 'altruism of everyday life', such as picking up a person's fallen object at the risk of personal injury, as a conservative, conformist act and 'creative altruism' as a non-conformist act that "requires cooperation" (1997:469-471). Klisanin, in her investigation into whether the internet gives rise to new forms of altruism, argues that Gruber's "spectrum of altruism" model provides the "necessary breadth for an exploration of altruism as mediated by the internet" (2011). According to Klisanin, there are three forms of digital altruism:

1. Everyday digital altruism – involving expedience, ease, moral engagement, and conformity.
2. Creative digital altruism – involving creativity, heightened moral engagement, and cooperation.
3. Co-creative digital altruism – involving creativity, moral engagement, and meta-cooperative efforts (Klisanin, 2011).

However, Klisanin's research deals with digital altruism from the perspective of analysing data and content from website charities and services and not individual acts of online altruism. Having considered additional themes relating to the subject on online motivations, this chapter continues with an examination of the participants' motivation to create and share their content.

8.2 +65 Motivation

8.2.1 Feedback, confidence, knowledge transfer and achievement

One of the prevailing responses to the question of what motivates this age range to create and share content was a need to rediscover or adopt creative practices that they had not been able to explore during their working lives. This reinforces the comments made in the participants' introduction chapter that discussed their adoption of digital technology. Susanne exemplified this through embarking on a

gratifying artistic journey of discovery after retirement that related to her need to be social.

Susanne +65:   I get an artistic and experiential satisfaction because I do things I wouldn't otherwise do, and it's a social satisfaction too. Creating is a personal pleasure and an artistic expression. [My] photographs are important because they can be shared so it's a social activity. If there weren't a possibility of meeting people face-to-face and sharing photos then I probably wouldn't have carried on.

As the previous chapter described, often several participants were motivated to share their content as a way of engaging with localised photography or local interest groups, which encourage face-to-face meetings and events. Like Susanne and several other respondents, Jane found that there have been occasions when virtual connections have led to real-life meetings.

Jane +65:   [The internet is] very much a window to another world but I've met people physically since that I've met online through blogging.

Some participants cited that their motivation to learn something new gave them a sense of achievement. However, this was often linked to the social aspect of learning, whether through online feedback or physically attending a college course.

Carol +65:   What motivates me? The fact that I love learning something new. The motivation is to learn and improve. It's the enjoyment of doing it.

Iris +65:   It's a sense of achievement I suppose. There's not much one can do at my time of life and it's something I feel I can get to grips with and become good at. Going to college has helped me to socialise and make more friends.

Along with physical social encounters, feedback from online sharing is a contributory factor in the gratification and building of confidence within this age range.

Jane +65:   I feel I have an innate urge to create artistically which I would be doing without the internet but my motivation to share online is to have feedback and have comment back. It makes you feel good when

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someone says they really like your picture so that is definitely a motivation for sharing it.

Jane typified how the majority of the over-65s sample felt about sharing online. She discovered a network of people with similar interests that can communicate and comment on her work in a more experiential and knowledgeable way than her family and friends.

Jane +65:   My husband and friends [don't produce art and although they] are encouraging they don't give me useful feedback and a lot of my work colleagues weren't in the field of creating. So I haven't got a lot of people around me that I can physically react with and show and share my work. The internet is substituting that feeling of being able to share what I've done. So that is satisfying.

Along with the satisfaction of receiving feedback from knowledgeable and conversant online individuals the benefits of sharing have been two-fold, firstly from the point-of-view of exchanging technical skills and, secondly, through personal critiquing. Engaging with others has helped to provide different approaches to producing and sharing content for this age range. For several, the internet has enabled them to research creative interests and connect with other artists without the need for physical locality. For Jane, this helped her improve and progress as an artist.

Jane +65:   So through the internet, through blogging, I discovered masses of things I could do (laughs). [My art] has changed enormously and I was kicked into the multi-faceted areas of creativity. It's now multi-media. So whereas before I was quite timid, I drew, I painted very conventionally but it has opened the doors for me to realise what is possible. It has made me realise I was quite naïve before.

The impact gained through this age range's motivation to share content for feedback has resulted not only in satisfaction gained from sharing, but also in confidence achieved both socially and technically. In the case of artistic expression, using the internet to share has facilitated personal development along with the fostering of confidence in this age range's artistic abilities. Feedback, therefore, tends to be reciprocal. Jane epitomised the sentiment of several of the retired respondents.

Jane +65:   I never had any formal art training so I've always felt inhibited and lacked of confidence. So sharing my work online and through my blog has helped my confidence. I can now see a lot of other people's work and how they go about developing it. [Online feedback is] like the doormat after the postman has been. I use [feedback] as a learning tool. It's my main reason for sharing and if someone comments [on my work] I like to comment [on others work too]. The internet has enabled me to educate myself and has given me a language to converse with other artists in real life as well as on the internet.

Jane's example represents several participants' experiences where sharing their content on the internet not only helped build confidence but also enabled them to fill the gaps in their knowledge. In this instance it specifically helped Jane become accustomed to the artistic syntax of her online and offline artistic peers.

8.2.2 Communicating, informing, volunteering and altruism

In the previous chapters there were several examples of respondents discussing their involvement with voluntary groups, such as local allotments, geological societies and farmers' markets. Some were involved with building and maintaining websites for their respective groups. All produced them on a voluntary basis and, when asked what motivated them, cited a need to inform and help the public.

Diana +65:   I don't expect to get paid for it. I suppose it's a hobby but a hobby with an element of volunteering involved and by helping the public there is some end use to it.

Christine +65: [My motivation comes from] a desire to give people access to information [and] keep them up-to-date with the developments the Allotment and Horticultural Federation. I think that is the beauty of it to be able to give people not only immediate answers but sources where they can go and explore it further. I think that's important.

Peter develops this thought process.

Peter +65: I'm often asked, "Why did you continue to [made and share your videos]?" and this sounds to me like a very altruistic answer, because in the process of doing it I help other people. I mean that sounds wonderful like I've got a mission but I do help other people not in answer to their questions but the fact that I have been adopted as 'The Internet Grandad'.

While Peter's online content sharing was untypical of the other participants, as it was prolific and relatively high profile, many of his motivations were similar to others in this age range. Peter considers the internet to have afforded him with the ability to recount and leave a record of his life online. Sheila was one of several participants whose motivation was driven by a "need to record and share [her] life". Some respondents considered that, through online conversations in response to their shared content, they influenced other correspondents as much as they have been influences themselves. In Peter's case, this is due in part to his early adoption of YouTube but also the effect he had on his many subscribers, many of whom were young, and the popularity of his uploaded videos. He believed his presence on the platform has encouraged other older people to take up similar practices.

Peter +65: YouTube is the domain of youth. I was the first old person who has invaded that domain, if you like. It would not have been unusual if nobody responded to any of my videos at all. But they did and I was very pleased about that. Also it did encourage more older and middle-aged people to do the same thing. Therefore, I think that YouTube is a platform where the old and young do mix, which is a good thing. So I feel quite proud of that.

Peter was another participant who believed that comments he received from sharing his content gave him the confidence to continue. He considers this to be the case with others who create, upload and share videos on the internet, too.

Peter +65: I think the internet has had a great effect on everybody. It improves one's confidence. You can observe the confidence that they are able to project by doing videos.

As of August 2013, Peter was still uploading around one video per week to YouTube, and his videos had received over 9 million views[15].

8.2.3 Motivation to connect through loneliness

As the previous chapter indicated, participants in this age range were more likely to live alone and were, therefore, more prone to feelings of loneliness. Some found that a consequence of using the internet to communicate made them feel less alone. However, several respondents made a conscious effort to share their content in order to connect with friends and other online users and as a way of addressing their isolation from others. Julie was typical of this situation. A few years earlier she had been forced to live alone in London due to personal circumstances. As a result, her motivation to address her potential for loneliness was established by connecting with others through online sharing.

Julie +65:   I was already 67 (in 2002) and after my divorce I wanted to make a website to publish my photos. When I discovered blogs it changed my life.

At the time of interview, Julie had three different blogs – two in English and one in French – and is a member of numerous photographic communities on Flickr. She also uses Dailymotion to upload video. For her, the social aspect of the internet, through conversing and sharing content online, has led to her physically meeting up with some the members of her online community.

Julie +65:   We made groups [on Flickr], we met each other on the web and we showed our photos, discussed photography and our lives. And I used it very much from the beginning when I made my first blog. […] I don't watch much TV. I am on the web much more, reading other people's blogs, looking at their photos and having good interactions with people, which is so much more interesting. Sometimes they write to me and we go photo walking together.

For Julie, her online and offline activities became less distinguishable as they became more interwoven, inter-related and integrated. Her entertainment preference

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[15] On 12 February 2014 Peter posted his final video and died on the morning of 23 March 2014. As of 30th July 2014 his final video had received 42,051 views. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Oakley

from TV to the web saw her move towards prioritising communication that enabled feedback. This helped her maintain beneficial communication with her niche community of fellow content sharers and the wider world, the consequences of which have helped her combat loneliness.

8.2.4 +65 Summary

The main motivational factors for creating and sharing content associated with this age range was the need to rediscover or adopt creative practices, which led to artistic expression. By connecting to artistically active networks of online content creators and bloggers several of the participants were able to develop as artists through the feedback they received. Through this pathway some participants indicated the beneficial effects of two-way communication derived from sharing their content online, which aided their learning through shared experiences and knowledge transfer. This enabled several participants to become more knowledgeable about the content they created and shared by using the internet as an experiential and research resource. Another beneficial outcome of sharing their content was one of improved confidence both in creating content and communicating with others, which has led to a level of self-efficacy (see Bandura, 1995). Their journey of personal growth and self-esteem attained through this practice is closely linked to Maslow's (1943) and Alderfer's (1969) needs theories, as discussed in chapter three.

The over-65 participants were less motivated to create and share content for self-promotion purposes than other age ranges. Several participants engaged in voluntary activities and were motivated to create and manage websites that were altruist in nature. Websites produced by these individuals for non-profit organisations were not ego driven or 'vanity' projects but public services. The primary aim of creating this content was to communicate and give information about their affiliated organisation and is an example of creative digital altruism (see Klisanin, 2011).

Three-quarters of the over-65 participants lived alone, and several indicated that their motivation to share content was to connect and communicate with people, which helped alleviate feelings of loneliness. Respondents also indicated that, as much of their online communication occurred through localised groups, online social conversations lead to offline face-to-face friendships and communities. The following bullet points give the motivations and outcomes expressed by this age range.

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Motivations to share content	Outcomes of sharing content
• Rediscover or adopt creative practices.	• Artistic expression.
• Feedback.	• Confidence.
• Learning.	• Sense of achievement.
• Knowledge transfer.	• Engagement with online community.
• Altruism.	• Satisfaction of being creative.
• Combating loneliness.	

8.3 40–50 Motivation

All of the participants in this age range cited 'to be creative' as one of the motivational reasons behind why they create digital content, and the majority cited self-promotion and artistic recognition as the motive for sharing their content. While on the surface this might seem like an obvious and simplistic reaction, their motivations and outcomes were far more nuanced. As described previously, all 40–50 age range participants were conversant with digital technology through the workplace and home, and the majority were introduced gradually over many years, often imperceptibly alongside analogue technology. Therefore, the distinctions between analogue and digital content were less distinct and, for most participants, sharing their content and connecting to others was the main motivational factor and of greater value. This is characterised by three respondents.

Denis 40–50: I think being creative is an important part of [my motivation]. I think communicating with friends is also important, and developing a network of people with a shared interest and enjoying the interaction and encouragement of that peer group really. I think for me it's also been about developing my own skills, particularly photography.

Frank 40–50: I think my motivation is to recording what goes on in my life so I think it's purely egotistical […] There is an angle of showing off with everything that you do in social media […] The feedback can become addictive and you keep checking if anyone has said anything.

Rich 40–50: To be honest with you [I'm sharing my content] because I want to be appreciated artistically and I'm creating things that I want people to like.

Several in this age range moved from analogue to digital progressively and sequentially, some developing their digital skills through an interest in analogue technology, both in subject and in type of media production. Ray was a participant who encapsulated this through the subject of his analogue amplifiers and guitar playing and through using analogue audiotape and linear editing as a recording method. As he gradually acquired and learnt to use digital technology, in this case his Apple Macintosh computer and associated pre-installed software such as iMovie, he started creating and editing videos digitally. As he began sharing his videos on YouTube he found he became more motivated.

Ray 40–50: Getting feedback [has become my motivation], and the curiosity of seeing how people experience what I do. [Sharing my videos has] had a strange effect on me because I get fans of what I do. I get genuine communication and feedback from people I don't know about my 'art' and my 'craft', which I wasn't expecting and that gives me the confidence to move forward.

Ray's videos became a vehicle to show his own ability as a guitar player to a wider range of people and his confidence was enhanced by the many positive comments he receives.

Ray 40–50: [The user comments] have enabled me to gain more of an understanding of what I do as a guitar player and that it's valuable and meaningful. Whereas my nature is to just sort of say to myself that "Oh, I'm not very good". But when you have people you don't know on the other side of the world telling you that they love it, you

realise that your playing has value and it propels you to develop your work a bit more. It's quite a massive thing.

Ray found evidence of the positive effect sharing self-created content has had on other fellow content creators.

Ray 40–50:   I've seen this with another artist who's put his photographs on the web. He found because he gets fantastic responses from people he doesn't know, his self-esteem and understanding of what he does have changed. He now has more confidence and he sees his work more realistically and our own natural put-downs are not allowed to breathe quite so much.

Kate was another participant that exemplifies this age range. She had been making personal videos and films for over 25 years and gradually transferred from analogue to digital over the last 15 years. Kate had only recently started uploading content to the video-sharing website at the time of interview and was similarly motivated to share her content.

Kate 40–50:   I suppose because you have these ideas and thoughts that come up inside you. They feel very important and worthwhile and you want to share them with people.

This helped her build an online following and she found it has helped her become more aware of the needs of her audience.

Kate 40–50:   I'm better at creating things [than before I shared my content on the web]. I'm more conscious of the audience and more able to engage with their needs, perception and desires and give them [my content] in bite size pieces. It's a more finely tuned film. So I think about my audience more but I'm not changing what I'm saying.

In this circumstance, Kate's message didn't change just the presentation. She found editing her content for sharing on the internet gave her a real empathy with her online audience that she had not found before they were put online.

Kate 40–50:   I suppose I want to say, "Look at this". It's an outpouring. To me, beauty is a very important expression. If you can capture something

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beautiful and your own feelings resonate with people it's really lovely to find that connection.

For Kate, the outcome of her motivation to share was the connection she made with other people through her shared content.

8.3.1 Introduction to creative practices via the internet

Fern and Robbie represent two examples of how the gradual use and understanding of the internet has introduced them to the practice of creating and sharing visual content. At the time of interview, Fern had been an artist for three years, but she had been using the internet for over a decade, which helped her find the resources she needed to start creating her content.

Fern 40–50:   I would not have become an artist without the internet because that gave me the tutorials and the links to buy the right books online. So you're really creating culture and knowledge very quickly. I think it's sped up the process of my learning.

However, Fern maintained that although the internet influenced, informed and enabled her to engage in artistic practice, it did not influence the reason for making her art. The primary motivation for creating content was self-expression and the motivation for sharing her content was feedback.

Fern 40–50:   I don't create for the web, I create for myself. So I do it for me and that's the same with my art and my photography. It's nice and interesting to get and see who's giving you feedback and what kind of work they are doing, and that expands my knowledge of creativity. […] I like being out there [on the internet] and to make myself known to the world and getting to know people who are on my same wavelength. Sort of spreading seeds and seeing what comes up and usually something does. So that's what motivates me to do it.

Robbie described himself as having a "reserved character" when expressing himself creatively and, prior to using social media to share his content, he had little interest in creating visual content. Since he started to communicate with people through sharing his content on the internet he has become more gregarious online.

Robbie 40–50: I am more motivated to express myself creatively to some extent. Which is something I never used to do very much. I've become much more upward and outward since [using] social media.

For Robbie "social media is a real enabler of communication". Using social media has provided him with a way of communicating that avoids the need to engage in physical social situations where he may feel uncomfortable. It has engendered an environment where he feels able to engage with others through sharing content, in this case photographs, which he has created using digital technology.

8.3.2 The internet is a 'double edged sword'

While there was a good deal of positive responses to the motivational outcomes of creating and sharing content on the internet, there was also an element of disillusionment with digital technology and the domain it embodies. These were views that did not appear as prominently in the older and younger age ranges. Tom embodied this view when he described his relationship with the world of computers, digital technology and the internet as a "double edged sword". As an early user of this technology he has been using it for around 20 years. Consequently, his motivation for creating websites had diminished; due partly to his perception of the complexity of modern web design but also through lack of patience and available time resulting from his single-parent status and work commitments.

Tom 40- 50: I've kind of got a bit bored with [making websites] I suppose because I was doing it back in the day when you were just typing in code and very simple designs. I'm not sure I have the patience anymore to sit down and learn programs like that from scratch, whereas I would have done years ago.

He also expresses a jaded view of the practice of creating and sharing content on the internet.

Tom 40–50: I think creating content on the internet is so commonplace now, everybody's doing it. I wouldn't say it was hugely satisfying. […] I think there are a lot of people thinking that way as well. It's so easy to spend too much of your spare time on the bloody internet (laughs).

Tom expressed that he would like to spend more time doing other non-digital pursuits, such as writing a book or making music. This may be due to his long-standing use and relationship with computers, digital technology and the internet.

Tom 40–50:   Everything I've done with computers has always been a double-edged sword. So it isolates you but then you're connected to the whole world at the same time, so it's kind of weird.

Although Frank created and shared far more content than Tom, he agrees with many of his views on the use of digital technology and the internet. While Frank has been building his own websites since the late- 1990s, he has become jaded with making them, in a similar way to Tom. The difference being that he finds the designs and over-reliance on set styles of modern websites 'boring'.

Frank 40–50:   A lot of the tools online are so instant and so readily available. You press a button and you've got a website. That's brilliant but they all tend to look the same and you've got 12 themes that everybody uses. So it becomes a bit samey and a bit boring. In the early days you had some really weird looking websites that had been cobbled together by people who were trying things out. It was more exciting. Now everything can be on Facebook and on Facebook it all looks the same.

Frank and Tom exemplify how several in this age range had engaged in a significant examination and questioning of the digital domain and culture, which has taken several forms.

8.3.3 Anxiety and the effects of sharing on the internet

A few in the sample expressed feelings of anxiety due to the scale and reach of the internet. Kate and Fern continue the 'double edged sword' theme in their reactions to their perceptions that the internet has both positive and, in this case, negative connotations. Fern was one of a few respondents who often experienced periods of anxiety due to her exposure to vast numbers of artists using the internet in the same way as her. This had a negative impact on her engagement with artistic networks and sharing her content.

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Fern 40–50:   The internet made me aware that there wasn't just one 'Picasso' but possibly a few hundred thousand and that's daunting. I'm not saying had I been born 100 years ago I would have been a Picasso but you were less aware then. When you realise how creative and good a lot of people are then you become overawed. […] I find that a depressing element to the internet. It's a feeling of being overwhelmed. Maybe we are not structurally built to know that there are another million artists out there and that the competition is impossible. So after a while I am on the internet I sometimes feel that anxiety.

This has created a personal dilemma for Fern. While the internet has been positive for her by helping distribute her work to a wider audience, it has also made her aware of the enormity of the competition. Kate also found this process had not been straightforward and was still adjusting to the practice of sharing her content, its significance and people's reaction to it at the time of interview.

Kate 40–50:   This is a funny area for me because it's been a process of letting go of old work or even just showing it in the first place [and getting] it out into the world.

For Kate, showing her work on the internet gave her feelings of anxiety towards the reaction of a wider audience.

8.3.4 Critical and reflective re-evaluation of digital domain

Rich has a wide-ranging knowledge and experience of using digital technologies and yet, at the time of interview, had started to reject many of the practices of digital culture. He also represents a theme running through the participants in this age range of nostalgia for analogue practices and technology. His views are extreme but in many ways they encapsulate the views of several participants aged 40–50. At the time of interview, Rich had built personal websites and made and shared his digital music and sound recordings for nearly 10 years, and was uploading his music and

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field recordings to the digital music-sharing platform Soundcloud[16]. He was also playing in a Ceilidh band, a type of Gaelic folk music and dancing. His made a comparison between the two.

Rich 40–50:   You put a piece of music up [on Soundcloud] and maybe 60 people listen to it and then it is forgotten about really. Compare that to playing a piece of music live and that's much more satisfying. […] It's actually much nicer to go and play in a pub where people are enjoying it or even spontaneously dancing than posting a very successful piece on Soundcloud.

While he realises much of what he does in real life and on the internet are related, Rich makes a clear distinction between his online musician 'life' and his offline live music playing as a musician. Indeed, this extends to him feeling that creating content using digital media is ephemeral and appreciation of it vague and casual.

Rich 40–50: I don't like the intangibility of digital media as regards to making art. It can be as banal as somebody clicking the 'like' button on a Facebook page. I think there is a terrible falseness about it.

For him, the physicality, tactile nature and perceived level of complexity gave analogue technology an appealing quality.

Rich 40–50:   There is something about [analogue] actually being a bit harder to do that makes it feel more accomplished. I've got a frustration with the internet and I think actually there are some things that I liked before the internet. Doing fanzines and the typewriter and going down the photocopy shop. It was fun.

This was an activity that he recently revisited as his reaction against digital culture.

Rich 40–50:   I did a little magazine with a friend of mine, which was completely non-digital and used no word processors to make it. I used a typewriter and we photocopied it and drew pictures in pencil. It's warts and all. It's got lots of typing errors, which I like. It was our

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[16] See: soundcloud.com

reaction to the way things are done on the internet. We're not going to digitise the magazine. We've only printed 30 copies.

In his mind, this action was a response towards the relative ease of creating content and brought into question the authenticity of adding pre-installed or online photographic filters from mobile phone applications.

Rich 40–50:   Anybody can publish a photo on an iPhone, click, upload and boom. I think it's too easy. I've never had an iPhone but I know you can get a thing (application) for it called Hipstamatic[17], which takes pictures like old-fashioned cheap cameras. And I just think, "Where's the fun in that?" I don't get it at all.

In a rebellious act that mirrors the previous analogue fanzine production he explained, how he created the effect 'for real' by going back to traditional film photography techniques.

Rich 40–50:   I'm not interested in digital photography anymore. My third digital camera has broken and I've gone back to 35mm film photography. I bought an old-fashioned camera for £6 and used some old expired 35mm film. If I'm very pleased with the picture I'll scan it and upload it, otherwise I'm just keeping it to myself now.

However, as his last sentence illustrates, he had not stopped using the internet altogether. These two exercises made him more critical and reflective about how he managed his time online and as a result uploaded content more effectively and efficiently.

Rich 40–50:   I'd like to do more real world things. Get on my bike and cycle round and do that sort of stuff than getting a headache sitting in front of the computer all evening.

Similarly, Frank's concern was that digital technology had started to become too dominant in his life. He mitigated this by forcibly restricting himself to periods of abstention.

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[17] See: hipstamatic.com/classic

Frank 40–50: The tendency for me is to move away from digital and do more offline stuff. We [sometimes go to a] house at the seaside and we made a deliberate decision not to have any Wi-Fi broadband and the quality of interaction with the children becomes better because you are not constantly on your phone and trying to share everything that you are doing and it creates more time. I think over time it will level it out probably.

Frank and Rich were representative of several in this age range who, as previously shown, created and shared their content widely on the internet and intimate that they would continue to do so. Therefore, what they express here is not a not a rejection of the digital domain per se but a critical and reflective questioning of current and long-term effects on their lives.

8.3.5 40–50 Summary

Creative self-expression and self-promotion were important forms of intrinsic motivation for this age range. Recognition and artistic appreciation were cited as the anticipated outcomes of these practices, which led to an increase in confidence and a increased levels of self-efficacy (see Bandura, 1995). While self-promotion and artistic recognition were prominent motivational reasons for sharing digitally created content, there was an underlying questioning and re-examination of how digital technologies are used and their relationship to analogue counterparts. As previously stated, it must be remembered that creating digital content for the participants in the 40–50 age range, was a practice learnt over many years alongside analogue technology and the transfer was gradual. This might explain the reason for a small but significant amount of respondents revealing a critical and reflective re-evaluation of the digital form.

The 'double edged sword' metaphor was relevant for participants in this age range as this was not a rejection of or abstention from digital practices or culture but a need to re-evaluate and in some cases re-visit old analogue practices. Indeed, as with the other age ranges, the majority of participants viewed the sharing of and feedback from their content to be of great value and the internet to be a great source of learning resources. However, while the initial attributes associated with digital

technology, such as the speed and ease of production and dissemination, may have been initially alluring, as soon as the technology became domesticated into their everyday life they were disposed to re-evaluate it. Part of this process included nostalgia towards analogue practices and this became more prominent as digital transfer became complete. The positive motivational aspect of this age range, therefore, was balanced by a motivation to re-assess digital technologies and review cultural practices. Although negative reactions to the digital domain were by no means exclusive to the participants' aged 40–50, negative motivational effects and outcomes were more prominent to them than the other two age ranges. The following bullet points, therefore, differ from the +65s as they include the re-evaluation and outcomes as well as the motivations and outcomes expressed by this age range.

Motivations to share content

- Creative expression.
- Feedback.
- Self-promotion.
- Speed of production.
- Show content to a wider 'audience'.
- Easy access to learning resources.

Re-evaluation of digital domain

- Overreliance on digital technology.
- Overwhelming amount of information.
- Lack of tactility of digital artefacts.

Outcomes of sharing content

- Artistic appreciation/recognition.
- Confidence.
- Development of online identity.
- Engagement with online community.
- Reactive to 'audience' feedback.
- Enabler of creative practice.

Outcomes of re-evaluation

- Periods of abstinence.
- Anxiety.
- Re-engagement in non-digital pursuits.

8.4 18–28 Motivation

As previously stated, several of the participants in the 18–28 age range were in their early teens when many media practices had started to transfer from analogue to

digital technology. This often meant that they were learning to use both technologies side-by-side while the transfer to digital practices took place. A common motivational theme for creating and sharing their content, which is present in all age ranges, is that of feedback. Darren exemplified this through his 'open' Facebook page, which showed and shared his work to a wider demographic.

Darren 18–28: I've got lots of ideas and things that I like to get out there, and it is one of my biggest motivations is share my work for feedback. When I put [my artwork] up on Facebook I get loads of comments. Obviously you'd get the same if you did a gallery exhibition but my gallery is Facebook and I get comments on there about my art and that motivates me to do more.

The previous chapter identified how several of the participants in this age range had already accumulated an archive of content from their early childhood on platforms they had stopped using. While the desire to leave a record of one's life online was not exclusive to this age range, it was a common motivational theme frequently expressed throughout the interviews with this age range. Participants performed this activity for a number of different reasons.

Joe 18–28: I've been asked about my motivation before and I said that, I want something tangible left of me when I die (laughs). I enjoy being creative and being able to share it to other people as well. It's a bit of an ego boost.

Sally-Anne 18–28: I just want to record things that have happened and memories so I can remember them. For me, it's sharing real experiences that are happening and not something that is made up.

Andy 18–28: It's like a record of what I've done. It's a way for me remembering that I enjoyed doing that.

Fay 18–28: The sharing bit is satisfying that you exist in a way, as an artist.

These four respondents characterised general themes present throughout the sample where documenting their life was conducted for reasons of ego, artistic existence and personal memories and reminders of one's life.

8.4.1 Developing professional practices

For several participants, their motivations for sharing changed as their content and experience of making it became more professional, which was typified by Dan, Darren and Mandy.

Dan 18-28:   [My motivation to share] started out as entertainment and just pleasure, and now the work I upload is more professional so my motivation is to get work in the future.

Darren found his motivation to create and share changed when a friend who runs his own record label asked him if he would work on the making of a music video. Although this project was unpaid, he had to adopt a professional approach to completing it. While he was still intrinsically motivated for personal fulfilment, extrinsic motives of potential paid employment, meeting deadlines and satisfying his 'client' came to the fore. He recruited some of his online friends with relevant skills to help him make the video. The organisation and planning and scheduling were all conducted using online mobile phones and social media. Online communication has helped this process through the networks of friends.

Darren 18–28: I've got a solid plan for the video I'm directing but at the same time there has to be a lot of flexibility [due to the lack of budget]. We're working for the fun of it and we don't get paid [and] we have the pressure of deadlines and the expectations of [the client]. That is all part of managing it. […] We can only get the cameras for free on a weekend and we've given about a month for editing. And so the deadline means we have to be quite professional about communicating with each other. [When the video is finished it will] be put onto YouTube and Vimeo and then linked to Facebook and their website and then sent to relative DJs and stuff trying to promote ourselves. All avenues of online sharing will be used.

Mandy spoke in chapter six of her need to learn technology and share her content as being a necessity not a choice. She also spoke of her two websites, one a personal blog and a second collaborative site for her comedy collective. Her motivations for creating content have fluctuated from personal fulfilment to the self-promotion aspect

of building an online presence that may lead to paid work. Her own personal site was used as a promotional tool to spread awareness of her photography, videos and writing.

Mandy 18–28:   I've become more aware of getting people to know about me through my online presence. I've got a lot of freelance stories and videos out there. It's been a way of communicating to a wider but also specialised group of people. They take more interest in my professional writing and me.

Her comedy collective site is a collaboration, where all three contributors have become technologically multi-skilled and are able to share in the creating of content.

Mandy 18–28:   With [the comedy site] it has to be a lot more structured because it's got to work round three different people's schedules but communication online has made this process much simpler. It's a lot easier because we all know how to edit and we can do that independently, it's now only the filming where we all have to be together.

What these three participants demonstrated was that, as professional practice and self-promotion were embedded into their lives, this often changed the motivational drives for sharing content.

8.4.2 Commercial awareness

Commercial imperatives were a motivation of sharing content for several participants in this age range and more of a characteristic than the older participants. In some cases, a commercial awareness was an unforeseen and unintended motivational outcome. Often commercial and non-commercial practices and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations ran side-by-side and shifted between the two, as with the example of Andy.

Andy 18–28:   I think [my motivation is] twofold really. The motivation with my photo stuff is if I see something interesting I want to show other people who might be interested. Usually they are friends. […] But the other motivation is definitely in terms of getting work. I want to get a job in an internet based start-up and I don't see like how I can realistically

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go "I know all about the internet…" if I haven't actually been putting myself out there online. That is definitely the motivation for starting my blog.

As previously discussed, Nancy and Carl were two of most successful participants at self-promotion and this had subsequently led to them generating an income from sharing self-created content. However, while both had similar outcomes, their motivation and approach to creating and sharing content came from a different standpoint. Nancy claimed her motivation to create and share content was the feedback she received. Nevertheless, she described her long-term motivation as promoting herself as a make-up artist with the aim of eventually earning a living from this profession. To promote her channel Nancy used as many social media linking devices and techniques as she could.

Nancy 18–28:   I get my motivation from the feedback that I get. I'm basically pushing my name out there because I want to be a famous make-up artist and if this is where I have to start then I'm willing to do it as much as possible. […] I've also got two Facebook accounts that are joined to my personal one. One account is for my blog and my YouTube channel, and the other for my actual make-up name. I use them to push the videos out as well so people who watch my YouTube will put a link below to my Facebook page, my blog page, and my Twitter name so I get my name pushed round more.

The promotion that she created for herself generated some unintentional feedback. What Nancy had not expected was the high level of emotional responses from her audience and subscribers, which had a positive effect on her self-esteem and gave her confidence in the value of her videos and associated content.

Nancy 18–28:   The feedback is so positive I think, "Well I'm actually helping people". I get private messages from people saying, "You changed my life" and "I love watching your videos. I wish I could be your friend" and it's like people rely on you for advice. I'm like an Agony Aunt and I'm happy to play that role because I know I'm making someone else happy.

In the previous chapter, Nancy explained that she had become a YouTube partner and, as a result, was paid for the views her videos received. The way her partnership with YouTube was arranged meant that the commercials on her channel were not directly targeted to the content of her video. This meant that many of the commercials appearing were directed at the wrong demographic, and not teenage females or those in their early-20s – Nancy's subscribers and potential audience. However, she was approached by a third-party agency to take over the advertising for her site, which began to directly target this market.

Nancy 18–28:   I've just signed a contract to go with another company, no longer being a YouTube partner, because they offered me more money and also offered to put the right ads [for my subscribers] on my videos.

By comparison, Carl' response to what motivates him to create and share his content might appear altruistic, but he also admitted to being 'partly' motivated by self-promotion.

Carl 18–28:   I suppose my motivation would be helping small children to learn to read and that's the crux of it. In everything I've done it's all come down to whether a child is in a better position to learn to read or an adult whose English is his second language or to help teachers teaching children.

Carl described in the previous chapter how YouTube inducted him into their partnership program due to his high level of views, which led to an advertising channel. At this stage his motivational emphasis for creating content began to shift from intrinsic to extrinsic drives. The revenue generated from the views to his channel had given him a small return of income. As the revenue-generating aspect of creating content began to become more prominent in his thought process he became more aware of his income and his 'views'. He watched as his 'views' and revenue fluctuated before stabilising.

Carl 18–28:   When the YouTube work reached its peak last March (2011), I was earning about £500 per month. At that point I was saying, "Right, let's get some more made and let's get it up". But then it went down towards Christmas so I started making a few more to keep it going up

and it's sort of plateaued now at a nice level. It's a bit of extra pocket money.

The emphasis of his videos changed around this time and so had his motivation for creating them – from a hobby to a position where education publishers *Times Education Supplement* (TES)[18] offered him a salary to make similar content for its website. Although he continued to do his full-time teaching duties, TES paid him to create 'professional content' for them in his spare time.

Carl 18–28:   I now work with the TES and any content I make is for them first and then it goes on their website. They give me a salary to make content for them. […] I'm probably at the lowest frequency of [personal] video I've ever been. But that is because I put all my energy into the ones I'm making for the TES.

During the interview, Carl was asked how working for a commercial company had affected his motivation to create videos.

Carl 18–28:   When the TES first spoke to me they said they'd offer me a salary to create content for them and it frightened me a little bit because it's almost like I've got to do it and I've been told I've got to do it.

Carl was subsequently asked whether the content he created had been affected by this development. He considered that being compelled to make videos though commercial pressure had affected his motivation and the artistic quality of his content, in comparison to his earlier hobby-like pursuit, and that it had been detrimental.

Carl 18–28:   Doing it on my own terms is definitely much better creatively because sometimes if you are churning these videos out one after the other they just look lacklustre. They've (TES) even commented that sometimes I'm not dancing around enough on some of my later videos and they are too mature (laughs). But if they wanted me to make a load of alphabet videos again then I'd have to make them, whereas if I'm doing it for myself I can do whatever I like.

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[18] See: www.tes.co.uk

In this regard being paid to create content in a formal and commercially orientated fashion has its disadvantages. As the reason changed for creating the content so did his motivation and enthusiasm and creative freedom. However, the issue of being paid also altered his motivational emphasis from an altruistic and intrinsically motivated reason to an extrinsic one.

Carl 18–28:   The only reason I work with TES is, selfishly, for money because it's hard to live in London on a teacher's salary. If they were to say, "You're not meeting our standards" then I'd say "Fine, let's call it a day" (stop working together). Although they pay me well the thought of having to meet those deadlines and make x number of videos by a certain date is quite challenging. It's hard work when you are told that you have to do it.

Issues over deadlines and the quantity and quality of content were partially overlooked in the short-term as Carl saw the benefits of the extra income. However, there was an indication that this might change if pressure from his employers were exerted or circumstances changed. There is a wider perception though feedback from his social network that his practice of creating videos has altered.

Carl 18–28:   It makes me think that someone else now is driving all my hard work. I'm not in control of it. From some people it's almost as if I've sold out to a big corporation. A few people tweeted back in September (2011) when I joined TES, "Oh, [Carl] has gone to TES". I think that if I've made all this content for free [then] why shouldn't I be rewarded for all the hard work I've put in.

This left Carl with a dilemma: the freedom and control of creating purely for himself or relinquishing some freedom for a regular salary. Once the temptation of earning an income was formalised, as with his TES contract, along came the external pressures of deadlines and employer preferences and prerogatives. This was a position that sometimes conflicted with his initial reasons and motivations for creating and sharing content. At the time of interview, Carl found that, although he preferred to be in control, the appeal of earning money from his perceived hard work meant that it was difficult to go back to the freedom of his earlier hobby-like pursuit.

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Carl 18–28:   I prefer doing things on my own terms, definitely. But at the moment it is just easier to live in London with an extra income.

For Carl and Nancy, introduction to the commercial practices and financial rewards that their content has presented brought about a more extrinsic motivational drive, which though appealing, made the journey back to intrinsically motivated practices more difficult.

8.4.3 18–28 Summary

Feedback was one of the primary motivations for sharing and creating content for the 18–28 participants and this was also consistent with the other age ranges. Self-promotion was another cited motivation that was present in the older groups too, however, the emphasis among participants of this age differed. While older respondents primarily used self-promotion to display their creative abilities, the 18–28 participants developed more professionally orientated practices and had a greater drive for career-based self-marketing.

Several of the participants described two levels of motivation for creating and sharing their content. These were intrinsic and extrinsic drives that often operated side-by-side and shifted based on the different contexts of their content, the audience it was intended to reach and the desired outcome from its reception. Some of the respondents displayed commercial imperatives, which were professionally driven and attained commercial awareness, sometimes with an unexpected and unplanned motivational outcome. One noticeable change was the introduction of financial rewards into the process. In this situation, participants saw a realignment of motives – away from intrinsically instigated content creation and sharing, to more extrinsically motivated drives. The participants in this age range indicated that the act of being paid had an allure that often made returning to solely intrinsically motivated content creation difficult. However, some participants felt the introduction of payments and professional contracts – extrinsic motivators – hampered their ability to be creative, as well as their level of freedom and enjoyment for creating and sharing content (see Amabile, 1996; Amabile et al., 1993).

Motivations to share content

- Recording their lives.
- Feedback.
- Self-promotion.
- Commercial imperative.
- Develop professional practice.

Outcomes of sharing content

- Building a life archive online.
- Confidence.
- Access to professional markets.
- Commercial awareness.

8.5 Conclusion

This final case study chapter has addressed the motivations of participants to create and share content online. It has shown that, while there are common traits throughout all age ranges, there are characteristics that are individualistic to each too. One common theme has been the predominance of intrinsic motivators in the adoption of these practices. As society in the UK changes from the predominantly routine industrial, algorithmic tasks of the 20th century to more self-directed and heuristic tasks of the 21st century information age, intrinsic motivators have been projected as more useful for the needs of modern society (Deci, 1971; 1972; Deci and Ryan, 1985; Amabile, 1996; Bassett-Jones and Lloyd, 2005; Pink, 2010). Certainly, intrinsic motivation was expressed as the prominent driver in all age ranges. The need for artistic and creative expression, personal achievement and affiliation to other web users, along with receiving feedback, were all motivational reasons provided and presented by participants in all age ranges. These are coherent with the first two needs of McClelland's needs-based motivational model (1961) – needs for achievement and needs for affiliation. However, unlike his theory that states one need tends to dominate more than the others, both achievement and affiliation appear to be equally weighted in importance within participants. Achievement through the use of content creation and affiliation through sharing it online has led to a growth in self-efficacy within a sizeable section of all participants.

Extrinsic motivators were more prevalent in the 18–28 participants as external incentives were introduced via their content and sharing activities. This younger age range conveyed a greater awareness of the commercial imperative and the potential of sharing their content on the internet, which extended to the opportunities it could provide for gaining employment or for financial subsistence. However, this posed a number of questions for some 18–28 participants, namely the loss of creative freedom and independent sacrifice that comes with externally set productivity deadlines. Carl explained how the introduction of extrinsic motivators had an effect on his motivation for creativity, and this is consistent with the research of Ryan and Deci (2000a).

While many of the motivations and outcomes, such as feedback leading to an increase in confidence, were uniform irrespective of age, there were some themes specific to each age range, of which several were unforeseen. One revealing motivation (specific, but not exclusive) of the over-65s was that of sharing their content to connect with people to combat loneliness. Several found also that interaction derived from content sharing elicited a less phatic and deeper engaged form of communication. Several participants from the 40–50 age range revealed an unexpectedly negative view in some areas towards the overreliance on digital technology and the seemingly pervasive nature of digital culture. This was not a reject of or abstention from the digital domain or necessarily content creation and sharing, but more a questioning and re-evaluation of the properties and practices inherent in digital culture. This indicated that as digital technology had been domesticated into their lives, the familiarity it conveyed made some question its validity. It also suggests nostalgia for analogue, non-digital content creation and a backlash against the ease of creating content in the digital domain. This differs from participants aged 18–28 who, due to several of them learning both technologies side-by-side, place less cultural importance on the digital/analogue distinction. By contrast, the over-65s enthusiastically embraced their journey of personal growth and the community aspect of using and/or learning to use digital technology and communication.

The previous three case study chapters examined the actions of participants in this study who have made a conscious decision to create and share their content on the

web. In order to do this some consideration was given to their backgrounds and their use and introduction to technology, which highlighted the variety of knowledge and education within and between all age ranges. Examination then followed of the process of creating content and then sharing that content on the internet. In examining the motivations of participants this chapter ends the case studies in this study and leads the way to the final concluding chapter. The next chapter, therefore, will review and comment on the findings and give a conclusion to the research questions set at the beginning of chapter three.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion and discussion

9.1 Summary

At the beginning of this project I presented three criteria that informed the title and conceptual approach. Firstly, the increasing power and speed of computers and the arrival of high-speed broadband connections have augmented the exponential rise in access to digital technology and the internet for everyday users. These advancements have afforded a wider choice of web tools, online platforms and expanded ways to communicate. Secondly, user engagement with the internet and social media has encouraged active, responsive online participation along with the production and dissemination of digital content, which has seen many individuals shift from a reliance on the 'passive' consumption of traditional media. This is evidenced by the large amounts of self-created content and, more specifically, visual and audio content, generated and shared by everyday users on media-sharing websites. The third criteria concerns the disparity between the volume of research conducted into the impact of digital technology and the internet on children and young people, and the comparatively small amount conducted towards adults, specifically with regard to digital content creation and sharing. From inception, therefore, this project has set out to explore, through empirical qualitative research, how everyday adult content creators share digital content online and their motivations for engaging in this practice.

While this study has covered several areas of research it sits in the field of media and communications studies but more specifically internet research and internet studies. Internet research is a relatively new area of interdisciplinary research, which considers "the relationships that bind internet technologies, individuals' lives, social institutions, and cultural meaning" (Mary L. Gray quoted in MacLeod, 2014). In this context the main premise of this research being how adults communicate using online tools to share self-created content. It posed an overarching research question

that asked: how do different age ranges of UK adult internet users create and share content online? This was followed by three further questions directly focusing on specific areas of the research. The following chapter sets out to firstly review data and analysis from the themes and case study chapters contained in this research, before relating them to the research questions in the conclusion.

9.2 Generations and age ranges

Before embarking on the empirical research, certain subjects needed exploration and issues needed addressing. One of the most pertinent areas of discussion was the debate concerning 'generations' and, indeed, whether a 'digital native' or 'net generation' was a credible description for a person born into a digital world and whether that meant older generations were excluded. This was derived from the polemical positions of Tapscott (2008; 1999) and Prensky (2001), which seek to divide and define generations based on their perceived relationship with and ability to use technology. One of the main criticisms arising from comparisons and differentiation between people in pre-defined generational groups is that standardised assumptions and pre-conceptions are made about how they behave and their ability to learn. Indeed, Mannheim's theory ([1928] 1952) implies that a generational consciousness within a generation is not necessarily homogeneous or coherent, as there will be divergent views and practices within any group.

Another problem with the age-specific nature of the terms 'digital native' and 'digital generation' is that of addressing the inception of digital technology. As has been illustrated by a large proportion of the participants in this research, access to and use of technology has occurred over many years. In some cases this could have taken place over 30 years, as I am testament. While my personal example may not be typical, it serves to demonstrate that people of all ages are introduced to digital technology in different ways, at different times and by different means – irrespective of age. There was no 'year zero' when one day all digital technology suddenly appeared. On the contrary, it was introduced over a longer period of time. Indeed, there was a point when both analogue and digital technologies were used alongside each other (and in some cases still are). Indeed, there is interdependence and convergence of both analogue and digital technology. A lag time also exists from

when digital technology was introduced into an analogue world to a time when it was/is fully established and embedded in our lives. This can be seen in the length of time taken for the practice of recording data onto physical storage systems, such as videotape, floppy disc, DVD or external hard drive storage, to the current practice of uploading data files directly for storage and transfer on the internet, such as cloud computing services and web servers. Indeed, in 2014 we are still in a period of digital transition.

As the internet has become more pervasive in the UK, the distinction made between 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants' and the concepts of a 'digital' or 'net' generation appear too simplistic and outmoded. These terms ignore the many considerations needed to understand how individuals of different ages with varying educational and socio-economic backgrounds learn and use digital technology and web media. In the second decade of the 21st century the debate needs a more nuanced approach. Technological advancements affect and are affected by people of all ages in different ways and are dependent on many factors, not just age or association with a generation. Indeed, as this research shows, there are commonalities and disparities within and between each age range of participants, all of which were involved in the specific practices of creating and sharing digital content online. However, as will be discussed later, there are certain characteristics that are prevalent in some age ranges that are not in others. This is not to justify or validate Tapscott and Prensky's view but to argue that both generalities of purpose and action, and specifics of age related circumstance need to be taken into account when discussing people who use the internet.

One commonality of all participants in all age ranges of this research was how they used both digital and analogue technologies in different ways to create and share their content. In light of this I propose 'digilogues' as an appropriate portmanteau to describe participants engaged in this dual practice. Nevertheless, and as one example illustrating the previous point, the way each age range engaged in this practice was also dependent on age related circumstances. This addresses (the research question) as to whether different age ranges of adult content creators adopt and use digital technology in different ways. Responses from the research suggests that in the main, the 18–28 participants were 'digilogue assimilators', in that they

grew up during a period of increased digital transfer and learnt to use and integrate digital and analogue technology concurrently side-by-side. The 40–50 participants could be considered 'digilogue appropriators' in that they grew up using analogue but gradually, and through integration and translation, learnt to use digital technologies and practices over a long period of time. Participants in the over-65 age range were more inclined to be 'digilogue initiators', in that they self-initiated change from analogue to digital through hobbies or interests they had undertaken in retirement. What is common throughout all age ranges in this study is that knowledge of analogue technologies did not hinder the transfer to digital technologies. Indeed, in a large proportion of cases the analogue experience helped develop learning in the digital domain through comparisons and distinctions.

9.3 Content creation

Another issue discussed in the early part of this research, and as a way of addressing the primary research question, was use of the term user-generated content, which linked content creation and sharing as one activity. Participant responses emerged showing that creating and sharing content were different and often separate activities that involve more complex processes than the term user-generated content implies. Therefore, this research made a differentiation between the practices of content creation and sharing. Data from participants indicated that the process of creating content was in many cases not produced solely for online sharing. Several instances within all age ranges, gave examples where personal judgement for creating digital content used decision-making processes that were developed through trial and error learning techniques. This was particularly evident with the middle- and retired-age ranges, who made a clear distinction between content they created and their decision to share it online. Certainly, the 40–50 age range had created the most content in their pre-digital life than the others. This made it necessary to make content remediation and digitalisation decisions followed by choices about whether to share this content online.

One clear difference between the young and older age ranges was their intended reasoning for creating content. The 18–28 participants were more inclined to create content *for* sharing. Indeed the phrase, 'self-created content for sharing', gives a

clearer understanding and definition of the two-stage process than the over-simplistic and rather detached term 'user-generated content'. This is a process often overlooked in discussions about user-generated content, as detailed in chapter three, which tend to focus too heavily on the sharing aspect of UGC. Therefore, further research is required to understand the process of decision-making between the process of creative production of the user (content creation) and the action of sharing this content creation on the internet.

9.3.1 Rethinking the concept of storytelling on the internet

During the background research into content creation the practice of digital storytelling was discussed. Much of digital storytelling describes a formal process where 'everyday people' create autobiographical films through a formalised workshop. This is a very worthwhile and valuable service, which through a formal structure and list of guidelines helps introduce the video production process to individuals. However, 'digital storytelling' does not correctly describe how and what many of the participants in this research are creating and producing. Many of the 'stories' and audio/visual content created by participants were implicit through the guise of a sequence of photographs, a collection of different types of media types on a blog, or recorded sounds (which had been edited and reinterpreted through a software package). Implicit stories of this kind, therefore, were open to interpretation by the 'audience' or online community. These are examples of implicit nonlinear digital audio-visual narratives of self-expression (non-linear being the way that their content can and is viewed by their online audience, e.g. a non-defined sequence that is open to personal interpretation by the viewer). Learning to create content was considered by several participants to be an informal self-taught process, which was informed and progressed by a cyclical trial-and-error process. This process was further enhanced by feedback received from their uploaded content, thus helping them progress as content creators and increasing their digital literacy. This area of the research reveals a focus for further investigation and study into practices encompassing different forms of implicit, nonlinear storytelling on the internet.

9.4 Sharing

As previously described, the sharing and publishing of digital content by participants was performed in many cases as a separate activity from creation of content. However, there was evidence that content was often created and shared in different ways. This was most prevalent with the 18–28 age range, which demonstrated this most clearly through their use of digital photography and their orientation to create content for sharing. Participants in this age range often produced and shared their digital photographs in one of two ways. Firstly, photographs taken directly from mobile devices tended to be shared casually with a carefree attitude and little use of editing or software manipulation. This form of sharing was in some cases less considered than the older age ranges. The second type of content created for sharing by the 18–28s was more consistent with the older participants, who spend time crafting their content, which was more inclined to be multimodal in its composition, for example videos that needed pre-production preparation before filming. All age ranges showed that at least some of their content was not digitally derived. A large portion of participants shared digital content originated from non-digital sources, such as physical drawings and paintings or remediated and redacted analogue content.

Several participants indicated that sharing self-created content on the internet helped to alleviate loneliness. This was particularly the case for over-65s living alone, but not exclusive to them. Sharing online offered a starting point for discussion and interaction between a wider demographic of people, helping to build a network of individuals with similar interests. This was also true for participants in other age ranges who felt isolated from physical social groups, as with the example of Fay who felt ostracised from her school peer groups. In these cases, finding friends through content-sharing platforms, such as deviantArt, helped link them to like-minded individuals with common interests.

While no conclusive evidence can be derived as to whether participants felt exploited or not by sharing their content on commercially orientated digital platforms and services, it is clear that a great deal of personal benefit was gained from their adoption of content creation and online sharing practices. Therefore, while theoretical arguments of digital labour, discussed in chapter three, posed by academics such as Fuchs (2014) are valid, empirical evidence from participants indicates connections

made through sharing content are many and varied and are particularly beneficial to older users. This is in line with Jenkins et al. who argue that sharing content "helps us articulate who we are, bolster our personal and professional relationships, strengthen our relationships with one another, and build community and awareness around the subjects we care about" (2013:304).

9.5 Motivation

At the start of this research project I explained how the creation of digital content was almost exclusively the preserve of the professional through the use of expensive computers systems, which gave almost no access to the non-professional, and how this began to change in the mid-1990s. I also made a comparison between the professional practices of a content creator (graphic designer) and the practices of the everyday non-professional content creator. The main difference between these two, as described in chapter three, was that generally professional practice was extrinsically motivated and non-professional practice intrinsically motivated.

As this research revealed, all the participants were, at least initially, intrinsically motivated to create and share content. The need for artistic self-expression, personal achievement, affiliation to others along with receiving recognition and feedback were all motivational reasons given by participants in all age groups for creating and sharing their content. In many cases this was and had been produced through vernacular practices of everyday creativity by many prior to them using digital tools and the internet. For other participants, digital technologies were enablers that unlock suppressed behaviour and creative desires. This was most notable with the over-65s where several participants were introduced to digital technologies via newly adopted hobbies or the embracing of previously deferred youthful interests or creative aspirations. Consequently, and as revealed in the previous chapter, there are common motivational characteristics throughout all age ranges, but there are also characteristics that are age related too. These are primarily associated with the life stages of the participants.

9.6 Conclusion

At the start of this project I made the decision to conduct a study that contributed a counter-balance to internet research predominantly orientated towards children and young people or that discussed internet usage in an age non-specific way. Accordingly, a set of research questions were established that asked how different age ranges created and shared content on the internet and what the commonalities and disparities within and between them. Alongside this, and at the early stages of the research, issues such as the so-called digital native and immigrants polemical divide and the digital generation were discussed and dismissed as simplistic terms with pejorative conations. With this in mind a study relating to adults of different age ranges ran the risk of polarising and generalising in the same way as Tapscott and Prensky. The research, therefore, sought not to view participants as members of a pre-defined generation, but as individuals within an age range who engaged in a specific practice. By the very nature of this practice (creating and sharing digital content) participants, particularly in the older age ranges, were untypical of most adult internet users, as statistics show (Office for National Statistics, 2013a). Consequently, generational preconceptions were suspended in favour of a more focused approach linked to the modes of communication and technologies available and familiar to them in their early life and to their own personal circumstances and backgrounds. This has also included the introduction to and adoption of networked, many-to-many communications. What has been revealed throughout the case study chapters in answer to the research questions is a highly nuanced set of conclusions. They show both commonly held actions of purpose and age related circumstances are relevant when discussing people who create and share content on the internet.

Chapter five gave a background to the age ranges and considered how each age range used technology, which helped address the research question that asked whether different age ranges of adult content creators adopt and used digital technology in different ways? This chapter confirmed that there are both similarities and differences between and within all age ranges. Participants from all age ranges found ways of using technology to create content without what they perceived as the natural learning skills. Some participants, irrespective of age, believed they had an innate understanding or found it easier than others to learn and use technology. In

several examples this was revealed to have been an issue with confidence or lack of it, often due to the resources and attitudes of educational establishments to technology.

The term 'digilogues', which I coined and explained above, gives an example of both the similarities and differences of technology use in adults. Similarity in that they all used digital and analogue technologies and media alongside each other, but difference in that the way they used it, which was often related to the technology familiar to their life stage. This term can be extended to wider content creating and sharing communities who are often using old and new technologies and media to engage in this practice. Indeed, this is in-line with the Bolter and Grusin's (2000) use of the term 'remediation', as discussed in chapter two, to describe the process, whereby 'old' (analogue) media is re-appropriated and modified into a new media (digital) environment. More specifically 'digilogue' media producers and disseminators use analogue and digital media indistinctly to form a complex cultural ecosystem, which combine material objects, digital creations, remixed material in online spaces through physical and online identities. However, while the term digilogue describes the similarities it also, through the use of a second term, describes life stage related differences (18-28: digilogue assimilators, 40-50: digilogue appropriators, +65: digilogue initiators), as previously described. Each age range will be discussed individually later in this chapter and will reference these differences directly.

In chapter four one of the research questions asked, what are the commonalities and disparities of practice within and between three age groups of adult content creators? While chapter six identified that not all digital content created by participants was created for sharing, content creators shared the skills they had learnt and some of the media they had produced to engage in an online participatory media environment, even if this was from a rudimentary starting point or level. In this sense they entered an environment of digital lifelong learning that gave them a platform to share, give and receive feedback and promote their content. By circulating personally created DIY media, collaborating and consulting with others and expressing and discussing personal creativity they have begun, reignited or developed a culture of vernacular creativity that makes and shares meaning with others.

This research revealed that the practice of digital content creation is not necessarily technologically driven. While the use of digital technology and the internet were enthusiastically embraced, as one might expect from the participants already engaged in creating and sharing digital content, the intrinsic motivations for engaging in these practices appear to be unchanged by their introduction to digital technology and the internet. However, while the motivation to create and share content was the intrinsic desire for creative self-expression, digital technology was the enabler for a broader scope of affiliation with others and for receiving recognition and feedback. Sharing self-created content online therefore fulfilled participants' need for validation and feedback of their content, and helped build confidence in their abilities.

Along with the similarities defined above there were also differing circumstances to which each age range was engaged and differing priorities that related to their life stages, which inform the research questions. The over-65s participants were predominantly concerned with retirement and re-education, while the 40–50 participants were more orientated to their family life, children and work. For the 18–28s, education and their learning technology were more recent in their lives. Consequentially, circumstance and priorities of this kind were influential to a greater or lesser extent in how and why participants in each age range created and shared content.

In some ways, the older age range had qualities that resemble the commonly held impression of how some young people act when they use digital technology and the internet. Participants had a generally positive attitude towards the digital world. They were excited by the new opportunities that sharing their content online presented to them and the ease of some digital practices to adopt (in comparison to analogue), such as digital photography. These new online options were perceived as empowering through the additional communication choices available to participants, and the speed and relative ease of delivery and response.

For the middle age range, 40–50, digital technology has been gradually domesticated into their lives, and while they are proficient at using it and had it firmly embedded into their daily lives they were questioning and re-evaluating the digital domain. From the small sample of participants in this study a definitive answer as to why this occurred is still open to question. However, evidence from these respondents

appears to show that one of the reasons for this may have been the personal adjustment of moving from an analogue culture of scarcity to digital culture of abundance. This was apparent both on a production level, through the availability of vast quantities of digital content, software applications, and online platforms, and an awareness level through the large amount of people producing and using them. A manifestation of this was projected through several participants' view of the seemingly transient nature of digital culture.

By contrast, the participants aged 18–28 had a greater understanding of the possibilities of self-promotion and their own online identity. This may have been due to them being introduced to the internet during their early teens. While the older age ranges had started using the internet primarily as an information gathering and search tool and gradually moved towards developing an online presence, several of the participants aged 18–28 used the internet for self-promotion or to project their online image from the moment they started using it. This can be seen in participants referencing their teenage blogs and photo galleries, which they no longer maintain or update but are still accessible as online archives and historical references of their early lives. These early iterations of content creation and sharing and self-promotion may have led to several participants developing a commercially minded attitude to the way they use and engage with digital technology and content sharing. This might explain also why creating and sharing for them were much more part of the same process. To conclude this section discussion will continue with comment and analysis concerning each age range and suggested areas of significance along with suggestions for further study.

9.6.1 +65 Participants

A picture emerged from this small sample of content creating participants which demonstrated that within the numbers of retired internet users there is diversity of knowledge, use and activity that is equal and common in many ways with other age groups. Career experiences, access to technologies, and education have all played a part in how and why they participate in the practice of creating and sharing digital content. Therefore, these are internet users that display neither a model of tech-

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savvy 'silver surfer' or 'digital dismissive', as is often the case when discussing this age range, but show a variety of diverse backgrounds, interests and abilities.

This research identified that this age range do adopt and use digital technologies in different ways to other age groups and this is related to their life stage. For the over-65s acquiring skills to use digital technologies were self-initiated and often unintentional, or as a consequence of adopting a new hobby or interest in retirement. For several, learning the transfer from analogue to digital technology or adopting digital was a gradual and necessary requirement for them to pursue their hobbies. In this regard over-65 participants could be considered 'digilogue initiators'. Digital technologies and the internet can be viewed as an empowering medium for participants in this age range. Not only does digital technology enable the reconnection to pre-retirement interests or discovery of new ones, access to and use of the internet also makes inclusive communications possible from positions of relative physical isolation. For some participants the internet has enabled a networked connection with a wider community through discussion or interest in their shared content. In light of these findings, it is evident that some over-65s are using digital media not merely to engage in a process of information gathering, but to express themselves through sharing self-created content. The outcomes challenge the association between old age and lack of internet engagement. Whatever the type or complexity of digital content created by the over-65s their use of digital media now encompasses production as well as consumption. There is also evidence of participants in this research, particularly Peter, projecting their identities into the digital space and of their online and offline activities beginning to merge. This is in line with the White and Cornu (2011) 'resident' maxim, where the distinction between online and offline has become increasingly blurred.

While suggesting that there commonalities that are present in all age ranges, as previously described, there is also a need to recognise that using the internet has specific issues for the over-65s that are not necessarily relevant to younger people. Retired people may have more free time to learn digital media but there are also issues of health, mobility, accessibility, physical isolation and loneliness that can be combated through online connections and communication. This research has revealed that developing skills that enable the creation and online sharing of content

has helped combat loneliness through connecting participants to local communities and special interest groups via the internet and led to them connecting physically to local interest groups. Social isolation, a lack of contact with friends and family and other looser networks of acquaintances, is a major issue for significant numbers of older people in the UK (Independent Age, 2010). As the UK population continues to age and as the number of older one-person households increases physical isolation and loneliness will become an ever more important matter. There are already many organisations in the United Kingdom that are taking initiatives to address these issues, including AgeUK, Age Concern and Help the Aged, but more needs to be done to harness the networking potential and array of communication channels available. Consequently, future initiatives should consider the diverse backgrounds and experiences of older people and the many different ways they can be introduced to digital media and the internet. These should not be addressed in a 'one-size-fits-all' type policy but one that recognises the diversity of skill, learning ability and motivation to adopt and use digital technology. In focusing less on presumptions of how a certain generational group may act and more on their motivation for a wide variety of interests and practices, we may be able to develop educational programmes, policies, design systems and devices that are better suited to the needs of all older people and, indeed, all age ranges.

9.6.2 40–50 Participants

As one might expect, family life, children and work were identified from an early stage in this research as being central to the priorities of participants at this life stage. One of the initial findings from this group of participants was how the adoption of laptops, broadband and Wi-Fi had impacted positively on their family life. This had allowed them the freedom to leave the comparative isolation of a fixed-line computer room or space and re-join the family unit in the living room during evening leisure time. This is consistent with an Ofcom Communications Market Report (2013), *The reinvention of the 1950s living room.* It revealed that families in UK homes had discarded their second television sets in favour of coming together in the living room to watch the main television. The difference from the 1950s was that they now brought with them laptops, smartphones and tablets, which has created a nation of 'media multi-taskers'. However, as some participants in this research revealed, the main television

took a background entertainment role and the (laptop) computer was used as primary entertainment for the creation of content and to interact with children, all this while still being present in the room with the rest of the family. This has had a beneficial role in engaging the adult with their children and introducing them to an active participatory role in creating and sharing their content.

This age group exemplifies the notion of how digital technology has been gradually introduced into many people's lives with a comparatively lengthy transition period from analogue to digital technology, which has resulted in an almost unconscious domestication of both technologies. There was a widespread belief among participants that the adoption, engagement and participation in content creation and sharing activities on the web were beneficial and that engagement with social media elicited a sense of empowerment and influence. However, alongside this view, and in sharp contrast with other age ranges, several participants brought into question concerns over certain elements of the digital medium, epitomised by the metaphorical phrase, 'a double edged sword' (a term used by two of the participants). While it would be easy to dismiss this as a nostalgic view of a previous pre-digital life, some significant concerns were raised. This was manifested in a number of ways. Firstly, negativity was shown towards the ease of the production and dissemination of digital content compared to that of analogue. Although this might appear counter-intuitive, several participants felt they had lost a valuable element of tactility and satisfaction from the production process. (Nonetheless, it must be noted that several also found digital production a distinct advantage over analogue. Indeed, participants with knowledge of previously held analogue practices, such as photography, found the transfer to digital technologies preferable, and sharing had enabled them to be more reflexive towards their content production, which is similar to other age ranges.) Secondly, some participants experienced feelings of anxiety from the seeming enormity of people, content and information on the internet. Thirdly, concern was expressed over their reliance on digital technology and the need to balance their lives with periods of abstinence. One participant characterised many of these views. He embraced a wide spectrum of digital technologies and used internet tools proficiently to create music collaboratively using musicians he had found though niche online music communities, yet he was the participant with the most negative views of digital culture and ambivalence towards certain digital tools. This could have been

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dismissed as an aberration were it not for the responses of several others who had misgivings about certain aspects of the digital domain and culture that they were, at the same time, engaged with.

What can be drawn from analysis of these 40–50 age range content creators is that knowledge of pre-digital and analogue technology has acted as a counter-balance to the pervasion of digital culture. These were not participants with Luddite tendencies, far from it. They embraced and understood and were highly conversant in the workings of digital technology and the internet. What they displayed was a high level of digital and media literacy that has been assisted by their knowledge of analogue practices and the mechanisms of a non-digital world. These attributes helped them analyse, re-evaluate and make comparisons between the two; a process, which at the time of research was, and presumably still is, ongoing. Here were examples of 'digilogue appropriators', several with high levels of digital literacy, who used their experience of both digital and analogue domains to evaluate, assess, accept or reject the values and workings of digital culture without blind acceptance of industry hyperbole or media scepticism.

9.6.3 18–28 Participants

The transitional era in which this age range grew up, where analogue was exchanged for digital technology, gave the 18–28 participants a unique experience. Learning both mediums simultaneously meant that, far from weakening their understanding of the digital domain, it gave them direct comparisons without prejudices or historical associations to an analogue one (or digital for that matter). Consequently, and in contast to the older age ranges, there was no nostalgia for the analogue technology, as with the middle age range, or a preconception of digital technology, as with some of the over-65s. As digital transfer took place they were able to value the speed of production given by digital technology but still retain an understanding for the use of non-digital and analogue content. This pluralistic use of technology and media types was seen in the many examples of multi-modal media content created by these participants, which might include the integration of traditional drawings and paintings, remediated analogue video clips and digital photographs. Therefore, these 'digilogue

assimilators' felt comfortable incorporating and absorbing both types of technologies into the prevailing digital culture.

As one might expect, the 18–28 participants tended to create more content for sharing than the older age ranges and unlike the older age ranges the processes of content creation and sharing were more attuned to creating content *for* sharing. In this regard, several could be regarded as content publishers *on* the internet rather than content producers who used the internet for distribution. Online and offline activities were generally considered to be part of the same experience, therefore, the digital world had been absorbed fairly seamlessly into their everyday life.

One practice that differed fro the older age ranges was that self-promotion was a natural activity for most participants, and they saw social media as a medium that greatly improved access to their content, while value was derived from online comments, feedback and conversations. Some initially reluctant participants were drawn to adopt digital technology as a matter of necessity and compulsion as they grasped the communication and distribution potential afforded by the internet. Participants in this age range were either coming into or about to join the job market or in employment that was a springboard or stopping-off point to another. The majority of the participants, therefore, had an awareness of the potential of the internet to promote their skills and develop new ones. The 18–28 participants' inclination for self-promotion led several to develop a more commercially and career-focused attitude to the sharing of their content. The platforms they use and the audience they attract led several to mimic the production processes and attain the quality of professional content.

Two participants, Carl and Nancy, could, in many ways, be considered the most advanced and emblematic examples of content creators in this study. These two people were initially intrinsically motivated to create and share content. Through processes of developing their skills, knowledge and online literacy they managed to build popular web spaces, which attracted high levels of visitors and subscribers to their video 'channel'. This led to each of them being offered a financial partnership deal that gave them an income, which was an unintended consequence of their practice. Adopting practices of this sort are alternative ways for abilities and ideas to become noticed. Prior to the distribution and dissemination affordances of the

internet, this would have been all but impossible for everyday vernacular practices to receive such large-scale diffusion and recognition.

As chapter five revealed, there was a disparity in the level of ICT, computer and digital literacy attained during secondary school education in this age range. This was shown to have occurred for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the resources and culture at schools varied depending on location and importance attached to these skills and knowledge. Secondly, there were different levels of perceived personal ability that affected confidence and adoption. Thirdly, as previously stated, there were some participants who were initially reluctant adopters and rejected the formal education provided for them in schools. However, as this research shows, all participants became highly adept at creating their own content and sharing it online. What this reveals is that learning these skills in school are important but, as evidence in this research suggests, lack of this is not necessarily a hindrance to learning digital and online skills. The motivation for these participants to create and share content and for self-expression and self-promotion generated the drive for self-learning that might include techniques of trial and error. This often provided them with ample time to experiment and explore in a self-initiated 'learning by doing' way.

9.7 Discussion

This research has shown that vernacular practices that were once localised in nature have, through online sharing, blurred the boundaries between local and global. The process viewed through the 36 participants in this study has indicated that sharing content fosters less phatic and more engaging conversations. These were enacted because the starting point for discussion derived from a shared creative act, such as a visually stimulating image or a striking audio-derived sound, which encouraged an online conversation. The level of freedom to publish, unhindered by the gatekeepers of traditional media organisations, encouraged a feedback loop of communication between online peers, which continued the learning process and helped build participants' feelings of self-confidence and creative self-expression. The simple act of sharing content has enabled a level of communication to and through online communities where participators become reviewers, commentators and evaluators of their own and others' work, and relationships are made that can lead to greater

opportunities for collaboration. The ability for people to use the internet to publish and build networks was one of the most beneficial aspects for participants in this research. Sharing their content has given them the facility to reach niche communities and wider national and international demographics that would not easily have been possible before the networking and distribution affordances of internet. Many adults are also creating historical visual and/or audio records of their lives online. As one participant quoted, "we've all become editors or curators of our own life", which encapsulates the actions and behaviours of many adults in this study, and suggests practices of personal expression and online participation that are indicative of many people using the internet today.

Chapter five revealed that formal education has an important role in initiating all age ranges of participants to engage with digital technology and stresses the importance of lifelong learning in an increasingly digitalised world and economy. This view is supported by the UK Digital Skills Council Taskforce whose report states that, "the current level of support [the UK] offer[s] to lifelong leaning is not fit for purpose for our digital future" (2014:105). Alongside this an Ofcom report revealed that six in ten UK adults admit that new technology confuses them (Ofcom, 2014). It is clear that there is a lack of equitable access to digital education that spans all age ranges. Even the most basic introduction to creative practices (that are inexorably linked to digital technology, such as digital photography or software photo manipulation software) can encourage a learning process through doing. While the motivation to create content is borne out of a desire for creative expression and not the allure of using and learning digital technologies, it is clear from this research that adults who are introduced to digital technology through their personal creative desires, hobbies and preferences for making and sharing content are able to adopt and develop personal learning styles that match their own needs.

The online world in the second decade of 21st century has become a more visual arena than the predominantly text based one of pre and early millennium. This is particularly due to faster download speeds afforded by the advent of broadband, the networking and social sharing facilities of SMS's, accessible and affordable software, and the greater amount of networked devices available within the marketplace. Nevertheless, personal desire to engage in creative practices and share self-created

content online has been show throughout this research to be motivational drive for self-expression. The ability to create visual content enables many people to express themselves in a way that may be different or easier that using the written word and this should be encouraged. Therefore, government and educational bodies need to place more importance on the value of visual creative practices and their value through online communication along with a review of the facilities for lifelong learning for digital skills and literacy across the UK.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Participant interview questions

Pre-interview introduction statements (before audio recording)

1. In this interview I will be asking questions about how you create and share content on the internet.

2. Creating content, in the context of this project, could be anything from taking and editing digital photos and sharing them, to making videos or music and putting them online, or updating or managing a website. It could also include taking images or sounds from other sources and reusing them to make something new.

3. Explain that the interview will be recorded and for the sake of the recording I may nod my head rather than replying with words like "yes".

4. All personal information from this project will remain strictly confidential.

5. Please note that this is not a test and there are no correct answers to the questions. I am interested in your personal experience, behaviour and actions when creating and sharing content on the web. This is an opportunity for you to speak openly and freely.

Interview (start audio recording)

Introduction questions

- How long ago did you start using the web?

- How long ago did you start creating and sharing content?

- What type of content do you create and share with people on the web?

- How long each week to you spend creating and uploading content?

- Could you tell me a bit more about the content you create?

- What platforms/websites do you upload your content to?

- How often do you create and share content?

- Do you share your content within a closed online community or is it made available to the whole of the web?

- Do you solely created the content by yourself or do you use elements from other sources? If so what are the sources?

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- Do you ever collaborate with friends or people you have met online to produce content? If you do, what is the age range of these people?

- Is there a particular time of the day or the week when you create your content and upload it to the web?

- Do you get feedback on what you have created? If so from whom?

- Have ever received negative feedback? If so, has this made you reluctant to create more?

- How many people did you regularly share your content with?

- Would you say you watched less or about the same amount of television since you started to use create and share online?

- How would you define social media?

Motivation

- What is your motivation for creating and sharing content?

- Would you describe your motivation to create and share your content as being:

  1) for self-promotion 2) to be creative 3) to communicate or collaborate with friends 3) something to do 4) better than watching TV

- What do you enjoy about creating and sharing your content?

- What satisfaction, if any, do you get from creating content online?

- Before you created content for the web did/do you create content as a hobby? If so, what? Was it non-digital content?

- Where do you get inspiration for creating your content? Is this from something that you have seen on another sites or is it from somewhere else in your daily life?

- How do you know when what you have created is finished?

- Do you consider creating content and sharing it online as a hobby or something that will eventually lead to paid work or a job?

Digital knowledge and literacy

- Where/how did you learn to create and share content?

- Did you find the technical process of creating and sharing your content easy?

- Would you like to develop your technical skills or are you comfortable with the skills you have?

- What details do you provide about yourself sharing your content online? (name? age? address? phone no.?).

- Are you concerned about your online privacy?

- Are you concerned about other people using your content?

- Have you ever uploaded something that you wish you hadn't? If so, what?

- Do you think creating digital content has helped you to better communicate with other web users?

Future:

- In the future do you think you will create and share more or less content online or about the same?

- In the future do you think you will watch more or less television or about the same?

Thank interviewee (stop audio recording)

Post interview:

Hand-out

Ask participant to fill out personal details form.

Website

Ask participant to upload some of their content to website using email address: contentcreation@posterous.com

Web address: http://contentcreation.posterous.com

Appendix B – Published material

Riley, T. (2013), 'Self-initiated (re)education of digital technology in retired content creators', Northern Lights 11, pp. 51–69, doi: 10.1386/nl.11.51_1

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Self-initiated (re)education of digital technology in retired content creators

ABSTRACT

The retired population in the United Kingdom is rising and statistics show that growth in the use of digital technologies and the Internet are also increasing within this age group. Small but substantial proportions are using the Internet for something more than to search and consume online goods and materials. This article explores what and where retired people learn digital technologies, skills often more directly associated with people born into a digital world. Through the use of qualitative data this article provides an insight into the (re)education of retired Internet users who are using digital technology and web media to create and share their own content. Digital technology within this sample of over 65s is often learnt unintentionally as a consequence of adopting a new hobby or interest in retirement or the rediscovery of an old one that they may not have been able to explore prior to retirement.

INTRODUCTION

In the first few years of the twenty-first century, access to and use of Web 2.0 tools and digital technologies in the United Kingdom increased considerably (Office for National Statistics 2010). Consequently, the process of creating digital content for everyday, non-professional web users has become more achievable than in previous decades and is now no longer the exclusive

domain of the professional. This practice has been accelerated with the advent of high-speed broadband connections, more powerful home computers and greater choice of web media tools and platforms. Users from outside a professional framework are now able to create and share digital content through virtual communities and online platforms relatively easily. Many academics and media commentators (Gauntlett 2011; Castells 2009; Leadbeater 2008; Shirky 2008; Benkler 2006; Poster 1995) see this as a significant shift away from the manner in which individuals traditionally receive and 'passively' consume professionally produced media. Individuals are now able to create and publish their own content online enabling them to become actively, responsively and inclusively engaged. The creation and sharing of this user-generated content has demanded that traditional media organizations adapt and reassess their modus operandi, as argued by David Gauntlett in his book *Making is Connecting*.

> Just 20 years ago […] you had to be one of the absolute elite, employed by a media organisation, and selected to produce content, to even get to speak. Today, a lot of non-elite, non-professional people are creating and sharing media, making their mark on the world, and sharing what they have to say about an incredibly diverse range of spheres and subjects.
>
> (2011: 233)

Creating and sharing digital content is a practice that has been adopted by all ages of society and is not exclusive to young people. Much has been written about the dexterity and competence of so-called 'digital natives' and the ability of the 'net' or 'digital' generation to learn to use technology (Tapscott 2009; Palfrey and Gasser 2008; Prensky 2001). These arguments appear somewhat unconvincing in a post Web 2.0 environment. People of all ages learn technology in diverse ways and there may be many different reasons why they participate in this activity. For instance, it could be dependent on availability of time, access to knowledge and technologies, workplace experiences or ability to learn skills, along with their own personal motivations. Therefore, the relevance of the term 'generation' requires examination with regard to people learning digital technologies.

In recent years a considerable amount of valuable research has been conducted into the impact of technology on children and young people (Buckingham 2006; Livingstone 2002). This has been complimented by statistical surveys of the UK populace (Becta 2010; Office for National Statistics 2010). However, little is known of the digital skills acquired by older retired people.

So what of the older generations who use digital technology and particularly those who create and share content? Are they handicapped from learning digital technology and creating digital content due to their age and perceived lack of acquiescence? The following empirical analysis looks at retired people who create, share and publish digital content on the Internet. It examines *where* and *what* they have been learning that has enabled them to acquire the digital skills needed to produce online content. On a wider level, it asks whether the association between old age and lack of Internet use is still an appropriate notion and whether use of the term 'generation' is correct for measuring the adoption and use of digital technology.

Data have been produced using qualitative research through face-to-face interviews with participants who are already engaged in creating and sharing

digital content via the Internet. Before moving to the methodology and analysis, this article will begin with a brief examination into whether a digitally knowledgeable 'generation' really exists or whether learning digital technology is more experientially age non-specific.

A QUESTION OF GENERATIONS

Karl Mannheim wrote about generations in the 1920s and developed a generational theory that is often contemporarily cited (Kertzer 1983; Edmunds and Turner 2002; Buckingham 2008; Luecke 2009). In 'The problem of generations' Mannheim (1952) formulated a synchronic structure comprising three components; generation location, generation as actuality and generation unit. These three parts express how people born at a certain time interpret and respond to the life chances presented to them. Most pertinent to this article are generation units, which are sub-groups or sub-divisions with different and sometimes conflicting units within a generation. '[T]hose groups within the same actual generation which work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways constitute different generational units' (Mannheim 1952: 314). Mannheim also believed that as the speed of change in society increases, the boundaries between generations are likely to become less distinct.

Drawing from many years of teaching diverse groups of young people, Siva Vaidhyanathan argues that talk of a digital generation is a 'generational myth' and that not all young people are tech-savvy and believes that the assumption that people are 'born digital':

> wilfully ignores the vast range of skills, knowledge, and experience of many segments of society. It ignores the needs and perspectives of those young people who are not socially or financially privileged. It presumes a level playing field and equal access to time, knowledge, skills, and technologies.

(2008: 2)

Thinking in generational terms is too simplistic as knowledge and understanding of technology varies greatly within all age groups. Consequently, there is a danger of overestimating the digital skills of young people and underestimating those of older age groups, a point argued by David Buckingham:

> To a greater or lesser extent, technological change affects us all, adults included. Yet the consequences of technology depends crucially on how we use technology and what we use it for, and these things are subjected to a considerable degree of social variation within age groups as between them.

(2006: 11)

Therefore, the term 'generation' is problematic when used in this instance for the categorization of age delineation due to generic assumptions, perceptions and attitudes associated with each generation. This is particularly critical in the digital era when the distinction and definitions made between 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants' can differ considerably *within* generations and be less divergent *between* generations. D. Tapscott (2009) and M. Prensky's (2001) standpoints presume the use of technology to be neatly ordered into definitive

groups, when in reality there is a greater crossover of skills, experience and knowledge.

These suppositions also ignore the proliferated and extensive use of digital technology in the workplace over the last two decades, enabling many 'immigrants' to access and learn digital technology over a longer period than many 'natives'. Indeed, D. S. White and A. L. Cornu argue, 'technology, computer applications […] have moved on to the point that the Native/Immigrant dichotomy is now redundant' (2011: 2) and prefer the age-neutral term 'visitors and residents'. This describes 'visitors' as 'unlikely to have any form of persistent profile online which projects their identity into the digital space' (White and Cornu 2011: 5). While for 'residents' the Internet is 'a place to express opinions, a place in which relationships can be formed and extended. […] A proportion of their lives is actually lived out online where the distinction between online and off–line is increasingly blurred' (White and Cornu 2011).

The concept of a 'net' or 'digital' generation, where a particular age group of Internet users are defined and characterized by their knowledge, behaviour, use and adoption of technology, has been shown to be flawed and problematic. The notion tends to ignore the diverse backgrounds and experience of each user and their access to digital technology. It can be equally as dissimilar or can span over a period of over many decades. Furthermore, it disregards the interdependence and convergence of old and new media.

THE OVER 65s IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The population in England and Wales is living longer and society is ageing (Office for National Statistics 2012a). Although an estimated six million people over 65 in the United Kingdom have still never used the Internet (AgeUK 2010) the number of people using the Internet in this age group is rising. Office for National Statistics data for 2012 show that 62.4 per cent of people aged between 65–74 and 27.7 per cent of over 75s use the Internet and this has been growing year on year (Office for National Statistics 2012b). Initiatives in the United Kingdom, such as Race Online 2012,[1] aim to raise these percentages. Particular targets of this campaign are the older, digitally excluded nonusers of the Internet. Some of the reasons for exclusion may be a lack of motivation or feeling too old to learn new skills. They may have a fear of technology and no e-literacy skills. There may be security and privacy concerns, little or no access to computers, or they may simply not be able to afford to go online (Morris and Brading 2007). Some are unclear as to how digital technology can provide an alternative or supplement to personal contact, for example to letter writing and using the phone (Hanson 2009). Outside these reasons there are still a number of older people that are 'digitally dismissive' 'refuseniks' of computers and the Internet, who are unlikely to be persuaded otherwise (Age Concern and Help the Aged n.d.).

Since the early days of the Internet a polarized view of this age group has emerged. On the one hand there is the popular notion of the 'silver surfer' as the older 'tech-savvy' Internet user and on the other, that of the fearful, or reticent nonuser. This has lead to an oversimplified perception of this age group (Selwyn 2004). This may have in part derived from early research of over 65s in the United Kingdom, which found that the Internet was used less for researching hobbies, playing games and browsing for fun than younger age groups (Selwyn et al. 2003). Findings on the boundary between work and leisure in retirement showed that some retirees were hesitant to define their

use of computer technologies as leisure due in part to the reskilling needed to use computers and the Internet (Buse 2009).

However, in 2012 the over 65s is a large and diverse group where use of computers and the Internet is equally varied. Levels of skills, knowledge and ability are dependent on a number of characteristics ranging from health, education and previous employment to socio-economic reasons. Evidence has emerged that this age group uses the Internet for more than just simple browsing. A report by AgeUK (2010) recorded that as many as 22% of people aged 65 and over had purchased goods over the Internet. This 22% included 44% purchasing holiday accommodation, 40% buying books, magazines and newspapers, 38% purchasing clothes and sports goods with 37% ordering household goods. In addition 20% downloaded films and music from the Internet, rather than buying them from a shop or receiving them by post. Statistics from this report also suggest that a higher level of computer and Internet literacy is present in this age group than is commonly perceived and their use of these technologies may be related to the usefulness of an application in their everyday lives.

Indeed, Office for National Statistics stated that 22 per cent of over 65s who use the Internet have 'upload[ed] self-created content to a website to be shared' (2010: 13) (see Figure 1). Although the report did not qualify as to what constituted 'self-created content', whether this was simply writing a comment on a blog or the more complex process of making a video, this is a significant enough percentage not to be ignored. It suggests a move towards the practice of self-production and self-publishing in addition to the consumption of services and purchasing.

In examination of this move towards self-production and self-publishing, a research project by A. Karahasanovic et al. conducted three separate studies into older people's user requirements for co-creation and user-generated content (UGC). The outcome of these studies showed that older Internet users, 'are very motivated to contribute with UGC, given the right circumstances [and] it is important they be able to use the new technologies easily' (Karahasanovic et al. 2008: 655). Y. Raban and M. Brynin report that:

> aging is not a one-dimensional process [and] it would be wrong to assume that only the young have learning curves, even if they move along these curves faster.
>
> (2006: 43)
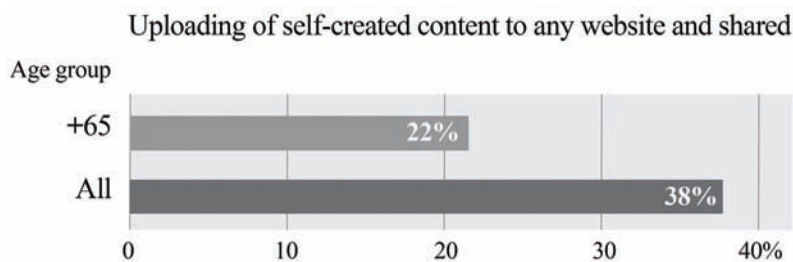
Source: Office of National Statistics – Internet Access 2010 UK Households and Individuals, 27th August 2010.

Figure 1: Uploading self-created content to any website and shared. (Office for National Statistics 2010: 13).

Findings developing from a 2002 e-Living survey, which looked at technology use in six different countries, suggests that 'a large proportion of older people are ready to adopt new technologies and have positive attitudes towards technology' (Raban and Brynin 2006: 48). Many of these findings contradict the polemical claims made by Prensky (2001) of a 'digital native' versus 'digital immigrant' and by Tapscott (2009) of a 'net generation' against the 'baby boomer generation' and 'Generation X'. The later terms of which are used pejoratively in this case.

METHODOLOGY

This article uses data collected from twelve retired participants aged 65–84 between March 2011 and February 2012. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in London and the South East of England with the exception of one participant who lived in Derbyshire, United Kingdom. This interview was completed using Skype with a two-way camera connection, enabling both interviewer and interviewee a visual context. All interviews were conducted in a semi-structured and open-ended manner. No financial or gift incentive was given to any of the participants and all gave information freely and without premeditation or instruction. No time limit was set for interviews and each interviewee was given as much time to speak and answer questions, as they required. Each interview lasted between 25 and 80 minutes generating a total of over nine hours of data.

The criterion for selecting participants was that they were over 65 and currently using the Internet and digital technology to create and share content. Every participant in this study was no longer in paid employment and was in retirement. Participants were selected from a variety of methods, including media sharing websites (Flickr, YouTube and personal blogs) to source appropriate online practices and for contacting participants. However, several participants were more responsive to direct face-to-face requests for interviews. Personal visits to organized groups helped reassure the validity and genuine nature of the project.

DEFINING DIGITAL CONTENT AND CONTENT CREATION

The term, 'digital content' in this article refers to the numerical representation of information in a digital form (Manovich 2001). Content may also originate from an analogue form but, through the process of digitization, becomes remediated into a digital form (Bolter and Grusin 2000). The creation of digital content can mean anything from a simple typed comment on a social network site to a more complex video production. 'Digital content creation' in the context of this article is defined as: an arrangement of visual and/or audio material that requires some element of composition or editing and has been created outside of a professional framework. Digital text is not included in this definition, other than its association to the visual and/or audio content. The inclusion of digital text would make the analysis of content too broad and would include more basic communication such as commenting on a blog or a social network site status update. 'User-generated content' is a content that has been created by the user and shared on the Internet (Shirky 2008). This differs from the use of the term 'digital content creation' or 'self-created content' in definition as the latter is digitally created or digitally remediated by the user but not yet shared or published via the Internet.

SHARING

In the digital world 'sharing' has many different meanings. Sharing by individuals often means to make a copy of a digital object or 'sharing' a hyperlink with a friend via an e-mail, social network site or the Web. Therefore, sharing in the context of this article is any visual and/or audio material that is sent via the Internet to others or made available to other users via the Web.

OVER 65 SAMPLE OVERVIEW

An obvious consequence and added benefit of retirement is the availability of more free time to indulge in leisure activities. Retirement has given the majority of the participants in this age group the freedom and opportunity to either renew an interest they had earlier in life, which work had restricted them from doing, or adopt new interests through re-education in universities, colleges or groups such as The University of the Third Age (U3A).[2]

All of the participants worked in non-creative jobs or industries prior to retirement, five of the sample in professional occupations and six in none or semi-professional employment. One described herself as a 'housewife'. Several have acquired computer knowledge and skills from their working lives or adopted digital technology after retirement as an extension of a hobby or interest. This has provided the skills for them to extend their knowledge by specializing in specific computer or digital art courses, rather than embarking on general computer access courses, therefore enabling them to develop digital content creation skills.

Due to the participants' inclination towards the practices of creating and sharing content, they were generally drawn to technology or artistically focused subjects. By definition, they could therefore be considered relatively computer proficient. However, this proficiency was diverse throughout the sample. The research sample had been using the Internet for a number of years prior to being interviewed and all of the participants were currently creating content at the time of the interview. Seven of the twelve interviewees began using the Internet between 2000 and 2003, with two starting in the mid to late 1990s, one in the late 1980s and one as little as three to four years ago (see Figure 2).

Eight of the sample finished their pre-employment education at secondary school level with the remainder attending further or high education. On retirement there was a high uptake in formal education through local colleges with some taking higher education degrees in universities. Most chose to study visual arts subjects such as digital photography and art, or digitally related software programs such as Adobe Photoshop or Dreamweaver. Several had acquired new skills in a creative subject that also involved technical and software proficiencies. This enabled them to pursue creative activities that they were either discouraged from doing, or were not confident to embrace in their earlier life.

Several of the participants' introductions to the Internet, Web and digital content creation came via an involvement in outside non-digital activities and interests. Consequently some have learnt the basics of how to upload digital photographs, create blogs, build a website through formal college courses, traditional books and manuals. Several in the early stages of re-education are more likely to use traditional learning resources such as books. However, as they use the skills they learn in formal education, they are inclined to develop 'trial and error' learning techniques, which include the Web to source learning materials or online tutorials that enable greater proficiency in their use
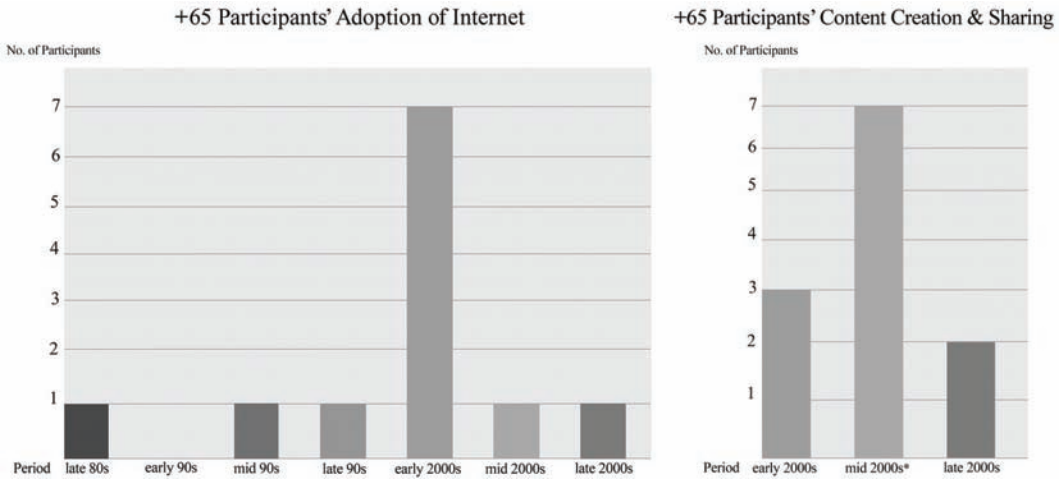
*1 participant created digital content in 2005 but did not share until 2008.

Figure 2: +65 adoption of the Internet and creation of content and sharing.

of digital technology. Of the twelve participants half said that they started to create and share content in the mid-2000s with three starting in the early 2000s, two stating that it was a 'recent' activity and one started creating content in 2005 but did not start sharing until a couple of years ago (see Figure 2).

(RE)EDUCATION AND LEARNING IN RETIREMENT

By and large retired adults return to education voluntarily and because they have chosen a subject or interest they want to learn and is part of a lifelong learning activity. Lifelong learning is defined by the European Commission as the 'lifelong, voluntary and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for personal or professional reasons' (European Commission: Eurostat n. d.). Learning after retirement has been the common feature that defines all the participants in this age group.

FORMAL (RE)EDUCATION IN RETIREMENT

The availability of more free time in retirement offers the prospect of developing new skills or enhancing old ones without the pressures or deadlines of a working environment. With this comes and a feeling of freedom too. One participant, Bob, aged 69 at the time of the interview, expressed a common view within the twelve retired participants. 'When you retire if you don't do something you probably vegetate'. This was reflected by the fact that all of the participants, including those who had used computers in the workplace, had been involved in some level of formal training since retirement. These were separated into three different categories: university, college and distance learning. In addition five out of the twelve interviewees sited The U3A as being of importance in their re-education. Although there was an inquisitive desire to continue or start learning after retirement, the main theme running through this group was their ability to rediscover and revisit a skill or interest they had experienced in earlier life, which had been restricted by work. In most cases this was an aspiration to pursue areas associated with a creative practice such as art and photography,

which inevitably led to a digitally created solution or digital facsimile of a physically created artefact. These learning experiences have in many cases given an introduction, no matter how rudimentary, into the digital environment. What follows are participants experiences of different types of post-retirement learning that has either led to or been directly associated with digital technology, the Internet and their ability to create and share content.

UNIVERSITY

Three participants entered higher education for the first time after retirement. Two of the interviewees completed a B.A. in Fine Art after working in a non-creative occupation before retirement. Both expressed how the experience was rather challenging. Myra, age 71 when interviewed, who had had a career in the prison service, found that she drifted into university education.

Interviewer: What was your motivation for embarking on a university degree course?

Myra: I'd been involved in going to art classes over the years and never taken it seriously and then when I retired […] I thought it was rather nice to do an access course and when I was there the people said well an access course [leads] to university […] and with it I did an A level in Art and that led to me to apply to university and I did a part time course. It was more of a challenge than I'd anticipated.

Prior to her degree Myra joined a photographic group on Flickr taking photographs at different locations on London and uploads on a weekly basis. Similarly Peter, aged 85 at the time of interview, entered higher education upon retirement and after working in the motorcycle trade until his early 60s. He reignited his interest in art by first completing a Foundation Art course followed by Fine Art degree at university in 1990s.

Peter: I've always been interested in Art and whilst I've always visited galleries and museums I've never actually practices it until I retired from work about 25 years ago now at the age of 60-something. And at that time I went to a local comprehensive where the art teacher there who let me sit in with the students […] to do my GCSE and then later the next year continued to do my A levels and subsequently went on to University to do a degree in Fine Art. […] I really didn't really enjoy the degree course very much [as] it was a time of conceptual art [but] I continued and got my degree of course. But part of the education that I really enjoyed was the foundation course that you do before you go to university. (Oakley 2012)

Peter's disappointing experience at university indirectly propelled him in the direction of computer art. Through a process of trial and error, he followed this by learning how to make videos using his Microsoft Window's Movie Maker.

Peter: Having given up art [after my unpleasant experience at art college] I thought that computer art might be an interesting thing to do. I had seen people at university in the very early days of

computer art and I thought that might be something to occupy myself and I learned quite a bit about Photoshop and graphic design and […] was using some of those skills to do family slide shows which I thought were fairly boring and thought that video and audio would help them. [I] had to investigate how to make a video, which I knew nothing about at all, but [Microsoft] Windows Moviemaker was part of [my] operating system so that was another skill that I learned and then, having thought I was fairly clever at being able to deliver video, I found YouTube. I can't remember how. I think I was sort of texting either some- body on Skype or on another website and, having found YouTube, I thought it was a wonderful thing to do.

Peter had developed all these skills since his retirement and used them to full effect. In August 2006 he started uploading self-created videos diaries of personal monologues to YouTube with an account named Geriatric 1927, his date of birth.[3] He has since adopted the self-appointed title of 'Internet Grandad' (*sic*) and has become something of a celebrity on the platform. As of August 2012 he has developed a large following with 40,926 subscribers and 9,196,729 video views. Over the first six years of making videos for YouTube he has built an archive of 361 videos of which he posts, on average, a new one every week.

Bob's route to using digital technology was more incidental due to his interest in astronomy and Astro Photography, which he had developed in retirement. Astro Photography, like other forms of photography, has made the transition to digital in recent years and now involves using specialist software and digital cameras to take photographs of outer space through a telescope.

Bob: I did an astronomy course at University College London just when I retired and I thought I really need something to do now. I was already quite into the Astro Photography bit. So I did the course [for] two years got my diploma and it was very good and I learnt a lot.

For Bob to continue developing his interest in Astro Photography, it was essential that he purchase a computer.

Bob: I didn't have my own computer until about 2003, in fact, I've been rather nervous of computers up to then but because of my developing interest in astronomy I could see that I was going to have to use a computer [to continue Astro Photography]. So I just went and bought one without knowing much about what I was doing and sort of taught myself and asked people about it.

In this regard, Bob's previous reluctance to buy a computer was overcome and necessitated by his pursuit and interest in Astro Photography, and his digital education gained from trial and error.

COLLEGE

Although there were a small amount of participants who enrolled on non-digital courses such as drawing or painting, the majority in this age group used local colleges to provide support and education of software and hardware. For

example, they may learn the technical workings of a digital camera, and then the software (e.g. Adobe Photoshop) and how they can be used in conjunction with the Internet. Irene, aged 84 at the time of interview, began creating content around 2005.

Irene: I started to go to the digital camera course first of all and the tutor there also taught Photoshop and said 'Why don't you come along?' So I did a 10-week course but at the time I was having my cataracts done so I lost quite a lot of time and I was finding it difficult to see. […] I went [re]did [the Photoshop course] this year, [and] even though I'm three years older it sunk in more and I just seemed to understand it better. […]

However, some participants experienced a limitation to the options available and felt that some of the courses that they had embarked were either too easy or too hard. Many complained that there were not enough courses to cater for intermediate skills and many courses either taught the basics or were too advanced. Consequently they were then left to learn by themselves.

Carina: I'd like to improve [my web design skills]. Because one of the things we were asking at Harrow College is can we have an intermediate course on Dreamweaver. We can create websites and so we want to be able to do more things like video streaming and those sort of things on the Web. […] The problem with the advanced one is that you have to go through a whole full-time course which we don't want that just to get the skills.

However, Carolyn, who attended a word-processing course at college back in 1997, expressed a frustration with some courses.

Interviewer: So where did you learn Photoshop then?

Carolyn: In my little room upstairs. (Laughs). I really learnt it myself. […] I did sign up for a [Photoshop] course about three years ago, which was a waste of money because it was so basic. […] I get books out of the library [and] I go onto the websites, forums. I'll ask questions if I don't know something. Usually someone comes back with the answer and there is so much on the Web to actually learn. You can learn an awful lot and the YouTube tutorials are fantastic.

Carolyn has subsequently learnt more advanced Photoshop techniques through a process of 'trial and error'. The combination of her earlier use of technology and use of the Web has helped her to develop self-learning methods through online forums and online resources such as YouTube.

DISTANCE LEARNING

Jill, a retired teacher, enrolled for an online course at the Open College of Art (OCA)[4] and found that this not only helped initiate her into digital photography but also introduced her to the practice of blogging and its associated community.

Jill: I did an OCA photography course and towards the end of that they were encouraging their students to do a blog as a learning record. I discovered blogging really as a way of communicating and recording my progress in photography but also then I realised I could upload other stuff. […] I'd spent quite a lot of time searching for different people who have similar interests. Then I realised there was this whole world of mainly women creating stuff and uploading it onto their blogs. So then I started scanning [my drawings] and putting them on too.

However, when she recently moved from using a PC to an Apple Macintosh she revealed how her use of technology as a teacher helped her when learning a new system.

Jill: I've taught myself the Apple and scanning stuff. I had to find how to do it through trial and error. I think one of the things about [teaching IT as] a primary school teacher [is that] you see the kids […] press every key together and they are all crashing and they all recover, you lose your inhibitions about making mistakes with the computer.

U3A

U3A is a UK organization and registered charity run by The Third Age Trust. In 2012, U3A celebrated its 30th anniversary and, as of August 2012, was made up of 858 affiliated local groups with 293,733 members UK-wide. Their website describes the organization as 'self-help, self-managed lifelong learning co-operatives for older people no longer in full time work, providing opportunities for their members to share learning experiences in a wide range of interest groups and to pursue learning not for qualifications, but for fun' (U3A n. d.).

With the emphasis on learning for 'fun' and not qualifications, the U3A offers another avenue for gaining knowledge for this age group. First, it provides access to a wide range of subjects, which are discussed and presented at weekly meetings. There are classes that teach the technical aspects of digital technologies such as cameras and creating and using blogs. It offers a way of continued learning without the pressure of a working environment. U3A also provides courses and subjects that meet with the relevant requirements of this age group, namely the need to return to interests or talents that they had embraced before they had started work. Sheppy, aged 70 at the time of interview, is an active member of her local U3A.

Sheppy: I was very keen on art at school and I was very good at it but I couldn't continue [with it] in my working life and when I retired I joined U3A art class and started painting pictures.

This is a theme that is commonly found between interviewees. Indeed, there are many within this age group who were deterred or discouraged from following artistic or creative paths earlier in their careers often through parental pressure or institutional advice. They have chosen, therefore, to revisit these interests and re-educate themselves upon retirement.

One interviewee, Sue, had little knowledge of digital technology, but began taking digital photographs after completing a digital photography course at her local collage upon retiring (about six years ago). As a consequence of

learning to use the camera, she bought her first computer and learnt Adobe Photoshop. Sue started taking digital photographs when she retired and bought a computer after buying her first digital camera.

Sue: At the age of 16, [I] thought of going to art college but I did science instead and then I became a therapist so I was very busy working and I didn't have any time to do art. When I retired I had the chance to go back to an interest I'd had in my teens. And then I joined a [photography] club and it became a social thing as well.

She has subsequently affiliated herself with groups such as the artists' collective, East Finchley Open[5] and the online London Independent Photographers Satellite Group[6] along with publications such as Highgate Wood newsletter. Another participant, who was directed away for creative pursuits in her early life, was Julie, aged 77 when interviewed.

Julie: When I was 14 I wanted to become an artist. But then my father was very afraid of that profession and put me in a chemistry school where I had a lot less time.

Julie started using the Internet in the late 90s and up until retirement she had used the Internet mainly for research and search. On the discovery of digital photography and web media in the mid-2000s she has subsequently created three blogs, uses Flickr for her photos and Daily motion to upload video.

PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE OF COMPUTERS IN THE WORKPLACE

The two eldest people in this group, aged in their mid 80s, retired before they could see or experience the use of computers in the workplace. However, seven of the sample used computers in a work establishment before retirement. Two of the interviewees learnt to use web-authoring software at their pre-retirement jobs as an IT specialist and a lecturer.

Carina: [I]n the 1990s, when I was lecturing at London Met[ropolitan University I began] to create web pages for WebCT and we also had in service training to use early versions of Dreamweaver. […] WebCT was a means whereby my lecture notes were put on the University server for students [to] download, and for students to upload their projects. Those were the sort[s] of things I was doing then.

Sheppy: At work, I learnt how to update websites. To start off with I didn't understand what they were but at work I learnt how you updated them, so once I had taken on the job as webmaster I bought Dreamweaver, which I find to be very good, and I just started to use that. It started at work but it's continued since then. […] I think the reason I got online so easily is because I ended up working for IBM and I was so used to PCs and laptops and Windows so I just sort of fell into it. I can understand there's a lot of people my age who are absolutely terrified

of computers because it's not part of their culture but it was part of mine. So, I thank my lucky stars it was.

Sheppy's observation exemplifies the advantages in learning computer skills at work and before retirement. This has a distinct advantage as it prevents them from having to embark on the steep learning curve of computer basics and makes it easier to take up more advanced and specific computer skills in retirement.

ONLINE COMMUNICATION

One of the benefits deriving from the introduction and development of digital and Internet skills for this group has been the ability to connect and communicate with likeminded people online irrespective of location. Participants were asked whether creating content and sharing it through online media had helped communicate with other people.

Peter communicates regularly with many subscribers to his YouTube channel. He now spends much of time communicating with some of his 40,000 YouTube channel subscribers. In effect Peter has developed friendships from all around the world through his online presence and uploaded content. He, therefore, conducts most of this communication through online media.

Peter: From my own point of view I think it's absolutely wonderful because through it I have made many, many genuine nice friends. And it's nice through the medium of Skype and places to be able to communicate.

Seven of the twelve participants were living alone when the interviews were conducted. Many spoke of how using online communications and sharing their content has helped them feel less alone. The following quotes give a nuanced observation of how two people regard the use of online media combat the feeling of loneliness. Julie believes the impact of sharing her content with other web users as has helped combat her feelings of loneliness.

Julie: I am less alone and I can share what I create and I can discover other works and they can discover me and I can pass on what I believe.

Sheppy sees her friends being divided between those who still use traditional and slow forms of communication like postal mail and others that communicate with her via the Internet.

Sheppy: I just feel closer to people. I'm retired. I live on my own. I've got some friends, complete luddites, they won't get on the Internet or anything and I have to snail mail them. And I don't keep in much good contact with them. But other people who are into all this new technology, I'm in contact with them every day. And you don't feel alone. You just feel as if the whole world's there and it's there for the taking.

Indeed, Sheppy makes a clear differentiation between the perceived technological deficiencies of her offline friends and regular communications made

with online ones that make her feel 'closer' to them. The implication here is that digital technology has become more important as her main form of communication and one to which she has become more reliant.

Another area of importance in retirement was health and its associated links. Health was a concern with some participants either through personal health issues or through restricted mobility brought about by their own or their partner's illness. In some cases the Internet has been a lifeline to the outside world or as Jill describes 'another world'.

Jill: The two things [retirement and the Internet] came together. I don't think I would have done anywhere near [as much in retirement] without the Internet. That was my door to the world. My husband had a stroke 14 years ago and we were a bit limited in our range of outdoor activities so I don't get out perhaps as much as I would like so I was very much at home. So this is very much a window to another world.

From this standpoint the use of digital technologies and the Internet can be arguably viewed as an empowering medium for this age group. Not only does it enable the reconnection to pre-retirement interests or discovery of new ones, as discussed above, it also makes inclusive communications possible from positions of relative physical isolation. For some participants it has enabled a two-way connection with a wider community through discussion or interest in their shared content.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

One of the main criticisms arising from comparisons and differentiation between people in pre-defined generational groups is that standardized assumptions are made about how they behave and their ability to learn. Indeed, Mannheim's theory implies that a generational consciousness within a generation is not necessary homogeneous or coherent as there may be distinctive division within a generation with divergent views or practices that take the form of 'generation units'. David Kertzer sees research using generations to observe social behaviour as potentially problematic. He argues that merely using generational groups to distinguish significant differences between the values of the younger and older generations 'offers us no means of knowing whether to attribute these differences to life-course effects or to permanent cohort characteristics' (Kertzer 1983: 131).

As the Internet has become more pervasive the distinction made between 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants' and the concepts of a 'digital' or 'net' generation appear outmoded. These terms ignore the many considerations needed to understand how individuals of different ages with varying educational and socio-economic backgrounds learn and use digital technology and web media. Buckingham argues that, 'the notion of a digital generation – a generation defined through its relationship with a particular technology or medium – clearly runs the risk of attributing an all-powerful role to technology' (2006: 11). Technological advancement affects and is affected by people of all ages in different ways and is dependent on many factors, not just age or association with a generation. Indeed, within the numbers of retired Internet users there is a diversity of knowledge, use and activity that is equal in many ways with other age groups. Included in this are a small, but noteworthy

proportion of digital content creators and publishers. These are Internet users that display neither a model of tech-savvy 'silver surfer' or 'digital dismissive' but show a variety of diverse backgrounds, interests and abilities. As with the small representative sample of participants in this article, they display many different experiences and knowledge of technology. Career experiences, access to technologies and education, have all played a part in how and why they participate in the practice of creating and sharing digital content.

It is evident from the interviews conducted here that many older people are comfortable with and have an aptitude for the use and learning of digital technology and web media. It must also be noted that, for the over 65s, acquiring skills to use digital technologies are often unintentional or as a consequence of adopting a new hobby or interest in retirement. For several, learning digital is a gradual and necessary requirement for them to pursue their hobbies. For example, for participant Sheppy, it is something that she 'just fell into' or like participant Myra a natural progression. This may have originated as a non-digital hobby but through the gradual adoption of technologies within these practices has become part of the process of engagement in the hobby.

Knowledge and understanding of technology varies greatly in the over 65s and is multi-faceted, as with all age groups. What the participants' have revealed about adopting digital technology for creating and sharing content has been fourfold.

1. Participants were self-initiated in their uptake of post-retirement education. This enabled them to acquire skills necessary to rediscover and explore interests they were unable to partake earlier in life. This may have been due to constraints of working, family life or through being discouraged at an early age by family members or institutions.
2. For several, post-retirement education helps extend or transfer physical world interests they are already engaged in, such as painting or drawing, to a digital form.
3. For several, introduction to the digital domain was an unintended consequence of education and came via an interest in subjects such as photography or astronomy, where introduction to digital technology or software was necessary for successful completion and progression.
4. For several, knowledge attained from formal education has led them to adopt 'trial and error' learning as a way to gain a higher proficiency of digital technology.

In light of these findings it is evident that many over 65s are using digital media not merely to engage in a process of information gathering, but are expressing themselves through sharing self-created content. The outcomes challenge the association between old age and lack of Internet engagement. Whatever the type or complexity of digital content created by the over 65s their use of digital media now encompasses production as well as consumption. There is also evidence of participants in this article, particularly participant Peter, projecting their identities into the digital space and of their online and offline activities beginning to merging. This is in-line with the White and Cornu (2011) 'resident' maxim.

While suggesting that there is a need for less generational comparisons there is also a need to recognize that using the Internet has specific issues for the over 65s that are not necessarily relevant to younger people. Retired people may have more free time to learn digital media but there are also

issues of health, mobility, accessibility, physical isolation and loneliness that can be combatted through online connections and communication. There are already many organizations in the United Kingdom that are taking initiatives to address these issues, including AgeUK, Age Concern and Help the Aged, but more needs to be done to harness the networking potential and array of communication channels available.

Consequently, future initiatives should consider the diverse backgrounds and experiences of older people and the many different ways they can be introduced to digital media and the Internet. These should recognize the diversity of skill, learning ability and motivation to adopt and use digital technology. In focusing less on presumptions of how a certain generational group may act and more on their motivation for a wide variety of interests and practices, we may be able to develop educational programmes, policies, design systems and devices that are better suited to the needs of all older people and, indeed, all age groups.

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