

Does the Internet Influence the Character Virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England?

A mixed method study with particular regard to cyber-bullying

by

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Abstract

There has been little research to date investigating what influence, if any, the Internet is having on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England. This thesis adopts a virtue ethics theoretical framework in an attempt to address this gap and bring new knowledge to the field. After providing an overview of the context of the study, arguments are presented as to why adopting a character based, as opposed to rules or consequences based; moral theory is preferential for investigations into the Internet. Following this, research into prominent moral issues, such as cyber-bullying, plagiarism and misrepresentation are explored in a review of the existing literature. The ensuing empirical research involves an in-depth and systematic survey undertaken in two sequential phases. Phase one comprises a questionnaire conducted with 1314 11 to 14 year olds and is chiefly aimed at providing a statistical exploration of the key issues identified in the literature review. Phase two involves semi-structured group interviews with 60 11 to 14 year olds which was designed to provide additional qualitative data on one particular moral issue - cyber-bullying. Combined, the survey methods enable a macro and micro examination of how young people express their character virtues online and allow for the discovery of a number of important findings. Evidence shows that the Internet presents both risks and opportunities for the development of character virtues; in particular, the moral virtues of honesty and compassion, in 11 to 14 year olds in England. Furthermore, whilst certain features of the Internet might encourage young people to be more or less honest and compassionate online, deterministic accounts of the technology are unhelpful. The research demonstrates that it is the character virtues of Internet users, as well as the features of the technology itself, that ultimately determines online behaviour. These findings have implications for those tasked with developing strategies for dealing with online moral issues, and attest to an urgent need for the development of new interventions that will help educate the next generation as virtuous digital citizens.

**This thesis is dedicated to my wife Emma
and our children Isla and Sam**

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CHAPTER ONE:

YOUNG PEOPLE, THE INTERNET AND CHARACTER VIRTUES

1 Introduction

Children in the digital age are neither unseen nor unheard; in fact they are seen and heard more than ever. They occupy a new kind of cultural space. They are citizens of a new order, founders of the Digital World. Katz (1997:1)

What has become known as the 'Internet' was invented in 1989, and two decades later, nearly three billion people across the world use it regularly. No other technology has disseminated as rapidly, and the Internet is now a global phenomenon, widely used by young people. Young people have been shown to be the earliest adopters of new technology and have variously been called 'the app generation' (Gardner and Davis, 2013) and 'digital natives' Prensky (2001). In the media, as well as in academic literature, they have been portrayed as being fundamentally different to previous generations, in that they have grown up with digital communications. The Internet is a key part of young people's lives today with almost every young person (99%) between the ages of 12 to 15 years old in the UK having used it (Ofcom, 2013). Furthermore, young people today live hybrid lives, combining their online and offline lives seamlessly, and it is therefore important to consider what influence the Internet might be having on them.

Influences on the character virtues of young people, such as education, parenting, religion and the media, have been the subject of research undertaken in recent years by Layard and Dunn (2009), Arthur (2010, 2010a) and Lexman and Grist (2011) amongst others. This thesis will seek to build on these studies, by investigating whether or not the Internet is influencing the character virtues of young people in England. This thesis shall

do so by seeking to answer the following primary research question; *'Does the Internet influence the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England?'*

Despite a growing body of literature focusing on the influence of the Internet, there is a dearth of research on how it may be changing the character virtues of young people. Debates about what effects the Internet is having on young people and their morals, are polarised. Critics point to the negative impact of the Internet, and issues such as cyber-bullying, increased access to pornography, safety and consumerism, have all been the subject of recent reports and books (see Byron, 2008; James, 2009; Turkle, 2011). Others (see Katz, 1997; Tapscott, 1998; Loader, 2007; Palfrey and Gasser, 2008) have championed the Internet and argue that it is not only good for young people, but also for the wider society. Most current literature focuses on the cultural, economic, social and psychological impact of the Internet. The little research that evaluates its moral impact is often polemic. Interpretations oscillate between extremes; young people online are depicted as being either predominantly dishonest or truthful, compassionate or callous, selfish or selfless, altruistic or egotistical, cowardly or courageous, and acting with either vanity or humility. Furthermore, the literature shows that the Internet appears to influence young people's character virtues in a number of complex ways, and that it is not clear if this influence is predominantly positive or negative. As such, this thesis has an exploratory aim, as it will bring new knowledge and clarity to the field, as well as demonstrate why this important, and as yet, largely under-researched issue deserves greater scholarly attention.

The thesis will be structured around the following three overarching research questions:

RQ1: To what extent, and in what ways is the Internet used by 11 to 14 year olds in England?

RQ2: What might be the influence of the Internet on two key character virtues; honesty and compassion?

RQ3: Why might the Internet have an influence on character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England?

These questions have been developed after undertaking a review of the literature (see chapter 3) and will enable the thesis to consider new areas of research, which will help to ensure it makes an original contribution to the field. The first question will involve investigating the extent to which the Internet has been appropriated by 11 to 14 year olds in England. Before attempting to understand what influence the Internet might be having on individuals, it is important to establish how, where, when and why young people appropriate it. This evidence will show the extent to which the Internet is used by young people today and will both illuminate and provide a context for any findings resulting from the other research questions. The second subsidiary question will focus the research on two key character virtues; honesty and compassion. These character virtues are deemed, after a review of the literature, to be the most likely to be influenced by the Internet. The final subsidiary question is the most challenging to answer, but also potentially the most interesting. It will involve a close examination of the unique features of the Internet and why these might be having a particular influence on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds. Combined, the research questions will ensure that an in-depth and thorough consideration is given to the area of study.

2 Context of the Thesis

2.1 The Internet

The World Wide Web, and what we recognise as 'the Internet', was invented by the British scientist Tim Berners-Lee in 1989¹. Since its invention, it has revolutionised the worlds of information technology and communications. Today, the technology enables the possibilities for worldwide broadcasting, global information dissemination and is the most widely used medium for collaboration between individuals, without regard for geographic location. It is variously known as 'cyberspace', 'the net' and the 'information

¹ Tim Berners-Lee is a British computer scientist who invented the World Wide Web. He first suggested the computer networked information management system in March 1989 and implemented the first successful communication between client and server via the Internet in November 1989.

highway’, but for the purposes of this thesis, it will be referred to as the Internet² and defined as ‘a global computer network, providing a variety of information and communication facilities, consisting of interconnected networks, using standardised communication protocols³.’

Since 1989, the global growth of the Internet has been phenomenal. In the 1990s it was estimated that Internet traffic grew by 100% every year, and World Internet Users and Population Statistics⁴ show that today, nearly three billion people use the Internet worldwide.

Table 1: Growth Of Worldwide Internet Use⁵

Date	Number of global users	% of global population
Dec 1995	16, 000,000	0.4
Dec 2000	361,000,000	5.8
Dec 2005	1,018,000,000	15.7
Dec 2010	1971,000,000	28.8
Dec 2013	2.749,000,000	38.8

In 2013 it was reported that there were nearly 53 million Internet users in Britain, which was 83.6% of the population⁶. In that year, 36 million adults (73% of the population) in Britain accessed the Internet on most days; 20 million more than in 2006. In addition, access to the Internet using a mobile phone more than doubled between 2010 and 2013; from 24% to 53%.⁷

² The etymology of the word Internet is from 1985 and stems from the US defense department as a way to describe linked computer networks.

³ See www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Internet

⁴ See www.internetworldstats.com

⁵ See www.internetworldstats.com/emarketing.htm

⁶ See www.internetworldstats.com/europa.htm#uk

⁷ See www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rdit2/internet-access---households-and-individuals/2013/stb-ia-2013.html

2.2 The Internet and Young People

Many academics are currently engaged in important research, trying to discover the influence of new technology on a new generation of young people. These academics largely view the 'new' generation as young people who have either grown up, or are growing up in constant contact with the digital media. They were born in the digital era and are characterised as constant consumers of technology, permanently online, able to rapidly assimilate multimedia information, as well as consume data simultaneously from different sources. They are both active creators as well as active users in a new digital culture. At the vanguard of this new digital culture is the Internet, and it has been argued (see for example Byron, 2008; Turkle, 2011) that this medium is having the greatest influence of all on young people.

The high rates of Internet use by young people, and the fact they are often early adopters of new technology (Katz, 1997; Tapscott, 1998), has led many writers to focus on the seemingly intrinsic connection between young people and the Internet. Terms such as 'cyberkids' (Holloway and Valentine, 2003), 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001), 'N generation' or 'n-geners' (Tapscott, 1998) 'Google generation' (Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005) or 'millennials' (Howe and Strauss, 2000) have been variously used. Reflecting on the constant development of the Internet, Gardner and Davies (2013) have recently argued that young people today are now part of an 'app generation'. Palmer (2006) states that the growth of the Internet has left today's children standing on the threshold of a new renaissance, and Sefton-Green (1998:1) believes that children are at the epicenter of the information revolution and at 'ground zero of the digital world'. Livingstone (2009), currently one of the most influential writers on the Internet and young people, explains that children are usually amongst the earliest and most enthusiastic users of new information and communication technologies. Research carried out in 2010 revealed that 45% of young people said they felt happiest when they were online, and 75% of young people claimed they could not live without the Internet⁸. The

⁸ A study of 994 16-24 year olds undertaken by Professor Michael Hulme, Institute for Advanced Studies at Lancaster University and commissioned for Youth Net. See <http://www.youthnet.org/what-we-do/key-facts-and-figures/media-factsheet-young-people%E2%80%99s-needs-in-the-digital-age/> for further details.

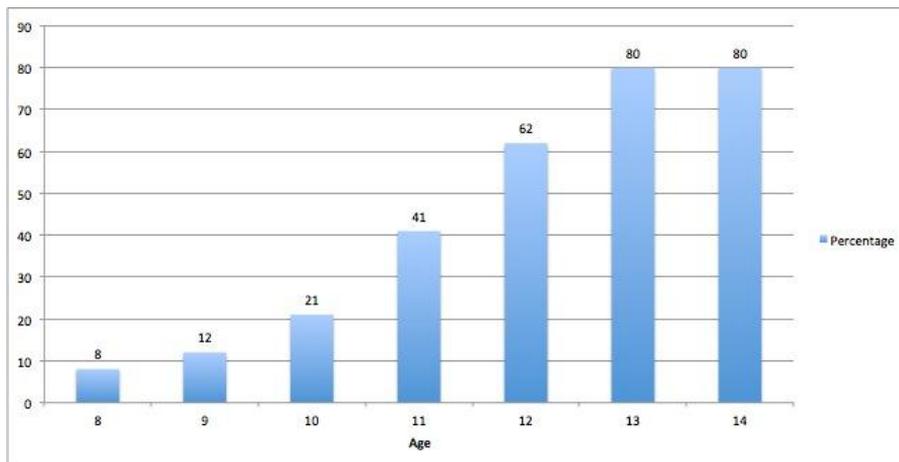
Digital Lives (Hulme, 2014) report explained that between messaging, watching videos, searching and social networking, teenagers have little time to take a break from the digital world. As a result, they sometimes let technology encroach on offline activities, such as school, socialising and sleeping.

Evidence drawn from various sources, shows that Internet use is almost ubiquitous amongst young people in the Britain. In 2013, it was reported (Ofcom, 2013) that 93% of all 5-15 year olds used the Internet, breaking down by age as 82% of 5-7 year olds and nearly all of 8-11 year olds (96%) and 12-15 year olds (99%). The estimated weekly volume of Internet use at home in 2013 increased with the age of the child; 6.5 hours for 3-4 year olds, 6.7 hours for 5-7 year olds, 9.2 hours for 8-11 year olds and 17.0 hours for 12-15 year olds. In 2013, 12-15 year olds spent as much time using the Internet as watching television. The 'Fair Game' report (Fielder *et al.*, 2007:6) found that many young people start going online from the age of five, or younger. This evidence of Internet use is comparable with that of the United States, where 93% of teenagers aged 12-17 go online⁹.

Social networking websites have also become increasingly popular. Social networking websites are online websites where users can create profiles and build personal networks that connect them to other users. In the past five years, such sites have moved from a niche activity into a phenomenon that engages tens of millions of people each day (chart 1).

⁹ See www.pewinternet.org/2010/02/03/social-media-and-young-adults/

Chart 1: Percentage Of UK Children Who Have A Social Networking Profile In 2012



Of the 37 million users of the Internet in the UK, at least 30 million had viewed at least one social networking website¹⁰. The Children’s Media Literacy programme found that in 2012, 47% of 10-12 year old internet users had a profile on a social networking website, which has risen from 35% in 2009¹¹. ‘Childwise’¹² report that 38% of all 7-10 year olds in the UK have visited Facebook, even though the minimum age it is possible to register on the website is 13. Their 2010 report also showed that: i) social networking is the main online activity for 5-16s; and, ii) Facebook and YouTube are now the favourite websites amongst all boys and girls, in both younger and older children. In addition, the ownership of phones has greatly increased amongst teenagers in the last few years, providing even greater opportunities for young people to access the Internet. In 2010, the age group that witnessed the biggest increase in accessing the Internet online was young people. In that year, more than 70 per cent of 16-24 year-olds accessed the Internet via a mobile phone, up 44 per cent the previous year¹³.

Due to ease of measurement, there is a significant amount of data (some of which is represented above) that provides a robust picture of the uptake and usage of the Internet by young people in Britain. The data reveals that young people tend to be early adopters of new Internet technologies, and that exposure to the Internet is growing in

¹⁰ See www.ecademy.com/node.php?id=132716

¹¹ See stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/oct2012/main.pdf

¹² See www.childwise.co.uk/childwise-published-research-detail.asp?PUBLISH=4

¹³ See www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_227158.pdf

both volume and interactivity amongst this age group. In addition, the data appears to demonstrate that young people have led the way in the creation of more networked and diversified forms of media engagement. It is clear that social media and communication practices today are vastly different than even a generation ago. However, despite the relatively clear picture of Internet usage there is a relative absence of knowledge about how the Internet is influencing and possibly changing young people. As their identities are increasingly tied up with the Internet, through profiles on social networking websites and other sites, this is a pressing question. It is perhaps particularly relevant, as in the media, and in much of the academic literature, young people are portrayed as being fundamentally different to previous generations. The absence of knowledge about how Internet practices are evolving, and how these in turn are influencing the social, cultural and moral worlds of children, should be of concern to researchers.

However, it is also important for researchers to not assume from the outset that the Internet is necessarily influencing young people (positively or negatively), or indeed that it is necessarily having the same influence on all young people. Selwyn (2009a) argues that we should not believe that all young people are 'internet natives'. In his review of the recently published literature on young people and digital technology, Selwyn discovered that young people engage with digital technologies in varied and often unspectacular ways, and this is in stark contrast to popular portrayals of them all being digital natives. Furthermore, Eynon and Malmberg (2011) found that young people engage with the Internet in different ways. Their research found highlighted types of Internet user profiles: the peripherals, the normatives, the all-rounders and the active participators. This evidence is a reminder that it is important to not view all young people as a single uniform group, but there should be awareness that young people use the Internet in different ways, and that the influence it has on their character virtues is likely to be similarly diverse in nature. Duncckels (2008: 172) also reminds us that we should not view young people as 'helpless' and 'naïve' and unable to deal with Internet threats. She conducted a study that showed 'a discrepancy between children's and adults' views on this subject. She found that the children in the study handle the drawbacks of the Internet well, but they do not discuss them with adults. The study does 'not paint a

picture of naive children, unable to see actual threats, but of responsible people aware of the threats that exist in their digital environment and with developed methods to avoid such threats' (Dunckels, 2008: 172).

2.3 Young People and Character Virtues

In the last two decades, as the Internet has become increasingly popular, there has also been a renewed interest in the character of young people. Much of the drive for this work has come initially from America. Lickona (1992:49) has argued that 'we are coming to see that our societal moral problems reflect, in no small measure, our personal vices'. Other American writers, such as Wolfe (2001) have described the moral eclipse of community by individualistic economic and political frameworks, and Bellah (1996) has argued that moral culture has swung in favour of individualism, at the expense of commitment to the social good. Lasch (1991) has documented a culture of narcissism, and Putnam (2000) has written extensively about the decline in the membership of civic groups, and how communities are increasingly becoming fragmented. Peterson and Seligman (2004) have investigated character strengths and virtues from a positive psychology perspective, and identified six key classes of virtue, which they believe to be the foundations of human flourishing. Other American writers, such as Ryan and Bohlin (1999), Jacobs (2001) and Berkowitz (2012) have all written books about character education and schools, whilst distinguished academics such as Sandel (2010), Gardner (2011) and Annas (2011) have written about the place of 'virtue' in the modern world. Many of these American academics, amongst others, have called for a renewed consideration of morality, through a refreshed focus on character and virtue.

In Britain, there has also been, in recent years, a renewed focus on character and virtue. In his book '*After Virtue*' MacIntyre (1981) argued that we have lost both our theoretical and practical comprehension of morality. MacIntyre believes that this is because since the Enlightenment, any attempts to formulate moral principles have become more difficult. Buckingham (2000:3) states that 'children are increasingly perceived as a threat to the rest of us – as violent, anti-social and sexually precocious'. Layard (2009) has

written about the difficulty of developing values in a competitive age, whilst Arthur (2010, 2011) has undertaken an extensive study into the values and virtues of 3-25 year olds. Dagger (1997:3) argues that modern life has led to a decrease in societal virtues, as we have become too individualistic.

As we regard ourselves more and more as self-constituted individuals, we fail to realise how we depend upon communities that not only give meaning to our lives but also largely constitute our identities. So preoccupied are we with our rights that we lose sight of our responsibilities and the need to act virtuously.

In recent years there has also been greater attention on the character of young people in Britain by politicians and others. The term ‘character’ is increasingly used by policy makers who are seeking to explain the behaviour of young people. In 2011, after the riots in England, the Prime Minister David Cameron stated ‘Education doesn’t just give people the tools to make a good living, it gives them the character to live a good life, to be good citizens’¹⁴. Furthermore, the Riots Commission Report recommended that every school should have a policy for character education¹⁵. The main recommendation of the Riots Commission Report was that young people need to build character to help them realise their potential, and prevent them from making poor decisions, such as choosing to riot. The report also indicated that schools should assume responsibility for helping children build character. More recently Tristram Hunt, the Shadow Secretary of State for Education has foregrounded character education and stated that character virtues are vital components of a rounded education and good preparation for a career – and that instilling them in young people ‘should not be left to chance’¹⁶. Hunt builds his argument on the premise that there is ‘growing evidence that character can be taught’. Likewise the all-party parliamentary group (APPG) on social mobility suggests that teaching ‘character and resilience’ should be an essential part of every school’s ambition and can

¹⁴ David Cameron, 9th Sept 2011 – speech at the Norwich Academy

¹⁵ See www.webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121003195935/http://riotspanel.independent.gov.uk/news/riots-communities-and-victims-panel-reponse-to-home-affairs-select-committee-report/

¹⁶ See www.government-world.com/schooling-for-the-future-speech-by-tristram-hunt/

be taught¹⁷. A Populus survey in 2013 indicated parents think schools can, and should, teach character¹⁸ and the CBI has also called for character education to become a more conscious part of schooling¹⁹. Recently, 'character' has also been the subject of several large studies by 'Learning for Life' (Arthur, 2010, 2010a) and an inquiry by DEMOS (Lexman and Grist, 2011). The *Learning for Life* study led, in part, to the launch, in May 2012, of the *Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues*²⁰. The centre is a multi-million pound institution at the University of Birmingham, which is a major international hub of interdisciplinary research into character, virtue and value education. Its vision is to conduct research that has both theoretical and practical implications. The launch of a centre of such size and ambition is a reflection of the increasing focus on character in Britain today.

2.4 Young People, Character Virtues and the Internet

Although academic research into the influence of the Internet on the character virtues of young people is relatively sparse (see chapter three), stories in the media demonstrate that its influence is a concern to many. Stories feature almost every day in the British news about one or more of the following concerns: cyber-bullying, internet-piracy, pornography, harmful and or offensive content, online stalking and paedophilia, stealth marketing, abuse of personal information, online gambling addiction, abuse of privacy, hacking and copywriting. It appears, based on the evidence of these stories, that the Internet offers many opportunities for breaches of morality. Most of these issues are not new or novel to the Internet, but rather manifestations of offline problems. However, the Internet has changed the nature and form that many of these issues take. For example, piracy is of much greater concern due to the ease with which music can be downloaded for free. Online stalking and paedophilia is of greater concern due to fears over anonymity and the new possibilities for connections being forged between strangers. Online pornography is a particular concern due to the lack of restrictions and

¹⁷ See www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-26118581

¹⁸ Populus Poll 'Should schools teach character' (2013)

¹⁹ CBI, First Steps report (2013)

²⁰ See www.jubileecentre.ac.uk

gatekeepers online; and cyber-bullying due to the fact it can now take place at any time and in any place. However, the news stories about young people and the Internet are not all negative. Positive stories about young people connecting online to make a difference are also regularly published. Stories about individuals who have started a campaign over social media, volunteered online, or offered help to a stranger, are all features of our daily news today. Such stories highlight the positive features of the Internet, as a tool for bringing people closer together, and as an enabler for compassionate online activities.

Discussions in the academic literature are characterised by the use of binary opposites to describe the influence the Internet has on young people. Holloway and Valentine (2003) suggest that academics, who write about the Internet and young people, are either 'boosters' or 'debunkers'. Whilst the boosters are people who celebrate the impact of the Internet on young people, the debunkers fear that the Internet is threatening young people's physical and emotional well-being. Even seemingly straightforward debates, such as those surrounding cyber-bullying (see, for example, Shariff, 2008), can in fact be problematic, as there is a battleground between those who want to ban the use of social networking sites in schools to stop cyber-bullying, and those who feel that doing so is a violation of individual rights. Much of the literature is highly polarised and sometimes charged with emotion, as Clough (2002:3) explains:

On the one hand, there are the exuberant enthusiasts who see 'cyberspace' as a new frontier promising freedom, democracy, knowledge, adventure and requiring the reinvention of all human social and political structures. On the other there are those who fear the Internet is giving unrestricted opportunities for pornographers, pedophiles, and drug traffickers, and leading to a future in which all human interactions is reduced to bits and bytes.

Van Den Hoven (2000:127) believes that it won't take very long 'before the full spectrum of immorality will be covered online: war atrocities, violence, crime, deception, greed, aggression, rudeness, inconsiderateness, and impoliteness'. Hammelink (2000:1) believes

the Internet brings 'great benefits and awesome risks' and Palfrey and Gasser (2008:8) note that today 'news coverage is saturated with stories of cyber-bullying, online predators, Internet addiction and online pornography'. Byron (2008: 48) found that 'the main concerns about the impact of the Internet on young people include: ease of access for users; abundance of material available; ubiquity and affordability; the interactivity of the medium; the potential for individual users to share material; the degree of anonymity that users can enjoy; and the lack of 'gate-keepers' or authorities that might restrict access'. Gardner and Davies (2013) fear that young people are becoming 'app dependent', and this is curbing their creativity, making them increasingly shallow and making them feel more alone. For Holloway and Valentine (2003:74) the Internet is being viewed by many as a form of 'electronic sodomy', and Comstock and Scharrer (2007:1) contend that there is already ample evidence to show that either the amount of time spent with the Internet or the content viewed, read, or heard, will have adverse effects on young people. The organisation, *The Alliance for Childhood*²¹, runs campaigns about the dangers of the Internet for young people. One of their reports, *'Fools Gold; a Critical Look at Computers in Childhood'* (Cordes and Millar, 2000) argues that digital technologies might end up being responsible for the destruction of childhood. The publication suggests that computers, rather than being of benefit to children, actually damage them in a number of ways. These include physical, emotional, social and intellectual hazards. In addition, and of most relevance to this thesis, they suggest the moral hazards might include: i) exposure to online violence, pornography, bigotry, and other inappropriate material; ii) emphasis on information devoid of ethical and moral context; and iii) lack of purpose and irresponsibility in seeking and applying knowledge (Cordes and Millar, 2000: 39).

However, there are also many commentators who view the Internet and its influence on young people, in a positive manner. These authors employ 'new generational rhetoric' (Buckingham, 2000:46) to argue that the Internet has enabled incredible social progress and brought with it new opportunities for young people. Authors such as Tapscott (1998)

²¹ See www.allianceforchildhood.com

and Katz (1997) present a utopian vision of the Internet, and focus on the opportunities it brings as a new means of empowerment for young people. Furthermore, they are forthright in attacking anyone who claims that technology is bad for young people, based on a moral authority. Rather than seeing young people as dumbing down and becoming addicted to the Internet, they believe young people are actually developing and thriving in the digital world, as 'concerns about the Internet, by cynics, moralists or technophobes, are plain wrong' (Tapscott, 1998: 6-7). For Katz, parents are becoming increasingly conservative as they do not understand youth culture, and try to control the use of technology, despite the fact that children have a moral right to access the Internet. These authors challenge the detractors by stating that issues such as online sexual content are not necessarily harmful for young people. Instead, they argue, it is important to remain open to progress and celebrate the benefits of the Internet, whilst teaching young people to cope with its risks. Palfrey and Gasser (2008:10) believe that concerns associated with the Internet, such as bullying, stalking, and copyright violation have been managed successfully in the past, so there is no reason why seemingly old-fashioned solutions will work just as effectively now. Fears about the influence of the Internet on young people might reflect previous moral panics about new technologies (Wartella and Jennings, 2000). Negative reaction greeted the advent of film in the 1900, radio in the 1920s and television in the 1940s. Concerns about the Internet could follow a similar pattern to previous panics and start by sparking debates about access to, and the time young people spend with the new technologies, and move onto concerns over content and its effects.

There is little agreement in the literature about whether the Internet is having a positive or negative influence on young people. The only agreement, in most of it, is that it is having some influence. The Internet has pushed back the boundaries for young people, allowing them to go places and do things, virtually, which before the invention of technology, they could never have conceived. It has brought with it new possibilities, and it is the effect these new possibilities have on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds that this thesis seeks to better understand.

3 Theoretical and Practical Goals

This thesis has both theoretical and practical goals and it is these that dictate the need for focused scholarly attention into the area. These goals feed into the research questions and combined, they lay the foundations for the programme of research. The goals are theoretical, insofar as the thesis will be a critical examination of how the Internet influences the character virtues of young people living in England. The overall aim is therefore to generate new knowledge that will bring a greater understanding to the field. However, it is hoped that this new knowledge and understanding will also provide a basis for developing new practical solutions, which will help to counter moral problems found online, such as cyber-bullying. The theoretical and practical goals will be examined in more detail hereafter.

3.1 Theoretical Goals

Despite considerable scrutiny of the Internet by academics from a variety of disciplines, there is a lack of empirical evidence about the nature of its influence on morality. There is a pressing need for the discovery of new evidence based knowledge that has an exclusive focus on what influence the Internet has on how young people behave morally online. The research that has been undertaken has largely centred on how and when young people use the Internet, as opposed to what influence it is having on them. Byron (2008) explains that much of the work that is considered evidence is in fact descriptive, and often draws on speculative and non-academic accounts. She states:

Most research has tended to use large-scale questionnaire surveys to map patterns of access and use in terms of the likelihood that children will encounter inappropriate material or experience inappropriate contact. However, very little is known about how the child interprets the material or what impact it might have on children's social or cognitive development.

Byron (2008:49)

Likewise, Holloway and Valentine (2003:2) argue that ‘children and young people have been relatively neglected by academic research’ and ‘despite the growing importance of ICT in the contemporary western world, there are surprisingly few studies of how people actually use these technologies in the everyday world’.

What is required now is not only more research into how the Internet effects young people’s social and cognitive development, but more specifically, how it effects the development of their character virtues. As James (2009: 89-90) notes ‘there are countless examples of ethical misconduct and confusion online which suggest a pressing need for new empirical research’. She continues, ‘despite the widespread participation of young people in the new digital media, little research is focused on the ethical perspectives of young people and their online pursuits’. James believes that in order for the promises of the new digital media to be positively realised, research that provides ‘support for the development of ethical skills, or better yet, ethical minds must emerge’ and argues that that we need to do this ‘not to create a more obedient, respectful youth but to develop ethical reflection and conduct as a key foundation for youth empowerment’. Livingstone (2009: 29) agrees and states that ‘without strong empirical findings moral panics readily take hold, as they have done many times before, catalyzing society’s perennial anxieties about childhood and triggering media headlines, public anxieties and official enquiries’. By conducting high quality research, this thesis will collect evidence that will help in the development of a more insightful picture of how the Internet influences the character virtues of young people. Furthermore, basing the research on an Aristotelian inspired virtue ethical moral theory (outlined in detail in chapter two), will ensure the resulting research will address another significant gap in the field.

The absence of research in the field that this thesis covers is not surprising, given that the Internet is a recent invention and perhaps more importantly, in a state of constant innovation and development. However, books, journal articles, papers and academic presentations about the Internet are vast. They have been written from a variety of social

science, as well as other, disciplines; including sociology, psychology, education and philosophy. Journals dedicated to research on the Internet are also available. These include *The Internet and Higher Education*²², *Internet Research*²³ and the *International Journal of Internet Science*²⁴. Other Journals have dedicated special issues to Internet research. This includes *The Journal of Educational and Social Research*²⁵. In addition, publishers, such as Taylor and Francis, have recently issued special collections on issues relating to the Internet, such as cyber-bullying and cyber-ethics. Many of these publications deal with issues that relate to Internet ethics, such as fairness, law, regulation, justice and free speech. However, these issues are not the focus of this thesis. There is also a great deal of recent research that examines specific moral issues on the Internet, such as online piracy and cyber-bullying. These publications tend, in the main, to provide descriptions about the moral problems alongside some empirical evidence as to its scale. Many of these publications (discussed in chapter three) have brought groundbreaking new findings but at the same time, exposed how much more there is to know about the Internet, and its influence on individuals and society more generally.

This thesis will endeavour to build on the foundations provided by the relevant literature, but conduct a focused programme of research that will make a unique theoretical contribution to the field. There are three features of the research that will ensure that it has the intended focus. The first feature is that it utilises a specific moral theory (virtue ethics), the second is that the thesis focuses on a specific age range (11 to 14 year olds) and the third is that it focuses on a specific location (England). Each of these features will be discussed in more detail below.

To date there has been a very little research that investigated the influence of the Internet on young people using virtue ethics moral theory. However, as will be demonstrated throughout the thesis, this theory is deemed to be particularly favourable for researching the influence of the Internet on morality. As will be discussed in chapter

²² See www.journals.elsevier.com/the-internet-and-higher-education/

²³ See www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?issn=1066-2243

²⁴ See www.ijis.net/

²⁵ See www.mcser.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=34&Itemid=70

two, virtue ethics is a moral theory that draws heavily on the philosophy of Aristotle. In particular, it prioritises the role of character and virtue in understanding the moral motivations and actions of individuals. It is demonstrated throughout the thesis that an in-depth consideration of character and virtue is both an interesting, and also fruitful way of understanding the influence the Internet has on individuals.

Secondly, the thesis will take 11 to 14 year olds as the focus of the research. Although the term 'young people' will be variously used throughout, the empirical research will be directed at those who are 11 to 14 years old, and in the first three years of secondary school. This age group has been selected for a specific reason. The evidence outlined above shows that 11 to 14 year olds are particularly heavy users of the Internet, and their Internet use expands rapidly as they enter secondary school due to their ownership of personal computers and increased access to the Internet on mobile phones. A report entitled *Digital Lives* (Hulme, 2014) found that the participants of their study 'acknowledge that their move from primary to secondary school was a key milestone in their technology use as they turned to Facebook, Twitter and messaging services for the first time to communicate with friends'. The report also shows that their use is less monitored and restricted by parents and other adults when they leave primary school. The increased use along with the reduced monitoring of this use makes 11 to 14 year olds a significant age group to focus on in the present research.

Finally, the research will be conducted in England. Although a great deal of research into the Internet has been undertaken in England, the majority of research was conducted elsewhere. American and European academics have made particularly strong contributions to the field, but there is also a great deal of research being undertaken in Asia. Nevertheless, despite the fact that it may be possible to broadly apply the findings from International research in the England, research that takes into account the particular cultural and social features of young people in England is a necessity. This is of particular importance if practical solutions and strategies to deal with particular moral problems, relevant to young people in this country, are to be developed.

Combined, the features of the research outlined above will provide an opportunity to better understand the influence of the Internet in a particular context, with a specific age group, and through a particularly promising moral theoretical lens. The new knowledge generated by the approach will also allow for some practical goals to be realised, and these will now be discussed.

3.2 Practical Goals

It is an ambition of most researchers that their work will be applied to real situations and to have an impact 'on the ground'. The ambition is no less for this thesis. It is hoped that the evidence drawn from the empirical research will lead to new knowledge and understanding as to the nature of the influence of the Internet on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England. This new knowledge will provide a useful platform from which to make practical suggestions as to how the findings can best be applied. The Internet, as has already been discussed in the previous section, has thrown up new moral problems. For many, such as teachers, law enforcers, policy makers and others, dealing with these moral problems are of real and pressing concern. For example, teachers today not only have to deal with bullying that takes place face-to-face in the playground, but also cyber-bullying occurring out of school. The Internet has changed the way that bullying is carried out and this is changing the demands on schools and teachers and other professionals. The hope, therefore, is that focused research into issues such as cyber-bullying, from a character virtue perspective, can form the basis of the development of practical transformative interventions.

Ultimately the goal of the thesis is to add to current debates about how education should be adapted for the digital age. The research will hopefully provide an insight into how best to increase the positive aspects of the Internet, such as cyber-citizenship, whilst reducing the negative aspects, such as cyber-bullying and online plagiarism. Although it is clear that the Internet is a complex system, this does not lessen the need to develop new approaches to deal with particular moral issues. However, within the confines of the

thesis it is not possible to offer individualised practical solutions to all of the exposed moral problems. Instead, a more foundational approach will be adopted, and in the discussions about the findings, core principles about how to deal with online moral problems will be suggested. It is anticipated that virtue ethics will provide the philosophical underpinnings of such a foundational approach. A consideration of virtue might be considered a suitable basis for determining what is good conduct in a decentralised, diverse and complex domain like cyberspace. In addition, virtue ethics, with its focus on virtue development and practical wisdom, offers an interesting basis for the development of strategies to tackle some, or all of, the moral problems that occur online.

4 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis has been divided into nine chapters and the following briefly describes each chapter, in order to highlight its most salient features. The summary of the chapters also provides an overview of the thesis narrative and how the research builds from its conception to its concluding findings.

Chapter two introduces the moral framework through which the Internet is to be investigated. The chapter starts with a review of moral theory, and in particular, considers three prominent ethical positions; deontology, consequentialism and virtue ethics. Particular attention is paid to virtue ethics, as this will be the moral theory of choice used throughout the thesis. Criticisms of adopting a virtue ethical approach are also addressed at this stage. The key terms ‘character’ and ‘virtue’ are both discussed, as well as defined, within the chapter.

Chapter three investigates what is, and is not, already known about the context of the study by examining the nature of the Internet, with particular reference to young people and its influence on character virtues. The chapter is organised by a consideration of the literature relating to the risks as well as the opportunities the Internet affords young people. Salient issues in the literature such as cyber-bullying, cyber-citizenship, and

misrepresentation, are considered. The chapter closes with a synthesis of the literature and makes some observations about how it might inform the empirical research that follows.

Chapter four starts with a discussion about appropriate methodologies for the research, and particular consideration is given to the challenges of measuring character and virtues. Arguments are put forward to adopt a pragmatic approach, which allows for the use of a mixed-methods research design. The chapter also deals with issues of validity, reliability and the ethics of the research, with particular reference to the chosen design.

Chapter five presents evidence about the influence of the Internet on the character of 11 to 14 year olds drawn from the questionnaire. The chapter is organised around the key research questions and, as such, addresses how the Internet had been appropriated and used by young people, the particular influence it has on the character virtues of compassion and honesty, and a specific investigation of Facebook as the most popular website used by 11 to 14 year olds. Consideration is also given to how the findings differ by demographic grouping, such as socio-economic status, age and gender.

Chapter six provides a discussion and interpretation of the questionnaire findings, with reference to empirical data drawn from other studies. Relevant literature that either confirms or undermines the findings is also referred to. The discussion draws out the most pertinent findings from the questionnaire, and exposes areas that require further investigation.

Chapter seven is the analysis of the group interview data. The focus of the group interviews is cyber-bullying, and the questions that were asked of the participants sought to explore the moral problem from various angles. The chapter analyses how the interviewees define and conceptualise cyber-bullying, and how they perceive the differences between online and offline forms. The chapter also explores why young people might behave differently online and offline, with respect to cyber-bullying. The

chapter closes with a consideration of how schools currently deal with cases of cyber-bullying, and how successful these various approaches are.

Chapter eight discusses, with reference to relevant literature, the findings from the group interviews. The findings are interpreted with regard to the thesis research questions. In particular, the issue of cyber-bullying is explored from the perspective of three moral theories: deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics.

Chapter nine provides a summary of the main findings of the thesis, as well as an exploration of what might be the theoretical and practical implications of them. The chapter closes with consideration being given to the most salient findings in the thesis, and goes on to make recommendations for further research.

5 Summary

This chapter has introduced the thesis by initially setting out the research questions. It then moved on to a discussion about the relationship between the Internet and young people, within wider public debates about the impact of new technology on society. Early on, a description was provided about how the Internet has been increasingly used by young people since it was invented. Next, the chapter described the recent interest in the character of young people by academics and policy makers in America and Britain. The positive and negative influences of the Internet on the character virtues of young people, with reference to the contemporary literature, are also addressed. The chapter closes with an overview of the theoretical and practical goals of the thesis. The overall aim of the thesis is to generate new knowledge by which to address emerging moral problems found on the Internet.

CHAPTER TWO: MORAL THEORY, VIRTUE ETHICS AND THE INTERNET

1 Introduction

This chapter starts with a review of moral theory and, in particular, considers three prominent ethical positions: deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics. Particular attention is paid to virtue ethics, as this will be used throughout the thesis and will provide the theoretical framework for the ensuing empirical research. The second section considers the merits of virtue ethics as a position from which to study the influence of the Internet. Critiques of virtue ethics are also addressed at this stage. The final section discusses the contemporary understanding of the terms ‘character’ and ‘virtue’.

2 Moral Theory

Morality has been defined in various ways within different socio-cultural traditions, both at philosophical and operational levels. The question of how best to lead a moral life, and how the word ‘morality’ can be best defined is one of the foundational questions of philosophy. Moral philosophers have over the years, formulated theories designed to help people make the best moral decisions. Some of the greatest philosophers, such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, John Stuart Mill and Bentham, have written about morality and what it means to do the right thing. In the following section the moral theories of these philosophers will be discussed in order to identify their underlying traditions, positions on human society and the stated limitations and challenges. Historically, many moral

theories have been developed by philosophers, including relativism²⁶, divine command theory²⁷ and egoism²⁸. However, for the purposes of this thesis, the two most prominent moral theories, deontology and utilitarianism, will be briefly discussed before turning attention to a lengthier consideration of the resurgence of virtue ethics.

2.1 Deontology

Deontology²⁹ is sometimes described as a 'duty' or 'rules' based ethical theory, as it considers that it is rules that bind individuals to their duties. The theory contends that moral duties are grounded in a certain kind of self-validating reason. Deontology is the moral theory most closely associated with the philosopher Immanuel Kant³⁰ (1724-1804). Kant's contention was that we are all rational human beings and therefore worthy of dignity and respect. Kant believed that there are features of actions that determine whether or not they are right based on a respect for other humans. Therefore, for Kant, moral worth comes not from the consequences that flow from it, but from the intention with which the act is done. What matters is doing the right thing, because it is right in itself and not because of another motive. Deontology is therefore based on the premise that people should do the right thing for the right reasons, as expressed in terms of duties. Kant believed that actions are only morally right when they are done out of a

26 Moral relativism is the view that moral judgments are true or false only relative to some particular standpoint such as a culture or particular historical period. David Hulme and Friedrich Nietzsche have both been closely associated with this theory, although Hulme did not directly espouse relativism.

27 The divine command theory holds that an act is either moral or immoral *solely* because God either commands or prohibits it. Historically Thomas Aquinas, amongst others, was closely associated with this theory.

28 Egoism is ethical theory that places the benefit of the individual as the basis for judgments on what is right or wrong. Altruism is often considered the opposite of egoism.

29 The etymology of the word Deontology (meaning the science of moral duty) is from the Greek '*deon*' which means 'that which is binding or duty'.

30 Immanuel Kant was born in Königsberg, near the southeastern shore of the Baltic Sea in 1724. He is considered today one of the most central figures in modern philosophy. His work, particularly synthesising rationalism and empiricism, laid the foundations for much of nineteenth and twentieth century philosophy. The fundamental idea of Kant's "critical philosophy" is that of human autonomy. Kant argued that human understanding is the basis of general laws of nature and that human reason gives itself the moral law, and therefore, scientific knowledge, morality, and religious belief are mutually consistent because they all rest on the same foundation of human autonomy.

certain kind of duty, and therefore he sees moral duties as laws for human conduct which should not be challenged.

One of the main attractions of deontology is that it seems in theory to be clear about what is right and what is wrong in any given situation. Furthermore, as we have a duty to always do what is right it provides a clear moral guide to what action is appropriate in any moral situation. Unlike utilitarianism, deontology does not advocate the ends justifying the means as the theory provides a sound basis for the inherent value of doing the right thing simply for its own sake. Another attraction of the theory is that because on the whole, moral duties do not change, there is a greater sense of predictability about what is acceptable behaviour. This in turn helps to make societies more stable³¹. Right and wrong do not vary according to the circumstance or any consideration of consequence. The Kantian version of deontology regards good intentions and motives as values in themselves, whatever the outcome of any particular action.

Deontology has also come in for its own share of criticism and is believed by many to be an imperfect guide to morality (see for example Anscombe, 1958; Nozick, 1974; Geach 1969). Firstly, and perhaps chiefly, one such criticism the criticisms is that deontology is hard to apply in practice. Not all situations are governed by pre-existing rules and therefore, the doctrine does not provide moral guidance when no rules are present. Furthermore, there is no universal agreement on a single standard for morality as actions are always case specific and reliant on individual judgement. Utilitarianists would challenge deontologists insofar as the latter ignore the fact that the consequences of dutiful actions might cause pain and suffering and that consequences must also be considered before any particular course of action is taken (see, for example, Betham. 1907).

³¹ Kant was actually less interested in social stability than rational moral integrity.

2.2 Utilitarianism

Up until the mid-1950s, and the revival of virtue ethics, utilitarianism³² was seen as the main rival to deontological moral theory. Utilitarianism is widely conceived as a form of consequentialism³³. Jeremy Bentham³⁴ (1748-1832), an English moral philosopher, founded the doctrine of utilitarianism. Bentham believed that the highest principle of morality is to maximise happiness, to ensure that overall and on balance pleasure is greater than pain. He advocated a naturalist approach to morality and wrote at the start of *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* that 'Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do.' (Bentham; 1907:3) Bentham believed that it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong. This has become known as 'the greatest happiness principle', in which the moral worth of an action is determined only by its resulting outcome. For Bentham, every moral argument must implicitly draw on the idea of maximising happiness. Bentham endorsed a concept of 'utility', with utility being whatever produces happiness and prevents suffering. Therefore, doing the right thing is to do whatever increases the utility that will in turn increase happiness.

The perceived benefits of utilitarianism as a moral theory are numerous. Firstly, at the time of Bentham and Mill, moral philosophy was generally considered the enforcer of rules and duties. In contrast, utilitarianism is believed to be grounded in actual effects, as

32 The word is first thought to have been used in 1827 and comes from *utilitarian* + *ism* and is widely understood to mean the doctrine that the aim of all action should be the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

33 Although in philosophy utilitarianism and consequentialism are often used interchangeable, utilitarianism might perhaps best be seen as a form of consequentialism. For whereas consequentialism is a general principle that things can be judged right or wrong based on the outcomes of an action, utilitarianism specifies that the outcomes should actually be judged based on the utility of happiness. Another form might be hedonism that states human pleasure should be maximized.

34 Jeremy Bentham was born in Spitalfields, London, in 1748 and is still one of the best known philosophers. Although Bentham, will mainly be associated with the doctrine of Utilitarianism and the principle of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number', he was also an advocate of law reform, a critic of established political doctrines like natural law and the first to produce a utilitarian justification for democracy.

moral action is seen as a way of improving real lives, and as not dependent on the metaphysical assumptions of deontology. Utilitarianism also seems to offer rules for particular situations and provides a helpful guide for how to act in any given moral dilemma. In addition, the theory allows for exceptions to the rule when warranted by the outcome. This has led to a belief that utilitarianism reflects cause and effect reasoning in science, and is therefore not simply a theoretical ideal, but can also be empirically tested.

There are several well known objections to Bentham's theory of utilitarianism (see, for example, Williams, 1973; Scheffler, 1982; Slote, 1984). These include the notion that the doctrine does not take into account individual rights, as it wrongly reduces morality to being measured on a single scale of pleasure and pain. It was also seen as a quantitative and reductionist approach to ethics. John Stuart Mill³⁵ (1806-1873) attempted to defend utilitarianism and recast it as a more humane and less calculating doctrine. Mill (1859) argued in his book *'On Liberty'*, that people should be free to do what they want as long as they don't harm others. However, the most persistent criticism is that consequences are hard to predict and therefore hard to calculate. For example, good intentions do not always lead to good outcomes, and therefore good intentions might actually lead to actions that turn out to be morally wrong, as they ultimately have a bad consequence. Calculating or even predicting utility also becomes increasingly hard in situations that involve a number of people and a number of alternatives, which is often the case. Williams (1993) critiqued Utilitarianism because it requires people to put too much distance between themselves and their own desires or commitments and is therefore alienating. Finally, the notion that the ends always justify the means has been widely critiqued.

2.3 Virtue Ethics

A third moral theory, virtue ethics, has recently undergone a resurgence and been seen as a viable alternative to utilitarianism and deontology. Modern virtue ethics takes its

³⁵ John Stuart Mill is a British philosopher, economist, moral and political theorist and widely believed to be the most influential English-speaking philosopher of the nineteenth century. He is still well known today for his effective defenses of empiricism and of a liberal political view of society and culture. The roots of many of his views are based in the work of earlier philosophers, such as John Locke, David Hume and Jeremy Bentham.

inspiration from Aristotelian notions of character and virtue, and therefore the work of Aristotle³⁶ himself must first be considered before turning to current understandings of this moral theory. The ancient roots of virtue ethics lie in the writings of Plato but are more significantly located in the philosophy of Aristotle (384 BC- 322BC). Several concepts central to the way Aristotle understood ethics are also important components of modern virtue ethical theory. These concepts are outlined by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* and include *eudaimonia* (happiness or flourishing), *arête* (excellence or virtue) and *phronesis* (practical or moral wisdom). Each of these will now be discussed in turn.

Eudaimonia

Aristotle thought the supreme good for human beings is *eudaimonia*, which is traditionally translated as either *happiness* or *flourishing*. It is both the most complete end and also self-sufficient, insofar as it cannot be improved by any other good. *Eudaimonia*, for Aristotle, should therefore be the goal of all men. To flourish is to live and act well. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle sought to understand the nature of a flourishing life. In particular, what components make up such a life and what control, if any, an individual has over it. He rejected the view that flourishing was about a life of sensual pleasure. Instead, for Aristotle, a flourishing life is about contemplation and the possession and practice of the virtues. This leads to the second concept, that of *arête*, which Aristotle thought was of particular importance.

Arete

The key to Aristotle's ethics and understanding of what it means to flourish is *arete*, often understood as excellence or virtue. A person with *arete* is a person of the highest moral effectiveness; they have all the virtues for a good life. Aristotle believed that virtues were

36 *Aristotle* was a Greek philosopher born in Stagirus, northern Greece, in 384 BCE. He first trained in medicine, before moving to Athens to study philosophy with Plato. Aristotle is said to have written 150 philosophical treatises. It is believed that about thirty survive and these cover many diverse philosophical problems from biology and physics to morals and politics.

'states of character' rather than passions or facilities. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle writes

We must consider what virtue is. Since things found in the soul are three kinds – passions, facilities, states of character – virtue must be one of these. By passions I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendly feeling, hatred, longing, emulation, pity and in general the feelings that are accompanied by pleasure or pain; by facilities the things in virtue of which we are said to be capable of feeling these; e.g. of becoming angry or being pained or feeling pity; by states of character the things in virtue of which we stand well or badly if we feel it violently or too weakly, and well if we feel it moderately.

Translated in Darwell (2003: 17)

Aristotle rejected virtues as passions, as we 'are not called good or bad on the ground of our passions'. He also rejected virtues as being facilities, as we are 'not praised or blamed, for the simple capacity of feeling passion'. Therefore, for Aristotle, if virtues 'are not facilities or passions they must be states of character' (Darwell, 2003:17). Aristotle believed that people should aspire to moral virtues and be educated for 'excellence of character'. Darwell (2003:12) explains that the virtues, for Aristotle, were dispositions to choose what is fine or noble for its own sake, and to avoid what is base. Badhwa (1996:306) explains that 'Aristotle's conception of virtue of character is of a habitual emotional and rational disposition to feel, choose and act in the right way for the right ends'. Aristotelian character is also, importantly, about a state of being. It is about having the appropriate inner states.

Virtue, for Aristotle (1976:94), was found in the middle ground between a deficiency and an excess of appetite, passion or desire. This influential idea is often referred to as 'the doctrine of the mean'. The central premise of the doctrine is that moral qualities are destroyed by a deficiency or excess of any particular passion or emotion.

It is possible, for example, to feel fear, confidence, desire, anger, pity, and pleasure and pain generally, too much or too little; and both of them are wrong. But to have these feelings at the right times on the right grounds towards the right people for the right motive and in the right way is to feel them to an intermediate, there is to the best, degree; and this is the mark of virtue

Aristotle

(1976:101)

An example that Aristotle (1976: 94) gives of the mean is that of courage, insofar as too little fear might lead to being foolhardy and too much fear to cowardliness. He explains ‘the man who shuns and fears everything and stands up to nothing becomes a coward; the man who is afraid of nothing at all, but marches up to danger, becomes foolhardy’. It is not easy to have virtues that hit the mean, as ‘it is a difficult business to be good; because in any given case it is difficult to find the mid-point’ (p108). Robinson (1995:62) writes:

When Aristotle or Aristotelians say that virtue consists in the ‘mean’ we must not be misled into thinking that there is some particular measure of emotion that is the right one in every relevant situation – into thinking, for example, that some particular mix of boldness and fear will always constitute courage in every dangerous situation.

The point where the mean is found varies with every given situation. As Hursthouse (1999: 12) explains, in the case of generosity: ‘this would involve giving the right amount of help, for the right sort of thing, for the right reasons, to the right people, on the right occasions’. Robinson (1995:64) argues that this is why Aristotle steered away from giving out a set of rules to be virtuous, as ‘rules look too absolute, too exceptionless’.

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle (1976) wrote that virtues are developed through habit and so there is a requirement for individuals to constantly practice them. He

(1976:91,92) stated: 'we become just by performing just acts, temperate by performing temperate ones, brave by performing brave ones' and that 'the moral virtues are neither by nor contrary to nature; we are constituted by nature to receive them, but their full development in us is due to habit'. As Sandel (2010:198) explains 'Aristotle's emphasis on habit does not mean he considers moral virtue a form of rote behaviour. Habit is the first step in moral education'.

As his student, Aristotle was influenced by Plato's belief that virtue was knowledge about what was good. However, he believed that it was not enough for people just to know what is good, they also had actually to be good. He wrote about how the presence (or absence) of virtues contributed both to individual and societal flourishing. The attainment of the good life should be the goal of humanity, and the good life is only possible if humans live a life based on the moral (and intellectual) virtues. Aristotle believed that people need '*phronesis*' or 'practical wisdom', to work out what is the right balance for any virtue.

***Phronesis* (practical or moral wisdom)**

A final important component of Aristotle's understanding of ethics, which forms a central part of modern day virtue ethics, is *phronesis*. Translations of *phronesis* have included, amongst others, practical reasoning, practical wisdom, good sense, moral discernment, moral insight, and prudence (Noel, 1999). Aristotle (1976) defines *phronesis* as a state of grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action that are good or bad for a human being. As has been previously discussed, virtues are more than tendencies to act in certain predetermined ways; they are excellences of character, which involve getting things right. For Aristotle it is *phronesis* that helps individuals get things right, as practical or moral wisdom: it is what helps individuals to make the right judgment in any given situation. Aristotle understood that the requirements of different virtues can bring about conflict because they sometimes point to different courses of action. For example, should one be honest or kind when faced with having to comment on a piece of clothing that someone else has chosen, and that is not particularly flattering? Should one be loyal or

honest when one learns of a friend's wrongdoing? However, he also believed that such conflict is only apparent as it may be resolved by those possessed of practical wisdom. Therefore, a brave person exercises practical wisdom when he judges that a given situation merits fear and decides how to respond correctly. The coward, in contrast, exercises no practical wisdom as he or she perceives an unthreatening situation as dangerous. The development of practical wisdom comes with time and through practice, Aristotle believed that knowing the best course of action would eventually become second nature. *Phronesis*, for Aristotle, is different from other forms of reason, such as *episteme* and *techne*. *Episteme* is scientific knowledge and concerns things that are necessarily true, and *techne* is craft knowledge, useful for finding an effective way to make a product. Neither of these are necessarily virtues, as they might be used for good or bad ends. *Phronesis* is different, as it concerns using practical wisdom to make a virtuous decision in any given situation. Therefore, the rational capacity operative in the virtue of character is practical wisdom.

2.3.1 Contemporary Conceptions of Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics, until recently, was not entertained as a possible rival to utilitarian or deontological theories. However, there has been a recent resurgence of virtue ethics, largely based on Aristotelian thinking, in contemporary moral philosophy (see Anscombe, 1958; Hursthouse, 1999; Wallace, 1978; Geach, 1977; Dent, 1984; Slate, 1983; Swanton, 2003; MacIntyre, 1981; Foot, 1978). Virtue ethics is now an accepted part of common philosophical repertoire, which has more recently broadened out beyond philosophy into multi-disciplinary work (e.g. Peterson and Seligman, 2004). The resurgence is largely credited to Elizabeth Anscombe (1958), and her influential article, *Modern Moral Philosophy*. In the article she denounced moral theories of deontology and utilitarianism, suggesting instead that moral language should focus on human virtues and vices of character. She proposes that modern moral philosophers should renounce preoccupation with moral rules and kindred notions such as obligation and duties. She wrote (1958:1) 'The concepts of obligation, and duty – moral obligation and moral duty – and of what is morally right and wrong, and the moral sense of ought, ought to be

jettisoned if this is psychologically possible'. Her primary charge in the article is that utilitarianism and deontology make little sense as secular approaches to moral theory as they are without rational foundation. The language of these theories of 'morally ought', 'morally obligated', 'morally right', originally required a divine legislator as the source of moral authority. Terms such as duty and obligation make little sense without a God, and to employ them in secular contexts was to suppose laws without a lawgiver. In the article, Anscombe presented virtue ethics as a viable alternative to other philosophical traditions (see also Sandel, 2010). In particular, Anscombe objected to theories that rely on rules of morality, which were claimed to be applicable to any moral situation – in short, any approach to ethics that relies on universal principles and results in a rigid moral code. In contrast to the emphasis on duties or rules in deontology, and utilitarianism that emphasises the consequences of actions, virtue ethics is based on a conception of morality as expressive of the character of a person. For Anscombe, good character comes from within, rather than being simple compliance to rules or duties. What matters is not observable behaviour, but the motivation behind it and the manner in which it is performed. Anscombe's call was for a different way of doing moral philosophy.

Modern Moral Philosophy led to a renewed focus on virtue ethics, not only by philosophers, but by academics from other disciplines, such as psychology, theology and the social sciences. Recently, virtue ethics has become a broad term to describe theories that emphasise the role of character and virtue, rather than emphasising doing one's duty or acting in order to bring about good consequences. The modern virtue ethics movement is led by philosophers who have drawn inspiration from Aristotle, and has sought a rediscovery of, and a renewed interest in the language of virtue. For example, Hursthouse (1999:13) following in Anscombe's footsteps, wrote: 'a virtuous person is a morally good, excellent, or admirable person who acts and reacts well, rightly, as she should – she gets things right'; and Foot (1978:107) argued that virtues are moral as they are 'general beneficial characteristics, and indeed ones that a human being needs to have, for his own sake and that of his fellows'. Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), although not generally considered a mainstream Aristotelian, has perhaps done as much as anyone in

recent times to bring virtue ethics to public attention. In his book *'After Virtue'*, MacIntyre, like Anscombe, was critical of such notions as ought and duty, and gave his own account of the importance of virtue. In particular, MacIntyre shows how conceptions of virtue are complex and that any single account of virtue requires a prior account of social and moral traditions in order to be understood. Increasingly, academics are seeing virtue ethics as the best basis for understanding morality and it has consequently become the theory of choice for many moral philosophers writing today (see for example Curran, 2000; Carr, 2008; Kristjánsson, 2007; Annas; 2011). Although these contemporary writers often differ in their interpretations of Aristotle, as well as on how best to apply virtue ethics to the problems of today, they all agree that virtue ethics reclaim the moral importance of virtue and character. For most contemporary virtue ethicists, an action should be seen as right, not because it can be universalised in light of a rationalist principle as a deontologist would contend, or because it makes the greatest number of people happy as a utilitarian would content, but insofar as it cultivates virtue, which in turn contributes to individual and societal flourishing. The focus for virtue ethicists is not on the 'deontic' correctness of individual actions, but on their 'aretic' role in a flourishing life. The bases, therefore, of a flourishing life are states of character based on virtue habits that guide motivation and conduct.

3 Virtue Ethics Research Framework

Much work has been undertaken recently to bring moral theoretical concepts to bear on questions about the media and new technology. Some authors (e.g. Christians, 1989) have called for a consideration of the ethical dimension of new technology, whilst others (e.g. Floridi, 1999; Gunke, 2007) have sought to develop some universal ethical principles for the use of new technology. Much of the literature considers what the primary ethical concerns of the Internet are, and the three moral theories discussed above are sometimes drawn upon. Each of these theories might provide a fruitful theoretical lens through which to investigate the influence of the Internet on young people. For example, if a deontological lens is adopted, then a consideration of what rules, duties and obligations young people have on the Internet would make an interesting focus for the

thesis. Alternatively, if a consequentialist approach is adopted, then the resulting thesis would consider the moral worth of young people's actions online, based on the concept of utility. However, virtue ethics also offer an attractive lens through which to investigate the influence of the Internet on the morality of young people and is also perhaps, as will now be demonstrated, better placed than the others to do so.

A utilitarian investigation of the moral influence of the Internet would involve an examination of how the Internet influences overall happiness. It would perhaps be hard to make such a calculation in general or universal terms, and this is one issue with the theory. However, utilitarianism as an overarching theory perhaps provides more hope for investigations of specific moral problems found online, such as cyber-bullying. A utilitarian approach would rightly surmise that cyber-bullying is morally wrong because it causes unhappiness and pain to the victims, which outweighs any pleasure gained by the cyber-bullies themselves. Adopting a utilitarian position in this thesis would mean addressing questions such as, *does the Internet do more good than harm?; what impact does cyber-bullying have on victims?; and, how can the pain caused by cyber-bullying be calculated?* These would all make interesting research questions. However, due to distinct features of the Internet, calculating or even predicting the consequences of any particular online action would present a researcher with particular difficulties. As Internet interactions take place in time and space dimensions that are very different from face-to-face, the consequences of actions are not always immediately obvious. For example, if a young person was to bully another in a school playground, the harm caused is often more immediately apparent, not only to the bully and victim themselves, but also to adults and other young people in the vicinity. Additionally, it seems that 'distance' is also one of the causes of cyber-bullying. A decrease in 'social presence' can lower a bully's empathy, which makes him or her more likely to be aggressive (Johnson and Keil, 2002). The more contact a person has with another, the more the intimacy, warmth and rapport between them may be expected. Mark and Ratliffe (2011:96) contend that

The decreased social presence in digital communications can not only make ordinary communications difficult because of the lack of immediate feedback, but for adolescences engaged in cyber-bullying it can be more harmful because perpetrators cannot accurately assess victims reactions. For example, communications not intended as aggressive or harmful can be perceived that way by the receiver.

The distance between the victim and the cyber-bully makes the calculations of consequences of any particular communication difficult to predict. Another consequence that is difficult to predict on the Internet is where any particular piece of communication might end up. Again, taking the example of cyber-bullying, even if a young person had meant to cause some unhappiness through a message targeted at a particular individual, it is difficult for he or she to control who might actually see the message and therefore what the consequence of his or her original action is. By their very nature, messages can be sent to multiple audiences in multiple locations and have consequences far beyond their original intention. Given the fact that the consequences of cyber-bullying are hard to determine, predict and therefore calculate, utilitarianism might be considered an impractical guide to such instances of immorality.

Deontologists would be less concerned about the outcomes of particular action on the Internet, and more about the moral duties of Internet users. Deontologists might argue that certain actions online are morally wrong, if they break rules that guide conduct on appropriate use of the Internet. Deontologists would be interested in asking questions such as *'what rules of Internet use should be constructed to ensure social harmony?'* and *'how is it best to enforce these rules to ensure they are adhered to by users?'* However, as in the case of utilitarianism, addressing these questions might prove challenging for a number of reasons.

An issue for deontologists is that currently there is an absence of agreed or enforced rules on the Internet. Attempts at increasing regulation online have encountered many

stumbling blocks as they often involve global agreements based on international collaboration. For example, one country might enforce the closure of a particular website, but this can be set up and run from another country. Governments have also been nervous about imposing regulation on large corporate websites, whilst finding it difficult to track down smaller ones. Of relevance here is the controversial Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace written by Barlow (1996). In this paper, Barlow stated that no government had the right to apply laws in cyberspace. He proposed that the Internet is outside any country's borders and so has the right to develop its own laws and social contracts.

An examination of the moral problem of online piracy provides a good example for examination of this contention. Many people do not know what the rules are when it comes to downloading films or music from the Internet. This might explain why many more people are likely to download a film from the Internet illegally than steal a DVD from a shop. However, although large companies employ lawyers to hunt down pirates and accuse them of breaking laws and acting immorally, in reality, very few cases go to court. Although most countries have regulations that apparently protect the rights of authors and publishers, such as copyright laws, patent/trademark rules and so on, these have had varying degrees of effectiveness. Whenever someone wants to circumvent them, they are probably violating either domestic laws or international treaties, or both. However, this has not stopped individuals downloading the latest film or album and streaming illegally pay per view sports matches online. One of the main problems is that law has struggled to keep pace with the rapidly advancing new technology, and also that the issues are normally global rather than domestic and require international collaboration. Therefore, although rules and regulations might be in place, it is understandable that there is confusion over what is one's duty, or who has an obligation to whom when it comes to online piracy.

The same issues apply in the case of cyber-bullying. Again, the rules are unclear but perhaps even more concerning than piracy, is that they are also extremely difficult to

enforce. Although most websites, such as ASK FM and Facebook, issue guidelines about appropriate use, the size and nature of the Internet makes these guidelines very difficult to implement. This became clear when the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, complained about social networking websites not clamping down on cyber-bullying after a victim had committed suicide. He said 'The people that operate these websites have got to step up to the plate and show some responsibility in the way that they run these websites.'³⁷ However, the websites targeted by Cameron, by their own admission, state they are unable to police all correspondence. Grodzinsky (2001: 580) notes that in the United States, the response to immoral issues has been to 'try and pass laws to stop the abuse'. However attempts at such regulation, notes Grodzinsky, are both seriously disputed and poorly enforced and therefore, websites such as Facebook largely rely on self-policing by the users themselves.

A system of formal rules on the Internet is, it seems, difficult to apply in practice. If rules were developed that can be properly enforced online, this would, it seem, reduce cases of immorality online. However, presently, websites used by potential bullies, or so-called cyber pirates seem to be incapable of regulation and, in any case, bullies find ways round any given rules and detection. Plaisance (2013: 91) argues that, to date, media theorists have largely sought to impose normative, largely deontological, frameworks as the basis for 'netiquette'. However, he believes there are 'few successful efforts to articulate a coherent framework that marries works on technology ethics with a project that identifies a set of universal norms to guide behaviour, on a global scale'. Therefore, looking for solutions to stop cyber-bullying, based on deontological thinking, might not be sufficient. The implementation of enforceable rules would be a step in the right direction for the promotion of moral behaviour online, but perhaps something more is required?

If utilitarianism and deontology on their own are insufficient moral theories through which to discern the moral implications of the Internet, what about virtue ethics? Does a character based moral theory such as virtue ethics offer a more useful framework for

37 <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/aug/08/cyberbullying-websites-boycotted-david-cameron>

research into the Internet, than the action guiding theories discussed above? Increasingly, some theorists (Valor, 2010; Plaisance, 2013; Couldry, 2010) are arguing that virtue ethics should at the very least compliment, if not replace existing deontological or consequentialist approaches to investigating new technologies. Vallor (2010) believes that several distinctive features of virtue ethics make it uniquely suited to the domain of Internet ethics and furthermore, a virtue-based perspective is needed to balance a strong utilitarian bias in the literature. Couldry (2010) agrees and argues that virtue ethics offers a more compelling and more useful basis from which to study the Internet, than deontological claims. Since rules are hard to establish and uphold online, and consequences are hard to predict, an approach to morality that is based on an individual's own character virtues is particularly appealing. As Plaisance (2013: 92) argues 'rather than getting mired in the philosophical thicket regarding the motives and duties of actors in an online world we should focus on what behaviour and guidelines contribute to the flourishing of digital lives': whilst Vallor (2010: 157) adds that what is needed is 'a more widespread and systematic application of virtue based normative framework to question the ethical impact of information technology and social networking technologies in particular'. A virtue ethics approach appears to offer a promising way to consider the specific nature of many of the moral issues found online. It is also beneficial for those interested in developing practical solutions for dealing with these moral issues, as it provides some universal guidance for what is appropriate behaviour based on the concepts of character and virtue. Another advantage, as will be attested to throughout this thesis, of the virtue ethical approach to studying the Internet is that it appears to be uniquely attuned to helping to understand the reciprocal relationships between technological structures and human agencies.

Returning to the example of cyber-bullying, virtue ethicists would consider cyber-bullying wrong, as it is an expression of non-compassionate behaviour, or cruelty to others. Individuals who commit cyber-bullying offences can be said to be lacking compassion and other moral virtues. As mentioned previously, increased 'self-policing' is one way the Internet might become a more moral environment. Moral virtues are, along with rules

and duties, an important pre-requisite of self-policing. Doing the right thing online should not simply be a matter of adhering to rules, or an assessment of consequences, but because certain virtues that guide actions online have become habits. If cyber-bullying is to be addressed, then seeking ways to develop moral motivation in young people through promoting empathy might therefore be a fruitful approach. Grodzinsky (2001: 581) agrees and states: 'although action guiding theory has predominated computer ethics texts, I believe that my I.T students have found more meaning in character forming theories such as virtue ethics'.

The arguments above have shown that solving moral problems such as cyber-bullying, as a deontologist or consequentialist might, is inadequate. Furthermore, an agent-orientated approach to addressing moral behaviour online is perhaps both preferable and better suited than an action or rule-based one. A virtue-ethical approach would place prominence on the need to reinforce the motivation for young people to do the right thing, especially when no one is watching. The answer to the question 'how should I behave online?' is 'virtuously', and a virtue ethical approach puts an emphasis on cultivating attitudes and dispositions that enable people do the right thing when rules are absent and the consequences are not obvious. Therefore, as virtue ethics appears to offer a useful opportunity for considering, and perhaps offering some solution to, the moral issues found online, it is also appropriate to adopt the theory as the basis for the framework on which to base the empirical research to be carried out in this thesis. The questions to be asked in the research will therefore not be concerned with duties or consequences, but with the virtues that both influence, and are influenced by the Internet.

3.1 Defending Virtue Ethics

The previous section has given reasons why virtue ethics is deemed to be a useful theory for the exploration of moral responses to the Internet. However, virtue ethics, like the other moral theories, has been the subject of criticism. It is important to explore and then address some of these criticisms before moving ahead. However, firstly the issues

of reductionism should be addressed. Although the discussions above have drawn clear lines between three prominent moral theories, and attempted to draw out and emphasise the differences between them, it is clear that in the 'real' world it is neither possible nor perhaps desirable to draw such distinctions. Individuals draw on a number of considerations when making decisions about what action should be taken in any given situation. Decisions might be informed by rules, consequences or their own character, but most likely all three in different measures in different situations. Williams (1985) was particularly concerned about moral theories that appeared to over-simplify morality and ethics. He stated:

If there is such a thing as the truth about the subject matter of ethics....why is there any expectation that it should be simple? In particular why should it be conceptually simple, using only one or two ethical concepts, such as duty or good state of affairs, rather than many? Perhaps we need as many concepts to describe it as we need and no fewer.

Williams (1985:19)

Williams called for a non-reductionist approach to moral philosophy and a greater recognition about the complexity of life. For Williams, pluralistic models that integrate, in a non-reductionist way, strong notions of duty, consequence and virtue, are therefore preferable to taking any one on its own at face value. Life, including online life, is not trivial or non-simplistic, and therefore, all tools at our disposal should be used to help make meaning of it. Therefore, whilst this thesis will prioritise the virtual ethical lens, it will understand that moral theories are likely to interplay with each other in different circumstances.

A criticism leveled at virtue ethics is that it does not provide an adequate guide to what action should be undertaken in specific circumstances. The charge goes that although virtue ethics sounds like a useful theory, it falls down in practice. Virtue ethics, it has been argued, does not help people answer such questions as; what sorts of actions are

morally permitted and which ones are not; and, what are the duties or rules of virtue ethics that can be used in specific moral situations? However, Annas (2011) following Hursthouse (1999) refutes this position and believes that virtue ethics does provide guidance for living morally, both generally and also in any given situation. Annas believes there are such things as 'virtue rules' and that they provide just as much guidance on what to do as rules or duties. In fact they are actually more useful as they provide guidance when the rules are absent. Virtues, for Annas, are moral rules for all times and for all situations. Virtues enable us to do the right thing, in the right way at the right time. To live morally, for Annas, makes demands on us, just as an employer and the rules that they set might. Annas believes that we should raise our standards of virtues as they can provide the guidance for living and for what to do in any given situation. Thus, in the example of cyber-bullying, virtues provides action guidance to potential cyber-bullies. It encourages them to think things through, weigh up the alternatives and make responsible choices about their actions. Virtue ethics proposes that rather than following rules, it is better to use practical wisdom to make wise and virtuous judgments about any particular action. Virtue ethics is a moral system that acknowledges everyday dilemmas, and suggests that as people develop wisdom over time and through practice, they should get better at negotiating dilemmas.

A further critique of virtue ethics comes from 'situationists' (Harman, 1999, 2000; Doris, 1998, 2002), who deny the stability of character virtues and insist that moral or other responses are dependent on particular situations. They challenge Aristotle's view that being properly habituated makes it more likely that an individual will engage in the right behaviour, under the right circumstances, and for the right reasons. Aristotle's belief has led virtue ethicists to contend that having acquired particular virtues, it is likely that an individual will engage in virtuous activities. Situationists disagree with Aristotle's belief that character traits are firm and unchangeable, and suggest that there are forces that come in to play, which are dependent on the particularities of the moral dilemma. Leading the situationist challenge is Harman (2000) and, most notably, Doris (1998) who have claimed to show empirically that robust and stable character traits do not exist.

Doris made a strong and well-documented empirical case against virtue ethics, exploiting situationist social psychology's data. Doris' main critique is that there is no strong predictive link between any global personality or character construct and overt behaviour in real life situations. Doris's evidence seems to show that agents make up their mind on how to act, depending on the circumstances of any given situation. On the face of it, this appears to contradict any belief that our character develops over time through acquiring virtuous habits. However, there have been several recent attempts to defend virtue ethics against this particular situationist challenge (see for example Kamtekar, 2004). A common rejoinder is that the situationist have misunderstood virtue ethics. Kamtekar (2004; 460) argues 'the character traits conceived of and debunked by situationist social psychological studies have very little to do with character as it is conceived of in traditional virtue ethics'. Virtue ethicists allow for the fact most people are not genuinely virtuous, but rather than this being an issue for the normative ideal of virtue ethics, it is argued that virtuous people are rare and that to be fully virtuous is a difficult achievement. When individuals make poor moral decisions in particular situations, it is because they have not applied practical wisdom correctly and they are still learning.

Although virtue ethics is not without its criticisms, it is the contention of this thesis that virtue ethics provides useful guidance on morality, for a number of reasons. It is flexible and embraces a wider range of possibilities than rule-based or outcome-based systems. This is mainly because of the central component of endorsing agent-based choice as the best way to guide one's life. Furthermore, just because a person falls short of perfect virtue, does not negate the value of virtue ethics. Therefore, despite the potential challenges to virtue ethics, it is here held to be a robust theory that provides a suitable framework for the research to be conducted throughout this thesis. Having decided on adopting the tenets of virtues ethics as the basis for the investigation, it is now important to gain a better understanding of how character virtue is understood in contemporary virtue ethics.

4 Character Virtues

As discussed above, the concepts of 'character' and 'virtue' are central components of Aristotelian virtue ethics. However, the meaning of these concepts is contested in contemporary academic discourse. A clearer account of how the terms 'character' and 'virtue' are currently used will provide an insight into current understandings of the terms. This, in turn, will lead to the construction of definitions to be employed as the basis for the present investigation of the Internet. Before turning to this, it is important to note that the notion of character described in terms of virtues has been criticised for being unclear, redundant, old-fashioned, religious, paternalistic, anti-democratic, conservative, individualistic and relative (Kristjánsson, 2013). The majority of these criticisms stem from a belief that character and virtue are considered old-fashioned terms that are not in keeping with the modern pluralistic world of today.

However, the tide appears to be turning. In the last few years, there have been many British publications on character which reveal a variety of approaches to character that have in turn led to a disconcerting heterogeneity of theoretical stances, conceptual assumptions and curricular initiatives (Kristjánsson, 2013). Perhaps the best known and also most interesting of the recent publications has been the series of reports published by *Learning for Life* (Arthur; 2010, 2010a) and the *DEMOS* Character Inquiry (Lexmond and Grist; 2011). What makes such publications interesting is the different ways they conceptualise character. The think tank, *DEMOS*, commenced an inquiry into character in 2009 and defined character as a set of capabilities that an individual may or may not possess. The 'Inquiry' report (Lexmond and Grist, 2011) found that the most important character capabilities for individuals to possess are application, self-direction, self-regulation and empathy. An earlier report by *DEMOS*, (Lexman and Reeves, 2010: 13) described character as 'a hard skill'. *Learning for Life* conducted a series of studies, between 2008 and 2011, into the character and values of 3-25 year olds in Britain, using a definition of character that gave prominence to values and virtues. The director of the *Learning for Life* research, James Arthur (2010;2010a), argued that character is essentially moral and therefore should be defined in terms of the moral virtues that an individual

does or does not possess. He believes that moral philosophy should have a role to play in character development, and that there should be a revival of virtue ethics and of moral traditions emphasising the need to inculcate good habits in individuals in order for them to live moral and flourishing lives. So, whilst *DEMOS* champions character are defined by performance enhancing capabilities, *Learning for Life* champions character are defined by moral virtues. These conceptualisations of character appear to be dichotomous and the table below shows some possible features of this dichotomy.

Table 2: Dichotomy Of Recent Conceptualisations Of Character

	Capabilities based conception of character	Virtues based conception of character
Key publications	DEMOS	Learning for Life
Key Virtues	Performance – i.e. resilience, application, self-direction	Moral - i.e. honesty, compassion, humility, gratitude
Philosophical Tradition	Liberal Rights	Communitarian
Location	Outer-self: displayed in outward action	Inner-self: comes from within
Common language	Skills, competencies and capabilities	Values, virtues and morals
Justification	Instrumental and ethical	Altruistic and ethical
Motivation	To be a successful individual in society	To be a successful individual by contributing to a good society

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues has drawn on these publications to shape its own work on character. In its publication, ‘Framework for Character Education’ (Jubilee Centre, 2013), it makes a distinction between three types of virtues that might describe a person’s character. These types of virtues are moral, performance and civic and can be defined as:

Moral Virtues: character habits that enable us to respond well to situations in any area of experience.

Performance virtues: behaviour skills and psychological capacities, that can be used for both good and bad ends, enable us to put character habits into practice.

Civic Virtues: character virtues and skills that are necessary for engaged and responsible citizenship.

(Jubilee Centre, 2013: 4)

Whilst the Centre acknowledges that human flourishing requires intellectual and civic virtues - as well as generic virtues of self-management, often known as enabling and / or performance virtues, - it is the moral virtues that are the most central and important. This is because whilst performance virtues help individuals to succeed, moral virtues enable societies to flourish. The framework contends that:

Individuals can respond well or less well to the challenges they face in everyday life, and the moral virtues are those character traits that enable human beings to respond appropriately to situations in any area of experience. These character traits enable people to live, cooperate and learn with others in a way that is peaceful, neighbourly and morally justifiable. Displaying moral and other virtues in admirable activity over the course of a life, and enjoying the inherent satisfaction that entails is what it means to live a flourishing life.

(Jubilee Centre, 2013: 3)

In America, there have been similar recent attempts to define character in terms of different types of virtues. Seider (2103), in his book about character education, explains how schools often adopt either a moral, performance or civic virtues based approach. Paul Tough's (2012) popular book about grit and resilience seems in favour of a predominantly performance virtues-based approach to character development. In contrast, well known character education advocates, such as Lickona (1992) and Ryan and

Bohlin (1999) argue that the moral virtues are the most important. Hunter (2000) is a strong proponent of the view that the term character and the language of ethics and virtue need to be rescued, as character development is essentially a moral discipline. He states: 'Character is not, as the psychologists would have it solitary, autonomous, unconstrained; merely a set of traits within a unique and unencumbered personality' (Hunter; 2000:15-16). The most basic element of character is 'moral discipline' and 'its most essential feature is the inner capacity for restraint and the ability to inhibit oneself in one's passions, desires and habits within the boundaries of a moral order'.

4.1 Adopting a Conception of Character Based on Moral Virtues

The section above describes how character has been variously described in terms of different types of virtues. It is now important to select a conceptualisation of character on which to base this thesis. If the thesis is based on a conception that emphasises character capabilities or performance virtues, then the influence of the Internet should be judged in terms of its effects on a young person's instrumental character qualities, such as their ability to show application, self-direction and self-regulation. However, if a moral virtues conception is chosen, then the resulting thesis should naturally focus on how the Internet is implicated in the formation of young people's virtues, such as honesty and compassion. As this thesis is concerned with exploring how the Internet is influencing the moral character of individuals, it will adopt a definition of character that emphasises the possession, or otherwise, of moral virtues. Such an approach enables us to consider not only how the Internet is changing the moral character of individuals, but also how this might in turn be impacting on societies as a whole. Therefore, rather than considering the Internet in terms of how it might develop instrumental capabilities that can be directed towards independent and perhaps self-chosen ends, it will explore the Internet in terms of how it is, or is not, changing young people's moral characters. The thesis rests on the contention that the acquisition and display of moral virtues is a deeper and more meaningful way to judge character. As such, Kristjánsson (2013:2) provides a useful definition of character that prioritises the moral virtues:

Moral character is understood to encompass the morally evaluable, reason-responsive and educable sub-set of the human personality, and the virtues are seen as the main vehicles of that sub-set: more specifically, as settled states of character, concerned with morally praiseworthy conduct in particular significant and distinguishable spheres of human life.

Based on the definition of character above, it is important to briefly define what is meant by the term (moral) 'virtue' within this thesis. Recently Peterson and Seligman (2004) developed what they described as a comprehensive typology of character virtues, which consisted of six virtues – wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence – identified as core characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers across time and world cultures. However, it should be questioned if it is desirable, indeed even possible, to identify a list of what might be called 'master' virtues. MacIntyre (1981:181) has argued that 'there are just too many different and incompatible conceptions of a virtue for there to be any real unity to the concept or indeed to the history'. Likewise, the Jubilee Centre (2103:3) believes that: 'No definitive list of relevant areas of human experience and the respective virtues can be given, as the virtues will to a certain extent be relative to individual constitution, developmental stage and social circumstance'.

As it is not easy, or necessarily desirable, to select a list of prototypical moral virtues by which to describe character, for the purposes of this thesis, moral virtues will be taken as any that have been defined as such by western cultures and communities over a lengthy period of time, and are understood to contribute to the moral life. Based on this reasoning, the definition of virtue developed specifically for this thesis, is:

Virtue is moral excellence. Virtues are inherently good and, if possessed by individuals, will be beneficial to individual and collective wellbeing. Moral virtues guide conduct and are the foundations of good character. Individuals should actively choose to display their virtues, and continue to choose to do so. Individuals must

also exercise practical wisdom to ensure that they do not display an excess or deficiency of any particular appetite, passion or desire as this would not be virtuous.

5 Summary

This chapter has sought to make a case for adopting virtue ethics as the most promising moral theory for investigating the influence of the Internet on young people. Furthermore, it proposes that moral virtues, as opposed to other types of virtues, such as performance, are the most important aspects of an individual's character. The acquisition and display of moral virtues is a more meaningful way to judge character. As such, the presently chosen definitions of character and virtues both draw heavily on Aristotelian inspired virtue ethics. Aristotle, it seems, still provides the best guide for constructing a contemporary understanding of character, today He also provides a relevant perspective through which to investigate the very modern phenomena that is the Internet.

CHAPTER THREE:

CHARACTER VIRTUES: ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

Despite the widespread participation of young people in the new digital media, little research is focused on the ethical perspectives of young people and their online pursuits.

James (2009: 89-90)

1 Introduction

This chapter explores the literature that relates to the Internet, young people and character virtues. It starts by explaining how a framework adopted from Livingstones' (2009) meta-analysis of the field is to be used to structure the review. The first section deals with the perceived opportunities the Internet brings for young people, and considers the themes of civic and political participation or community involvement and activism, social networking and online identity construction. The second section concerns the perceived risks that the Internet brings for young people, with reference to the themes of cyber-bullying, plagiarism, consumerism, pornography and misinformation. As the literature relating to each of these themes is discussed, attention is given to the influence they might have for the central focus of the thesis, namely the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds. The chapter closes by interpreting and discussing the state of the literature, as well as highlighting some noticeable gaps that ought to be addressed.

2 Literature Relating to Virtue Ethics and the Internet

In the previous chapter it was proposed to use virtue ethics as the moral framework through which the influence of the Internet on 11 to 14 year olds would be examined. However, there has been very little research to date on the influence of the Internet on young people (or adults) that adopts an overarching virtue ethical lens (see Appendix 11

for an overview of the literature review strategy). There has been literature, largely from a philosophical and normative standpoint (referenced in the previous chapter) that makes the case for virtue ethics a useful theory for both investigating, as well as dealing with, some of the moral issues raised by the Internet. There is little, if any, empirical research that utilises virtue ethics as its predominant theoretical basis. This is a significant gap considering the vast number of books, papers, articles and reports that have been published about the Internet and young people in recent years. However, some of the literature does discuss in more general terms the issues of morals, character and virtues. Perhaps most notable amongst these is the 'Good Play' project report (James, 2009) which focused on 'the ethical contours of the new digital media' and the Pontifical Council for Social Communication (2002) which produced a report on '*Ethics and the Internet*'. In addition, cyber-ethics (Bailey, 2008) has become a growing discipline that seeks to address the many ethical questions raised by the Internet. However, these publications are largely about how the Internet should be organised or monitored ethically, as opposed to its implications for the development of moral character in young people as might be envisaged by, for example, neo-Aristotelians. In consideration of the literature, it is therefore important to draw a distinction between that which is chiefly concerned with how societies should organise cyberspace in order to address ethical questions of fairness, security, justice and free speech, and that which looks directly at the impact of the Internet on young people's character virtues. It is a focus on the latter that appears to be missing in much of the literature addressing the impact of the Internet on young people.

Given the lack of literature directly relating to virtue ethics and the Internet, the present review must therefore find a different starting point. A consideration of the risks and opportunities that the Internet has presented for young people, and the implications these might have for research into character virtues, is suggested as a promising approach. However, the first challenge is to identify what the risks and opportunities are and which of them are most likely to either positively or negatively influence young people's character virtues. This is no easy task as the literature ranges across the

disciplines of education, psychology, information science and health, as well as new emergent sub-disciplines, such as cyber-ethics. Therefore, with such a vast body of knowledge covering so much territory, an appropriate framework is required in order to organise this literature review. Livingstone’s (2009) meta-analysis of the recent literature relating to children and the Internet, provides just such a framework. Her meta-analysis reveals that issues can be considered to be either online opportunities or online risks (table 2). She acknowledges that there is potential for the risks and opportunities to overlap, but her analysis provides an excellent summary of the literature in the field.

Table 3: Online Opportunities And Risks (Adapted From Livingstone, 2009:30)

Online Opportunities	Online Risks
Access to Global Information	Illegal content
Educational resources	Paedophiles, grooming, strangers
Social networking among friends	Extreme or sexual violence
Entertainment, games, fun	Harmful, offensive content
User generated content-creation	Racist / hate material / activities
Civic or political participation	Advertising and stealth marketing
Privacy for identity expression	Biased or misinformation
Community involvement / activism	Abuse of personal information
Technological expertise / literacy	Cyber-bullying, harassment
Career advancement / employability	Gambling / phishing / financial scams
Personal / health / sexual advice	Self-harm (suicide, anorexia)
Specialist groups / fan forums	Invasions / abuse of privacy
Shared experiences with distant others	Illegal activities (hacking, copyright abuse)

This table provides a framework by which to categorise the literature to be included in this review. Although the themes Livingstone has identified relate to children and the Internet, many of them also relate to questions about young people’s character virtues. What follows is a consideration of the literature organised by the themes identified by Livingstone. As each theme is discussed, particular reference is made to the implications

it might have for the morality of young people and, in particular, their character virtues. After the themes have been addressed, some concluding remarks will be made about the body of literature as a whole, and in particular how it might be reconsidered through a virtue ethics theoretical lens.

3 Online Opportunities and Character Virtues

There are a number of online opportunities included in Livingstone's (2009) topography, which are relevant to this thesis and its consideration of the character virtues of young people. These include; i) the potential for the Internet to enable young people to take part in civic or political participation, and be more involved with their communities; ii) increased potential for social networking with friends; and, iii) potential for enhanced privacy for identity expression. Each of these opportunities will now be addressed in turn, with particular reference made to the influence they might have on the morality of young people.

3.1 Civic or Political Participation / Community Involvement and Activism

For many, the Internet has been held up as the great hope for encouraging young people to participate more, both civically and politically. The Internet has opened up new opportunities for young people to participate in their communities and become what James (2009) calls 'cybercitizens'. Pettingill (2007) coins the term 'civic engagement 2.0' to describe the new phenomenon of young people participating online. Bennett (2007) believes that online participation mobilises people into social and political action, and Jenkins (2006) suggests that the Internet provides an opportunity for individuals to become part of a new participatory democracy. The Internet has, these authors contend, provided a vehicle for young people to connect with compassionate causes and make a difference to others, leading to them becoming more socially conscious. It has enabled young people to develop a strong sense of community online, and this has led to them seeing the importance of civic ties and better understanding their obligations to their communities. However, questions have been asked about whether the Internet fosters

'real' civic action or whether it in fact actually leads to greater isolation from the real world as a result of increased engagement in online activities.

Recently, several academics (Gilbert, 1992; Loader, 2007; Coleman and Blumler, 2009) have argued that the Internet can and does facilitate online participation. These researchers state the reason is two-fold: firstly, because it engages young people on their own terms; secondly, because young people have grown up with and regularly interact through social networks and therefore see online interaction as a natural means to participate civically. These researchers contend that the Internet has provided a new platform for young people to become better citizens. It can be a powerful tool for civic engagement and can increase a young person's sense of self-efficacy, as the Internet has enabled them to take personal responsibility for their own lives (Coleman and Blumler, 2009). For Gilbert (1992) the struggle for citizenship is partly a struggle over the means and substance of cultural expression and therefore, new technologies open up new possibilities for young people. The new media has given young people a louder voice and a better opportunity to participate, and this has enabled them to play a greater role in political and civil movements (Loader, 2007). The Internet can help bring communities closer together and make them more powerful and potentially more influential (Marcus *et al.*, 2010). Byron (2008:48) states 'there are few people who would deny the power of the medium to release children's creativity and offer new opportunities for learning, culture and community participation'. As such, there is a hope held by many that the demand for more active and informed global citizens can be aided significantly by new technologies such as the Internet.

The Digital Futures report (2010) in America also found that young people believe that the Internet is a useful tool for social activism. The report shows that almost two-thirds of online community members in America, who participate in social causes (64.9 percent) state that they got involved via the Internet. In addition, more than 40 percent of online community members participate more in social activism since they joined an online community. Likewise, the Good Play report (James, 2009) provides evidence that young

people use the Internet for different forms of participation and engagement, and that these are largely motivated by the individual's sense of civic purpose. The report shows how the Internet offers opportunities for young people to promote a particular cause or viewpoint, share information with the broader public, and can encourage collective problem solving for the good of the world.

In Britain, the Demos Centre for the Analysis of Social Media found that social media is increasingly being used for social action. In the report *Service Generation* (Birdwell and Millar, 2013) it was reported that social media has created new digital spaces, significant for those interested in undertaking meaningful and positive social action. The analysis detailed in the report shows that around 340,000 young British Facebook users have interests related to social action, and that between 7th and 14th November 2013, around 150,000 Tweets were identified as discussing social action. The specific kinds of social action these users are interested in differs by gender, insofar as females are more interested in volunteering, and males in protest and activism. A subsequent report by Demos, entitled *Generation X* (Birdwell and Mani, 2014), found that 84 per cent of teachers informed that they thought that the new networks and forms of engagement provided by social media are – or can be – just as effective as traditional forms of engagement (e.g. joining a political party or voting). The survey revealed that substantial numbers of young people use social media to become engaged with social issues: for example, 38 per cent of those surveyed stated they had signed a petition online; 29 per cent had used Facebook or Twitter to raise awareness of a cause; 21 per cent had 'liked' a political cause or group that they agreed with; and 19 per cent had donated money online. Teachers are also noting an increase in this type of engagement amongst their students. Over half of teachers (57 per cent) reported that they had noticed teenagers using social media to become involved in politics and good causes. Pettingil (2007:160) argues that new digital media offers the path of least resistance to young people, and that rather than seeing these 'social facts as debilitating to democracy, they should be leveraged to get the most out of young people's desire to be active and feel a part of something beyond themselves'.

Micro-volunteering – participating in small increments of time, in particular through the use of technology – has recently attracted increasing attention (Browne *et al.*, 2013). Micro-volunteering is perceived to be a good way to overcome the barriers for some, and has been viewed as offering convenient and flexible volunteering opportunities that fit easily into everyday life. A supposed advantage is that micro-volunteering has the potential to engage a larger number and wider range of young people. Flouch (2010), for example, views micro-volunteering opportunities as a way to reach those outside the ‘civic core’, who are not interested in more formal, structured participation. There is also limited research that shows that micro volunteering might lead to more sustained and long-term volunteering (Bright, 2011).

However, some of the literature questions the quality of online civic engagement by young people. Hampton and Wellman (2003) are cautious about whether the connections people make online are strong enough to truly merit the label of ‘community’. Furthermore, questions have been raised by Coardes and Millar (2000) about whether social networking does in fact lead to enhanced civic engagement, either on or offline. A meta-analysis of research conducted by Boulianne (2009) maintains that use of the Internet has a negative effect on civic participation, since the amount of time spent online detracts from the time available to young people to participate in more meaningful activities offline. Marche (2013, cited in McChesney, 2013:7) agrees and states ‘within this world of instant and absolute communication...we have never been more detached from one another’. For Marche, the Internet undermines traditional notions of social cohesion and citizenship, in that it becomes a hyper-real domain, whereby online activity causes individuals to become detached from reality, their critical conscience and their civic identity. Bauerlein (cited in McChesney, 2013:6) maintains that the young generation of the 21st century are ‘actively cut off’ from the reality of the world, unlike past generations of young people. The emergence and expansion of the Internet can actually make young people ignorant of democratic processes and threaten their prioritisation of citizenship.

Despite the concerns, the literature presented above seems to provide a strong case that the Internet has helped facilitate compassionate behaviour between individuals and groups. However, a key question is whether the Internet has opened up new avenues for young people to be more compassionate and caring, or whether it has simply replaced, or perhaps replicated, offline positive examples of good citizenship. Answering this question will help determine the impact of so called 'cyber-citizenship' on both individuals and societal flourishing.

3.2 Social Networking

The Internet is changing the way that young people interact and relate to others. It is commonplace for young people today to have as many online relationships as they do offline, mostly connecting through social networking websites. Websites such as Facebook, Twitter and, most recently, Google+, enable young people to build relationships with other young people online. Recent research has shown that the use of social Internet applications enhances young people's social connectedness, and that the more young people are online, the more friendships they establish (Peter and Valkenburg, 2006). Many young people use social networking websites to stay in touch with their old friends, but new friendships are also often created in cyberspace (Lenhart and Madden, 2007). Young people often disclose information about themselves online as a way of building more trusting and caring relationships with others, and as in any relationship, reputations are put at risk if young people do not behave well online (Palfrey and Gasser, 2008).

However, although it appears social networking could be developing the quantity of young people's friendships, some authors (Layard and Dunn, 2009) believe it might not be improving their quality. These authors have questioned whether online friendships contain the same care and compassion as offline friendships and although social networking websites are 'an endless source of fascination, they risk encouraging a commoditisation of friendship where what counts is not the depth and quality of friendship but exactly how many friends you can list on your page' (Layard and Dunn,

2009:61-62). Furthermore, such sites encourage the view that value is gained through relationships of exhibition; by detailing and publicising every aspect of an individual's life. Online friendships are based on many of the same aspects as traditional friendships – shared interests, frequent interaction – but they are nevertheless very different in tenor, as they are often fleeting and are very easy to enter and leave (Palfrey and Glasser, 2008:5). Wellman and Hogan (2004:4) notes that 'a pervasive concern has been that the Internet would suck time out of in-person connectivity, fostering alienation and real-world disconnection'.

Sherry Turkle³⁸, Professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, presented perhaps one of the strongest refutations of the view that the Internet – and in particular social networking websites – bring people closer together. Her book 'Alone Together' (2011) contends that the technology actually does the opposite of what it professes and makes people less connected and ultimately, more lonely. Turkle provides evidence that rather than bringing people closer together, online friendships are actually making people feel more alone, and that people are less compassionate to one another. This leads her to the conviction that we are coming to the point where we expect more from technology and less from each other. The Internet offers us companionship without the demands of friendship, as it makes it easier to communicate with each other, than it does to disengage at will. For Turkle, the Internet has brought about a change in relational values, and the way people think about social connections with family and friends.

The literature pertaining to the influence of social networking on virtues associated with friendship, such as compassion and care, is finely balanced. Perhaps more significantly the discussion above has demonstrated just how little is known about the area. Academic arguments are contradictory, some claiming that social networking websites are making

38 Turkles' book 'Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other', she explains how new technologies are affecting young people. The data is drawn from interviews with children and adults about their use of technology and their interpersonal relationships. She has also written a book entitled 'life on screen'(1995) that explains how new technology is affecting how we see ourselves as humans.

us feel closer together, whilst others hold that this is actually leading us to have shallower relationships with more people. Therefore, a key question is: are social networking websites enabling greater connectivity and in doing so, providing a vehicle for enhancing important character virtues, such as compassion; or are they in fact doing the opposite?

3.3 Privacy for Identity Expression

The Internet has afforded young people opportunities to gain privacy to develop their identities. This is seen as having beneficial advantages for young people, enabling them to try out different expressions of their identity, leading to enhanced self-esteem about who they are. Wiszniewski and Coyne (2002) adopt the metaphor of a 'mask' to describe the process by which young people craft their identities online. For example, in some online contexts including forums, chat rooms, online role playing games and social networking websites, and users can represent themselves visually by choosing an avatar (normally as an icon-sized graphic image). They create such avatars as a way of representing themselves in these domains and this is one way users might choose to express their online identities. By putting on a 'mask' when going online, young people can test out different parts of their personality, and adjust the mask based on peer affirmation (or not). Therefore, the online masks are constantly being formulated in dialogue with others, and how they express their character virtues online is a reaction to those they are communicating with

However, although this process might be perceived to be beneficial for the educational and more general development of young people, some authors have suggested that it might also have negative implications for the development of their character virtues. Individuals act differently online than they do in offline settings and many people do not act online according to their moral conscience – since cyberspace makes it easier to be deceptive and dishonest (Whitty and Johnson, 2009). Clough (2002:22) argues that there is a disparity between online anonymity and responsibility, insofar as 'not being anonymous and being known by others is fundamental to being responsible'. The 'attractions of anonymity – both in terms of keeping our identities hidden and of not

knowing the identities of others – is that we believe we can act irresponsibly towards others’. Gardner and Davis (2013) call this the ‘packaged self’, where young people carefully create their profiles on Instagram or Tumblr to boost their online persona. They say that just as a CV is full of highlights, the Facebook page has become a manufactured resume of existence, and it is often narcissistic. To support this claim, the authors found that young people talk about themselves 80% of the time when they make posts on social media.

Even when young people are not taking advantage of the anonymity that the Internet offers, James (2009:31-33) details several potential ethical issues associated with them being able to construct their own identities online. With reference to Goffman (1990), she explains that young people seek to construct their identities in order to create a particular image of themselves.

By using cultural artifacts, they craft their online identities with an eye towards attracting and entertaining an online audience. They omit the parts of themselves that did not fit with their desired performance and augmented the parts that did.

(James, 2009: 31-33)

The Internet, it seems, has provided young people with new tools with which to construct or assume new and potentially harmful or deceitful identities. It has enabled young people to deceive others about their identity as it is harder to establish the credibility of others online, given the absence of visual cues. The situation tempts the young to exaggerate their achievements, motivations and / or competence (James, 2009). Recent research has shown that forty percent of children have made up things about themselves online (Livingstone and Bober, 2004) and that many children lie about their age in order to register on social networking websites (Ofcom, 2008). Even Tapscott (1998:8) an advocate of the Internet, admits that ‘there is considerable deception’ and that ‘N-Geners often inflate their age online’.

Turkle (2011) explains that young people today are tethered to other young people by a non-stop connection through phones and the Internet, and they are constantly encouraged to share information about themselves by updating their online status. This leads to young people having a never ending urge to redefine who they are and what they are doing, and tell everyone about it. Furthermore, they use online connections to gain instant feedback and affirmation from peers who respond to their updates. This has led to a situation where young people have lost the ability to undertake autonomous self-reflection, and are largely reliant on feedback from others, and therefore always looking for ways to present the best of themselves online (Moser, 2007). For James (2009:32) 'a strong desire for positive feedback and praise from others might interfere with a young person's capacity for reflecting in an abstract, disinterested way about the ethical implications of his or her conduct'.

The literature shows that although privacy for identity expression is considered an opportunity for young people, it also seems to be presenting risks for the development of their moral character. The Internet has perhaps occasioned additional temptation for young people to lie about their age or even completely reinvent their online identity, and this poses a question about how truthful individuals feel they need to be online. Therefore a key question is - has the freedom the Internet has brought to those seeking to craft their identities come at the expense of young people acting honestly and in good faith online?

4 Online Risks and Character Virtues

A number of online risks identified in Livingstone's (2009) meta-analysis of the literature pertaining to young people and the Internet have implications for the focus of this thesis. These include; i) illegal activities and especially copyright abuse; ii) misinformation; iii) cyber-bullying; iv) extreme and / or sexual violence, and; v) advertising and stealth

marketing. Each of these risks will now be addressed in turn, with particular reference to the influence they might have on the morality of young people.

4.1 Illegal Activities Especially Copyright Abuse

One issue addressed extensively in the literature is the changing nature of copyright laws, illegal downloading and in particular, online plagiarism. Plagiarism is described by Sutherland Smith (2008:20) using words that signify some sort of immoral intent - lying, cheating, stealing, dishonesty and deception. For that author, it is considered the darkest form of cheating. Mirsky (2000) believes plagiarism is a danger to intellectual liberty and Loveless (1994:10) 'the cardinal sin of academe'. Teachers are warned that Internet plagiarism is on the increase because it costs neither time nor money, insofar as it is easy to cut and paste the ideas and writings of other people into your own document (Laird, 2001:59). In her own review of the literature, Sutherland-Smith (2008:1) found that 'there is little doubt that the Internet has been linked to plagiarism' and 'that plagiarism, as well as cheating, is increasing'. In a study of 34,000 students in the USA and Canada in 2001-2, it was found that there had been a 28% increase in plagiarism (McCabe,2004:6). In another study of 698 students in the USA, 25% of them admitted to online plagiarism (Scanlon and Neumann, 2002).

Another activity that is seemingly on the increase is the illegal downloading of music, films and other content from the Internet. As the Internet brings a false sense of reality, lower chances of detection, less severe punishment for potential miscreants, the ability to adopt a virtual persona, as well as the convenience of downloading, young people's understanding of what is right or wrong in this regard has changed (Freestone and Mitchell, 2004). One study found that crime within I.T. is looked upon in a less serious manner, both from an ethical and a legal perspective, than other crimes committed by young people (Forester and Morrison, 1994). Freestone and Mitchell, (2004: 124) argue that the Internet presents a new context for unethical behaviour as it 'enhances temptation, opportunity, and anonymity and reduces the perceived illegality of unethical behaviours, which is likely to worsen as access increases'.

In summary, the Internet appears to have blurred the lines between what it is to do the right or wrong thing. One issue is that the Internet might have increased the temptation to be dishonest online, as it is much easier to cut and paste text from a website than copy it from a book. Another issue is that it might actually be changing the sense of what is considered honest and dishonest behaviour, as young people come to believe that downloading music for free is actually not illegal as everyone else they know is doing it. In these two examples, the Internet has appeared to facilitate an increase in online dishonest behaviour.

4.2 Misinformation

The ability to create, upload and publish material online without any checks has led to a vast range of information being available freely online. This information is of variable quality and some could be considered as deliberate misinformation. James (2009: 66) states that 'the relative absence of accountability structures permits deception' and that young people do not always have the maturity to determine the quality and truthfulness of the content they find on the Internet. A recent survey of 9 to 19 year olds found that many young people are not able to spot whether information online is trustworthy or not (Livingstone and Bober, 2004). However, another survey found that over half (55.2%) of all users (including adults) believe that most or all of the information available online is reliable and accurate (Digital Users Report, 2010).

The ability of users to create their own content not only means that young people might be duped by untruthful content, but also opens up the possibility of them being dishonest themselves. Defamation is a growing issue, as the Internet has provided a new opportunity for people to publish false or dishonest statements that might cause real upset or damage (Willard, 1997:43). Despite a lack of research that investigates whether people act differently on the Internet, Byron argues that there some studies are beginning to show that the Internet does alter the moral perspective of some individuals. She states:

It is potentially more complex for children and young people who are still trying to establish the social rules of the offline world and lack the critical evaluation skills to either be able to interpret incoming information or make appropriate judgments about how to behave online.

(Byron, 2008:5)

The issue here is that the Internet is largely un-moderated, as is often young people's use of it. This has perhaps led to young people feeling that they can act differently from when they are in face-to-face situations and watched over by peers, parents or other adults such as teachers. It appears that the lack of online guidance and regulation has made it easier for people to be dishonest when on the Internet.

4.3 Cyber-Bullying

Cyber-bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others (Belsey,2005). Shariff (2008), a leading expert in cyber-bullying, states that it is currently at the forefront of educational policy agendas throughout the world as, since the Internet became commonplace, it has been increasingly used by young people to bully others. His meta-analysis of the literature on cyber-bullying reports that both victims and bullies experience greater psychosomatic problems, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and poor overall mental and physical health than those not involved with bullying.

Layard and Dunn (2009:45) argue that cyber-bullying is a 'new form of harassment' that can be nastier than normal bullying as the bully remains anonymous, and it takes place in the public domain. The authors argue that a bully can now spread malicious stories about or pictures of someone through mobile phones or the Internet without being easily identified. Another difference is that the Internet is open to a possibly infinite audience. Campbell (2005) notes that potentially more young people are likely to bully online as

bullies do not actually see the painful impact on their targets and the real harm that they do. He also believes that communications online have restricted sensory input as interactions lack the usual social cues of facial expression and voice intonation. Byron (2008) believes that many people bully online as the Internet suppresses these visual clues that help individuals moderate their interactions with others.

There is a great deal of research both in Britain and internationally that shows the extent of this problem. For example, Livingstone (2007) found that 20% of young people across Europe have experienced online bullying or hostility, and 10% have been sent hostile messages. A survey by Pardeon and Pijpers (2006) found that half of Dutch teenagers had been asked to undress on a webcam. A study by Noret and Rivers (2006) carried out over four years found that 7% of 11-15 year olds say they have received nasty or threatening messages once in a whilst, and that the situation was getting worse over time.

There is perhaps more literature on cyber-bullying than any of the other themes discussed in this chapter. Only a small amount of it is discussed in this section as it is dealt with more extensively in later chapters. Suffice it to say, at this point cyber-bullying appears, from the significant number of studies into it, to be an issue that has clear implications for the present study into character virtues and, in particular, how young people display acts of uncompassionate behaviour online.

4.4 Extreme and /or Sexual Violence

A significant proportion of the literature pertaining to the Internet and young people focuses on the theme of pornography and / or extreme sexual violence. There is concern expressed that the increasing ease of access to this material influences the morality of young people, and in particular, their sense of compassion and care for others. Michele *et al.* (2005) found that self-identified seekers of pornography, both online and offline, are significantly more likely to be male, with only 5% of seekers being female, and that the vast majority (87%) of young people who report looking for sexual images online are 14

years of age or older. According to Byron (2008) 57% of British 9-19 year olds have come into contact with online pornography, with 36% of them stumbling across it, and 25% receiving it through unsolicited emails. These figures are similar to those found elsewhere in Europe (Livingstone, 2007) where data from 300 research projects in 21 European countries on Internet use and children found that, on average, 30-40% of young people in these countries have viewed online pornography.

Byron (2008:51) explains that 'there is a growing body of evidence on the effects of sexually explicit material on attitudes, values and beliefs'. For example a survey of 2000 11-25 year olds carried out by Young Minds³⁹, found that a third of the participants had watched sexually explicit material on a mobile device. The report also found that many people who watch porn think it has a 'damaging effect' on their relationship with others. Peter and Valkenburg (2006) found correlations between exposure to sexually explicit online content and attitudes towards sex, such as respect for women, and understanding of sex as related to love and compassion for others. Further, a study of 458 young adolescents showed that whilst girls were less accepting of sexual harassment than boys, exposure to music videos reduced their resistance. For both the male and female participants in the study, frequent TV viewing and exposure to pornographic material led to a greater acceptance of sexual harassment⁴⁰. A linked concern is the portrayal of woman in video games popular with young people and often accessed over the Internet⁴¹.

A study by Mitchell *et al.* (2005) found that twenty five percent of young people had unwanted exposure to sexual pictures on the Internet in the past year. The study also found that whilst the majority had no negative reactions to the unwanted exposure, a quarter did say that it made them very, or extremely upset. The Bailey Review (Bailey, 2011) found that nearly nine out of ten parents they surveyed agreed with the statement

³⁹ See www.youngminds.org.uk/news/blog/1854_safer_internet_day_porn_affecting_11-year-olds

⁴⁰ See UK Children Go Online, Economic and Social Research Council (2005)
http://www.citizenonline.org.uk/site/media/documents/1521_UKCGO-final-report.pdf

⁴¹ See www.vodafone.com/content/parents/expert-views/how_are_young_people_affected_by_sexual_images_in_the_media.html

that ‘these days children are under pressure to grow up too quickly’. The review found that young people are pressured into taking part in a sexualised life before they are ready to do so, and that this is largely due to the Internet.

The link between increased possibilities for young people to access sexual and / or violent content online, and the development of character virtues is vastly under explored. However, even slim evidence does suggest that there is a risk that exposure to such content is changing the way young people think about their relationships with people of the opposite sex and their display of key moral virtues such as love.

4.5 Advertising and Stealth Marketing

The Internet is an established platform for advertising and is increasingly being used to display adverts specifically geared towards young people, and these may have an adverse effect on their character virtues. Layard and Dunn (2009) argue that opportunities for increased commercialism have been created by new technologies such as the Internet. Internet advertising and consumerism is the sole theme of the ‘Fair Game’ report (Fielder *et al*, 2007). Its authors argue:

One of the concerns about the Internet in recent years has been the increase in commercialisation and children’s vulnerability to persuasion or exploitation. One important question is how young people filter genuine content from advertising. The borderless nature of the Internet means that rules and regulations that exist are more diffuse and difficult to enforce, whilst exposure to advertising online can be prolonged, interactive, engaging and exciting.

(Fielder
et al., 2007:2)

The ‘Fair Game’ report (Fielder *et al*, 2007) found that a quarter of the seventy advertisements the study examined were for products or services that are illegal for under 16s in the UK, such as gambling sites, credit card sites and sites with sexual

content. The report found that 25% of the adverts in their study could be considered unsuitable for young people. It also found that nearly all sites (95 per cent) had some sort of commercial activity on them, from various forms of marketing and paid-for advertising to the sale of goods and services. Across the forty sites they looked at, even by searching just two pages (the homepage and one other), they encountered 211 marketing messages. These findings are particularly worrying given the fact that another study by Eastin, Greenberg and Hofschire (2006) found that children tend to believe content on sites that include advertising. The 'Fair Game' report (Fielder *et al*, 2007:2) shows that Internet advertising can also be particularly harmful as 'hidden persuasion techniques are employed, in the form of advertisements and commercial messages that cannot be easily identified by children'.

The concern raised by the Fielder (2007) report is that the Internet is making young people more greedy, selfish and focused only on themselves: although the evidence base to support such a claim is still quite insubstantial and further research is required. The report does, however, raise questions about the impact of the Internet on young people's ability to delay gratification and their capacity to exercise the virtue of self-control.

5 Interpretation and Discussion of the Literature Review

The literature review would appear to reveal that there is a body of existing knowledge that provides a useful basis for this thesis to build upon. However, the review also reveals that much current literature focuses on the cultural, economic, social and psychological impact of the Internet on young people, and less so on its potential moral impact. Furthermore, the literature that does address the moral impact is often polarised and, at times, polemic. It would be difficult to make any strong assertions about the influence of the Internet on character virtues from this body of literature alone. However, what seems to be clear is that the Internet appears to influence young people's character virtues in complex ways, which are both positive and negative.

As it stands, these polemical and polarised perspectives of the literature, make it difficult to find a firm foundation on which this thesis might build. The following discussion attempts to bring some order to the literature, with reference to the main research question that this thesis sets out to answer. This discussion will be based on one interpretation of the literature and will attempt to draw together the most pertinent themes for the foundation of the empirical research, which follows this chapter. It will be argued below that there are strong grounds for the adoption of a virtue ethics theoretical framework for an investigation of the influence of the Internet on young people.

Although there seems to be an absence of literature on the major issues relating to the Internet and young people within a virtue ethical framework, the moral issues recently identified and discussed in the literature review, might be related directly to the Aristotelian notions of *arête*, *eudaimonia* and *phronesis*. In order to demonstrate how a virtue ethics framework might bring some much needed order to the literature, each of these notions will be considered in turn, starting with *arête*.

Arête

Arête, for Aristotle, means excellence or virtue. Many of the risks and opportunities of using the Internet, as discovered in the literature review, have implications for the development of moral virtues in young people. The table below summarises the principle themes addressed in the literature review and demonstrates how each might be linked to different character virtues and vices.

Table 4: Online Opportunities And Risks And Associations With Character Virtues And Vices

Online Opportunity or Risk	Theme	Character Virtue	Character Vice
Opportunities	Cyber-Citizenship	Compassion,	

		Benevolence, Caring, Charity, Integrity, Selflessness, Service, Altruism	
	Social Networking	Compassion, Caring, Integrity, Discretion, Empathy, Humility, Love, Respect, Loyalty	Vanity, Jealousy, Envy, Arrogance, Disloyalty
	Privacy for Identity Development	Integrity, Honesty, Humility, Modesty, Sincerity, Temperance	Vanity, Jealousy, Envy, Arrogance
Risks	Illegal Activities Especially Copyright Abuse	Honesty, Trust, Integrity, Sincerity	Dishonesty
	Misinformation	Honesty, Trust, Integrity, Sincerity	Dishonesty
	Cyber-bullying	Compassion, Respect, Caring	Anger, Injustice, Recklessness, Wrath
	Extreme and / or Sexual Violence	Compassion, Caring, Love, Temperance, Respect	Wrath, Lust
	Advertising and Stealth Marketing	Contentment, Humility, Patience, Prudence, Temperance	Impatience, Greed

It is clear from the table that there are strong grounds for considering the moral issues thrown up by the Internet, in relation to the development of particular virtues. In addition, there appears to be some evidence that the Internet is influencing the character

of the young people who use it, although it requires further research. So although there appears to be a link between the Internet practices of young people and their character, what is unclear is how exactly these interplay with each other. Further research is required to discover whether the Internet influences character virtues predominantly positively or negatively, as well as which virtues are most likely to be influenced.

It is also clear from the table that the virtues of honesty and compassion appear to be the most likely to be influenced by the Internet. It is for this reason that the subsequent empirical research will have a particular focus on these two virtues. It will be demonstrated later in the thesis (page 94) that these virtues also serve well as meta virtues for several others. For the purposes of this thesis the following broad definitions for these two virtues, adopted from the Framework for Character Education (Jubilee Centre, 2013), will be used

Compassion	Exhibiting Care and Concern for others
Honesty	Being truthful and sincere

Eudaimonia

As already discussed, the Internet appears to have the potential to influence a young person's character, but it might also be having a wider influence on societal flourishing. The literature review has highlighted a number of risks presented by the Internet for young people, and these combined are likely to having a negative effect on human flourishing. Cyber-bullying, misinformation, extreme and / or sexual violence, and illegal activities, such as piracy, are all potentially harmful to a collective sense of trust, honesty, compassion and other virtues that enable humans and societies to function and flourish. However, it is not solely the risks identified in the review that might have such negative consequences. For example, although social networking is presented as an opportunity, it has also been argued that it changes the sense of what it means to be a 'friend', which has a knock-on effect on how humans function and grow together. Rather than seemingly strengthening relationships, the Internet might actually be pulling people and

communities apart. On the other hand, advocates of the Internet argue that online activities, such as cyber-citizenship, actually bring people closer together and promote a greater sense of wellbeing and happiness in society. Furthermore, rather than individuals simply contributing face-to-face to local flourishing, they can participate directly and effectively with other geographically remote communities. The fact that much Internet transcends normal time / space barriers might mean it contributes to a larger sense of global flourishing. The Internet appears to promote human inter-relatedness unlike any other previous technology. Further research is therefore required to address these questions and enable a better understanding of whether the Internet enhances or diminishes human flourishing.

Phronesis

The review suggests that the Internet has potential to: influence a number of different moral virtues; and have both a positive or negative effect on human flourishing. One factor that might determine whether the Internet is having a positive or negative effect on individuals and societies is *phronesis*, or practical wisdom. It is young people, as moral agents, who make the decision about how they choose to use the Internet. Using their developing practical wisdom enables young people to become better Internet users and determines the best way for them to use the technology. For example, a young person needs practical wisdom to decide whether he or she is going to use a social networking website to create and strengthen friendships, or to bully and hurt people. Likewise, practical wisdom may help a young Internet user decide if he or she is plagiarising someone else's work, or if he or she is referencing it properly. Therefore, as the role of the virtuous agent is prioritised in what makes a young person a 'good' Internet user, it is important to avoid being technologically deterministic.

6 Summary

The review of the literature has indicated the extent to which the Internet has been studied in recent years. A growing body of literature has sought to understand how and why young people use the Internet, and in what ways it influences them. It has shown

that the debates surrounding its influence are polarised, and that the Internet brings both opportunities and risks for young people. The literature mostly concerns itself with the cultural, economic, social and psychological impact of the Internet. In contrast, there is a relative absence of literature that considers its moral impact. Clough (2002:3) argued that the 'Internet is young, which should make us shy of precise ethical judgments regarding its legitimacy or use'. To date, this seems to have been largely the case. However, now that the Internet is fully established and almost universally used by young people in Britain, it is time to start asking such questions and to discover how it is influencing the moral character of young people in England today?

The literature review has provided a useful foundation for the empirical study to follow, and has also provided a rich source of guidance about how best to carry out the current research. Most importantly, it has demonstrated that there is a need to undertake focused and evidence-based research into the influence of the Internet on young people's character virtues. A discussion about appropriate methodology and research design will be addressed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR:

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology and research design to be adopted by the thesis. It explains how the methodology will allow new knowledge to be generated, which in turn will enable a better understanding of the influence the Internet has on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England. Initially, the methodology is discussed, along with the particular challenges associated with conducting research into character virtues. A mixed-method survey design is selected as the chosen method. The methodology rejects any tension between the positivist and interpretivist paradigms and explains that the study will be based on a pragmatic approach that rationalises multi-methods research design (Lincoln and Guba, 2000; Cresswell, 2009; Robson, 2011). The empirical study involves an in-depth and systematic survey undertaken in two sequential phases. The chapter describes phase one, including the design and construction of a questionnaire, chiefly aimed at providing a statistical exploration of the key issues identified in the literature review, and phase two, the design of a semi-structured group interview schedule, designed to provide additional qualitative data on cyber-bullying (a theme that was identified as significant in the questionnaire findings). The two survey methods; questionnaires and group interviews, enable the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data and combined, they allow for a powerful analysis of the chosen topic to be undertaken. The chapter closes with a discussion about the reliability and validity of the research, as well as acknowledgment of its possible limitations. The ethical considerations of the research are also resolved at this stage.

2 Methodological Decisions

In order to conduct valid research into the influence of the Internet on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds, a suitable research methodology needs to be identified. The

section below describes both the steps to be taken in order to carry out the research, as well as the logic behind them.

It was established in the previous chapter that there has been a dearth of empirical research in the field covered by this thesis. There has been research targeted at particular moral problems, such as cyber bullying and plagiarism – but none to date has undertaken research with a particular focus on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England. It is for this reason that the present research is exploratory in nature. The ambitions of the research are to ‘map the field’ and provide the foundations for further studies that might follow. Surveys are considered a good method for exploratory research (Marshall and Rossman, 1995; Yin, 1994) as well as being a data collection tool that efficiently enables an understanding of how research participants view their own behaviour, feelings, attitudes, and personality constructs. They can also be used to gather data from a large sample in a time-efficient manner (Robson, 2011). Surveys are also the most dominant method employed for research in the field of character and virtue (Kristjánsson, 2015 forthcoming). However, researchers tend to have strong, frequently polarised views about the place and importance of surveys, as the trustworthiness of the data depends to a considerable extent on the technical proficiency of those running the survey. Although surveys are often considered an easy way to gather a great deal of useful data, there are often limitations with this method when it comes to what generalisations can be drawn from them. As Denscombe (2004: 144):

There is no golden formula which, if slavishly adhered to, will ensure success and fend off all potential criticisms. Almost inevitably, the researcher will need to apply discretion, make trade-offs and exercise judgement when producing and implementing a survey.

Before describing how a survey-based research design will enable a thorough investigation of the influence of the Internet on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds, the viability of surveys for this purpose will be discussed. In particular, the following

section describes, with reference to the relevant literature, some of the 'trade-offs' that were made in selecting surveys as the method to be employed in the research.

Experimental trials are considered the gold standard of research in social sciences, and are used by researchers interested in determining the *impact* of a variable or phenomenon. There are different types of experiments, including most notably randomised control trials (RCTs). Medicine, in particular, has a strong history of conducting RCTs to assess the effectiveness of treatments, particularly drugs. Rigorous methods have been developed by the CONSORT (Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials) group (Moher *et al.*, 2010) and all medicines have to undergo three phases of clinical trials to be licensed in the UK (MHRA, 2008). Although RCTs are less common in the social sciences, some attempts have been made to apply CONSORT guidelines to social scientific experimental trials. There have also been attempts to apply RCTs in the field of character and virtues research. For instance, the My Character (Arthur, Harrison, Kristjánsson *et al.*, 2014) programme undertook a feasibility RCT to assess the effectiveness of a new character education intervention, designed to enhance the character virtues of future mindedness. It applied the standard design of RCTs to assess the performance of those who participated in the programme. The feasibility report provided evidence that although it is possible to run RCTs in education, a particular challenge was the creation of suitable outcome measures that reliably measure character virtues. For example, in this trial, a bespoke questionnaire was created to measure eight character virtues, and although it demonstrated several positive aspects, it was deemed that significantly more developmental work was required to create a validated measure.

Although issues with developing suitable outcome measures presents a major challenge for experimental research into character virtues, perhaps a more pressing problem is the logistical challenges associated with running them. Oakley (2006:64) states that RCTs are 'ethical and useful' but this can only be true if they work in practice. Although it might be feasible to develop outcome measures for a trial, to assess the impact of the Internet on 11 to 14 year olds, it is the practical issues that make adopting such a research method in

this thesis almost impossible. Primary amongst the logistical concerns is that most experiments normally require a control group. As has been discussed in chapter one, the Internet is used in England by almost all 11 to 14 year olds, and therefore it would be very difficult to find a group of 11 to 14 year olds in England who have not, at some point, used the Internet and could act as a control group. Within the confines of this thesis, it is not possible therefore, to test the *impact* of the Internet on character virtues, and the research must instead settle for exploring, through the use of a survey, its *influence*.

2.1 Methods of Measuring Character

Kristjánsson (2015, forthcoming) calls the measurement of character, the ‘profoundest problem’. This is because measuring virtue in people in general and in young moral learners in particular, is fraught with difficulties. Kristjánsson argues that no tried-and-tested instruments to operationalise and measure moral virtue – on a naturalist-realist conception – seem to exist, and that more research is needed to develop credible measures of character that are reliable and have predictive (likely to predict later measures) and concurrent (relates well to other similar measures) validity. The biggest challenge to validity, Kristjánsson observes, is the over-reliance on seemingly subjective self-reports. Many surveys rely on participants self-reporting their behaviour and the concern is that self-reports do not always generate reliable data (Spector, 1994). This is particularly the case when participants are asked to self-report on their own character. However, due to reasons of social desirability and / or self-delusion, they are unlikely to provide an objective account of virtue (Walker, 2014).

The biggest and best known survey currently in the character virtues field is the *Values in Action* (VIA) questionnaire, developed by Martin Seligman and Chris Peterson, at the University of Pennsylvania (Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Park and Peterson, 2006). The VIA survey contains 240 questions that report to measure 24 character strengths. Individuals can complete the survey online and are asked to answer questions about themselves, as objectively as they can. The VIA classification is claimed to be well tried and tested and is ‘grounded in a long philosophical tradition’ (Peterson and Seligman,

2004:9) going back to Aristotle. Honing in on six broad categories of virtue (which 24 character strengths link to), the VIA claims to provide a holistic self-assessment of an individual's virtue strengths and weaknesses. However, despite the fact the survey is widely used across the world, its validity has been challenged on a number of grounds. The most persistent criticism is that the results are unlikely to be objective, as responses might be considered biased due to the likelihood of respondents being either self-depreciating or exaggerating their own virtuous character, due to social desirability (Walker, 2014; Kristjánsson, 2015 forthcoming). Research has documented the occurrence of this bias in particular, for self-report measures of personality traits (Crowne and Marlowe, 1960), attitudes (Arkin and Lake, 1983), and behaviours (Goode and Hatt, 1952). For example, a young person completing the survey in school might over-exaggerate their virtuous character in order to conform to a social norm, or indeed their teacher's expectations. Other surveys, such as the School Virtue Measure⁴² suffer from the same self-reporting concerns, and despite evidence to show that some of the shortcomings of self-reports may cancel themselves out over large samples (Bok, 2010: 36-42) they have attracted some degree of criticism, particularly when they have been used in isolation.

Alternatives to self-report surveys, such as dilemmas, were explored from the outset for use in the present research. Although dilemmas have been popular in research into moral behaviour since the days of Kohlberg (1972), they have recently been gaining increasing recognition. Perhaps the best known is the Intermediary Concept Measure (ICM) for adolescents, developed by Steve Thoma at the University of Alabama (Thoma, 2006; Thoma *et al.*, 2013). The measure utilises seven moral dilemmas about social issues, in which participants must rate options for the protagonists' actions and reasons for acting. The measure is targeted at moral judgement and is intended to activate intermediate moral schemas. Other examples of dilemmas tests include the Moral Judgment Test (Lind, 2005) and the Situational Judgement Test (STJs) (Kotzee and Cooke, 2014), which tests professionals' likely performance on representative tasks. STJs are

⁴² The SVM is a measure in development by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues.

increasingly being used as selection and training tools, especially in medical education (Patterson and Ashworth, 2011). There have been several advantages associated with the use of dilemmas in moral research that has made them increasingly popular; these include the level of detail and range of choice options based on real dilemmas, which are more likely to make them reflective of life. Furthermore, dilemma tests are reported to be more objective than self-reports as they provide some critical distance.

However there have been challenges to the use of dilemmas as measures of character; chief of which is that moral reasoning does not necessarily equate to moral action. Evidence that demonstrates a link between responses to dilemmas and predictions of actual behaviour is weak, although Thoma (2014) does present some evidence of correlations between dilemma responses and behaviour in his work. However, it is not challenges to validity alone that concern researchers interested in utilising dilemmas in their studies – the practical challenges also make them a demanding research method. For example, the ICM has evolved from started by James Rest in the early 1970s. Rest initially developed the Defining Issue Test (DIT) and his colleagues, Narvaez *et al.* (1999) continued to develop and refine the test to its present form. Despite its long history of development, and its use by thousands of respondents, its construct validity and psychometric properties are still questioned. As there are currently no ‘off the shelf’ dilemmas in the field relating to the Internet and character virtues, developing a validated set of dilemmas from scratch would present a lone researcher a considerable challenge. To do so would involve a considerable amount of development, testing, analysis and re-testing. It is for this reason that they are considered to be beyond the limits of the research to be conducted in this thesis.

Observation based research methods might also have lessened an over-reliance on self-reporting. Some successful attempts to measure virtue through observation have been recorded (Fallona’s, 2000). However, there are also seemingly insurmountable practical issues with observation as a method. Observation is known to be a labour-and-time consuming method and sometimes difficult to administer (Robson, 2011). However, for

this particular study, the real concern is that many young people use the Internet privately, which makes observation of its use particularly difficult. Other methods, such as implicit testing and biological research are also being considered as more objective measures for research into virtue, but they are either too under developed, ambitious or expensive to be considered a viable method for the present research. Therefore, for the reasons outlined above, surveys have been selected as the method of data collection tool, and the following section considers what actions might be taken to strengthen the method in the hope of increasing its validity.

2.2 Mixed Method Research

An approach to strengthening character based self-report surveys, which is increasingly being documented, is the use of mixed or multiple methods; it allows for triangulation. When used in combination, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for a more in-depth analysis (Greene, Caracelli, and Graham, 1989; Tashakkori and Teddie, 1998). The central premise of mixed methods is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provide a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Cresswell and Clark, 2007:5). Mixed method research is particularly beneficial for studies into character, as it often draws on qualitative and quantitative data in combination and is therefore more likely to provide an accurate account when researching the intricacies of character (Arthur *et al.*, 2104; Kristjánsson, 2015 forthcoming; Alexander, 2014). For example, the research in to the *My Character* educational programme (Arthur and Harrison *et al.*, 2014) recommended combining experimental data with focus group data to enable a more sophisticated evaluation of how the programme enhanced character development. The SVM triangulated data drawn from various participants, including parents, teachers and students, as well as from various methods – self-report surveys and dilemmas. When it comes to research into character, there seems to be particular advantages with combining qualitative and quantitative data; whilst quantitative data might show factors such as size and quality, qualitative data might help assess the quality, worth or merit of something or someone, by giving a judgment against a normative ideal or standard of

excellence. Therefore, taking the example of the present research, the questionnaire might reveal how many people are cyber-bullies and the semi-structured interviews might reveal why these people report to be cyber-bullies. The advice from Alexander (2014) is that all the available research tools should be applied if the richest picture of human character is to be gained from any single piece of research. David Funder's work on personality (Funder, 2012) also demonstrates that character or virtue is best measured using multiple methods. It is for these reasons that a combination of *quantitative* and qualitative survey methods will be employed in the present research with the anticipation that this strategy will mitigate some of the validity issues associated with self-reporting.

A mixed methods design, as described above, is broadly in line with much contemporary social science research. Mixed methods research is described as the use of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques in either parallel or sequential phases (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998:11). Research conducted by Sandelowski, Voils, and Barroso (2006) found little difference between studies presented as qualitative as opposed to quantitative, in terms of their epistemological principles. However, this was not always the case. Traditionally, the two dominant and traditional research paradigms of social science - Positivism and Interpretivism, have often not been perceived as compatible (Coe, 2012). These paradigms have traditionally been associated with particular epistemological assumptions and ontological positions (see Arthur *et al.* 2012). Positivism is a philosophical position, promoted by a nineteenth century French philosopher Auguste Comte (Comte, 1844; Giddens, 1974), who believed that positive methods applicable in the natural sciences were equally applicable in the 'social sciences'. Social scientists who are positivists, approach their studies in a similar way to natural scientists, claiming to have a detachment from the topic under investigation; the pursuit of objectivity and a set of true, precise and wide ranging social laws. There has however been a great deal of debate on the issue of whether or not this positivist paradigm is suitable for the social sciences (see Robson, 2011, Bryman, 1984). Contrary to the positivist claims, interpretivism (see Burr, 2003, Schwandt, 2007) is based on the

argument that there exists 'more than one reality' or an 'everyday reality'. In the social sciences, interpretivism is often linked to the work of Max Weber (1864-1920) who argued that the human sciences should be about understanding rather than explaining. Interpretivists normally work with qualitative data, and believe that findings are discovered by interacting closely with the data, using techniques such as grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Interpretivists argue that the social world is not suitable for pure scientific research, and should be researched in a more nuanced and subtle way. Interpretivist researchers do not pretend to solve the problems of positivist research, but also do not perceive them as constraints.

The 'paradigm conflict' outlined above has been viewed by some as a 'war' between the positivist and interpretivist camps (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). The literature suggests there are two distinct theories; i) that paradigms embody different assumptions, and therefore, require distinct methods and strategies for data collection and analysis; and, (ii) it is appropriate to combine the two paradigms if it serves the purpose of research more accurately (Robson, 2011; Cresswell, 2003). The latter approach relies on what Robson (2011) has termed a post-positivist epistemological position, and a researcher comfortable with undertaking pragmatic research actions. It is this approach that will be followed in the present research. The research design allows for the collection of both qualitative and *quantitative* data, and a combined analysis of both. Therefore, rather than being impeded by this possible tension between the paradigms, this thesis will draw inspiration from both paradigms, and adopt a 'critical pragmatic' (Robson, 2011) methodology, believing this to be a promising ground for an investigation into character virtues. Such a position rejects any traditional epistemological assumption that qualitative research must be purely interpretivist and quantitative data must be purely the realm of positivists. It also dismisses any assumption that the two research views are incompatible. The position accepts that there are differences in qualitative and quantitative approaches, but there is no reason these cannot be combined, and moreover, in doing so, the research is actually strengthened.

Within a mixed methods design, Morse (1994) suggests there are two ways of organising the research. The first he calls simultaneous triangulation, where the researcher answers the research questions at the same time, and the second is called sequential triangulation, which involves the researcher conducting the project in two distinct phases. This thesis will adopt the latter approach, as the results from the first qualitative stage will be used to inform the development and design of the second qualitative phase. Therefore the thesis is characterised by the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The qualitative data function to help explain and interpret the findings of the primarily quantitative study. A description of how each of the methods was developed and applied in the field will be provided in the following section on research design.

3 Research Design

The research design to be employed in this thesis must enable the primary and subsidiary research questions to be answered. Therefore, an investigation largely based on collecting quantitative data is required to explore how and when 11 to 14 year olds use the Internet, as well as a how it broadly might be influencing the character virtues of honesty and compassion. A further investigation, primarily based on collecting qualitative data, is required to explore in more depth what the nature of any influence might be. The rationale for mixing methods is that neither quantitative nor qualitative data alone will be sufficient to capture both the trends and nuances of Internet use by young people.

The subsidiary research questions: i) *to what extent and in what ways is the Internet used by 11 to 14 year olds in England?*; and ii) *what might be the influence of the Internet on two key character virtues; honesty and compassion?* - can be answered through questionnaire data collection and analysis. However, answering subsidiary question iii) *why might the Internet have an influence on character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England?* - demands a different survey approach, namely group interviews. Whereas the questionnaire will collect macro level data pertaining to items such as the use of the

Internet and frequency or occurrence of moral issues such as cyber-bullying, the group interviews will allow for a micro level investigation of a particular moral issue, which in turn will enable a closer examination of why the Internet might be influencing the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds.

The research was conducted in two phases. Phase one involved the construction and administration of a multi-part questionnaire, designed to collect predominantly quantitative data, and phase two was group interviews focused on a particular theme identified after analysis of the interview data. In the concluding chapter of the thesis, the data collected from the questionnaire and group interviews was amalgamated and subjected to combined analysis. An overview of these two phases is contained in table 5 below.

Table 5: Phases Of The Research

Phase	Data collection Tool	Position	Orientation	Participants	Dominant paradigm
Phase One	Questionnaire	Dominant	Deductive	1314 11 to 14 year olds	Quantitative
Phase two	Group Interviews	Secondary	Deductive	60 11 to 14 year olds	Qualitative

The two sequential phases meant that the research was: i) 'complementarily' as the methods will measure overlapping but different facts; ii) 'initiation' as they allowed the discovery of contradictions as well as new perspectives, and (iii) 'expansive' as it helped to extend the breadth and range of the inquiry (Sale, Lohfeld, and Brazil, 2002). Before explaining how the fieldwork was organised and research instruments developed, it is important to acknowledge that there are potential difficulties for a researcher, particularly one working alone, using a mixed-method approach. One issue is the potential complexity that the methodology brings to the study, as it is necessary for the

researcher to possess greater skills, at both the development and data collection and analysis stages, and a requirement for them to develop knowledge and expertise in different analysis strategies. Another weakness is a requirement to ensure the strategies are properly integrated, and that one is not simply bolted onto the other. It is therefore important to plan and organise the fieldwork systematically before embarking on any data collection.

3.1 Organisation of the Fieldwork

As depicted in Table 6 below, implementation of the research in the field started with gaining ethical approval in October 2011. Once approval was granted, a pre-pilot and pilot of the questionnaire were undertaken in two schools in November 2011. Distribution of the questionnaire spread over a period of three months, between January and March 2012. The second phase of the fieldwork; the group interviews, started in May 2013 after the questionnaire results had been subjected to an initial period of analysis. The group interviews were completed in December 2013 and subsequently analysed.

Table 6: Organisation Of The Fieldwork

Activity	Sub-Stage	Timeline
Development of questionnaire		July 11
Ethical Approval		Oct 11
Pilot	Data collection	Nov 12
	Data analysis	Dec 12
Main questionnaire		Jan - Mar 12
Analysis of questionnaire data		Aug - Jan 13
Re-analysis of the literature in the light of questionnaire findings		Feb - Apr 13
Development of interview		May 13

schedule		
Group interview pilot	Data collection	June 13
	Data analysis	July 13
Group Interviews		Sept - Nov 13
Analysis group interview data		Dec - Feb 14

3.2 The Sample

As the research design involved the use of both qualitative and quantitative data, this raised different concerns regarding the size of sample and sampling procedures. Traditionally, quantitative methods require a randomised and representative sample, so that the results found can be generalised beyond the selected group. In contrast, qualitative procedures put greater emphasis on the quality of access and interaction with the selected research participants in their natural setting. However, as Brewer and Hunter (1989: 117) state: in mixed method studies ‘the conventional dichotomy between probability sampling procedures usually associated with survey research, and the non-probability strategies associated with other research styles needs to be reconsidered’.

It was decided that the participants would be selected through cluster sampling. Robson (2011: 273) explains that cluster sampling is widely used in educational research and when researchers are working with schools. He explains that such an approach ‘can be used when the sampling frame is not known e.g. when we do not have a full list of children in the population’. Cluster sampling is often considered a compromised route forward, but useful when it would be almost impossible, given the scale and scope of the study, to achieve a truly random sample. The aim of cluster sampling is to choose a mixture of schools that represent the wider school population as much as possible. Therefore, the present research sites were selected based on the premise that they housed a diverse set of participants within the 11 to 14 age bracket, in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion and rural and urban settings. Table 7 below provides details of the six schools involved in the questionnaire (see Appendix 3 for a description of the schools).

Table 7: Questionnaire Research Sites

School	No. of pupils on roll	Age	Type M /F	Setting	% free school meals	Ethnicity of pupils	5 or more A*-C Grades at GCSE (incl. Maths and English) (2012)
School A	932	11-16	Mixed	Urban	Higher than national average	Mainly from minority ethnic backgrounds	77%
School B	1375	11-18	Mixed	Semi-Rural	Well below national average	Mainly white British heritage	96%
School C	1667	11-18	Mixed	Semi-Rural	Higher than national average	Mainly white British heritage	65%
School D	597	11-16	Mixed	Urban	Higher than national average	Mainly from minority ethnic backgrounds	71%
School E	944	11-16	Mixed	Urban	Average	Mainly white British heritage	62%
School F	1350	11-19	Mixed	Rural	Higher than national average	Mainly white British heritage	60%

None of the schools that took part in the survey were selected as research sites for the group interviews. This ensured that a broader population could be surveyed. The schools were selected based on the same sampling criteria outline above. Key indicators

for the selection of schools included: location (urban / rural); socio-economic indicators (by deprivation and free school meal data); and diversity. Table 8 below shows the schools selected as locations for the group interviews (see Appendix 8 for a description of the schools).

Table 8: Group Interview Research Sites

School	No. of pupils on roll	Age	Type M/F	Setting	% free school meals	Ethnicity of pupils	5 or more A*-C Grades at GCSE (in Maths & English) (2013)
School G	1074	11-18	Mixed	Urban	17.5%	94% White-British heritage Remainder: minority ethnic groups	64%
School H	1195	4-19	Mixed	Urban	29.2%	Proportion of ethnic minority groups is higher than national average.	46%
School I	1607	11-18	Mixed	Urban	10%	Majority White-British heritage; remainder being from ethnic backgrounds, mostly polish	78%
School J	482	9-13	Mixed	Urban	21.5%	Most pupils White-British heritage.	n/a
School K	179	11-19	Mixed	Urban	12.3%	Not Known	n/a
School L	1922	11-	Mixed	Urban	26%	Proportion from	71%

		18				minority ethnic backgrounds: quarter of the national figure	
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The suggested optimum number of participants for a group interview varies across the literature; however, 5-6 participants are generally seen as ideal. A group of this size is considered small enough to be controllable, whilst large enough to offer a genuine group dynamic (Krueger, 1994). The lead teachers in each school were asked to select a representative sample of young people to take part on the interviews. However, there are likely to be some limitations of this method due to availability of students at the time of the interviews, their willingness to take part, and also whether permission to take part had been provided by their parents. Therefore when considering the composition of the interview groups, it must be conceded that it is unlikely that a representative sample was gained in all of them. In addition, as the participants were selected by the schools themselves, there is a chance that more articulate participants, and/or those of higher academic aptitude were selected to 'represent' their school.

The sampling outlined above means that the participants in this research cannot be considered a probability sample. However, although the selected group cannot be said to be representative of all 11 to 14 year olds living in England, they still provide a useful sample to capture the attitudes of a selected group who use the Internet. The choice of sampling means that the data drawn from the survey cannot be assuredly generalised to the whole population. The results therefore need to be treated with caution, especially when attempting to draw more generalised conclusions from them.

4 Research Instruments

The instruments used for data collection were the 'Internet and Young People' questionnaire (Appendix 1) and a semi structured interview schedule (Appendix 10). In the following section, the process of developing these instruments, as well as the salient features of each, is described.

4.1 The Internet and Young People Questionnaire

Questionnaires are a popular method in social science research. They enable the collection of data in an efficient manner, given constraints such as time, access and costs. One of the method's major strengths is that it allows for a large number of factors and variables to be assessed in a short period of time. Questionnaires are also widely considered to be 'young people friendly' and a good method of collecting data from children (Heath *et al.*, 2009; Gallagher, 2009). These are the reasons why questionnaires have been chosen as the preferred method for the first phase of the empirical research being conducted within this thesis.

A cross-sectional questionnaire design was chosen as the most suitable for the present investigation. Cross-sectional studies are useful for researchers, who want to look at a particular state of affairs at one particular time. Collecting data from a specific age group at one point in time allows inferences to be made about change or development, through comparisons and correlations of the data. Questionnaires can also be interviewer-administrated or self-completed. The advantage of interviewer administered is that there is scope for more checking of whether participants understand the questions, but this is offset by the fact they are often harder to administer and take longer to do so. In the interests of efficiency, and in order to maximise the return rate, a self-completion questionnaire hosted on an online survey facility (www.surveymonkey.com) was chosen as the preferred method. Heath *et al.* (2009:3) also explain that 'whilst tried and tested methods such as interviews and surveys remain widely used there is also a much great willingness amongst youth researchers to daw on

more diverse repertoire of methods of data collection'. These include the use of new technology, and web surveys, which appeal to young people.

Gallagher (2009:73) argues that questionnaires are generally accepted to be a good tool to use when researching young people. The main advantages are that they can be useful for obtaining the views of children who would not have the confidence to speak in an interview or focus group; young people are more likely to be familiar with the format and if they are administered through school it is possible to get very high response rate. However, there are also some disadvantages, including that young people may perceive them as a piece of school work, and therefore perceive them as negative, as a boring exercise or as an intrusion into their private life. Gaining voluntary consent can be problematic; and, self-completed questionnaires maybe difficult to complete for children with low literacy levels (Gallagher, 2009).

4.1.1 Constructing of the Questionnaire

The following section describes how the questionnaire was developed. The aim of the questionnaire was to collect quantitative data to answer the following two overarching research questions (as detailed in chapter 1).

RQ 1: To what extent and in what ways is the Internet used by 11 to 14 year olds in England?

RQ2: What might be the influence of the Internet on two key character virtues; honesty and compassion?

In order to enable a more in-depth understanding of RQ2, four secondary research questions (SRQs) were constructed to inform the development of the questionnaire, as well as provide a framework for its analysis.

SRQ 1: How do 11 to 14 year olds in England report their actions and attitudes relating to the virtue of **compassion** on the **Internet**?

SRQ 2: How do 11 to 14 year olds in England report their actions and attitudes relating to the virtue of **compassion** on **Facebook**?

SRQ 3: How do 11 to 14 year olds in England report their actions and attitudes relating to the virtue of **honesty** on the **Internet**?

SRQ 4: How do 11 to 14 year olds in England report their actions and attitudes relating to the virtue of **honesty** on **Facebook**?

In addition, demographic data about the participants were collected, which enabled one further secondary research question to be formulated.

SRQ 5: Is there a relationship between gender, religion and socio-economic status and the influence of the Internet on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England?

The success of a questionnaire largely depends on the quality of the questions it contains. Finkelhor (2006) states that achieving a high level of validity in research with children, regarding their online activities requires mutual understanding and shared definitions of the terms used in the questions. He states that this can be particularly confusing for research into the Internet due to the number of terms associated. As recommended by Finkelhor, all the questions were checked during the pre-pilot and pilot stages (see Appendix 2 for changes made to questions after the pilots). Punch (2003) believes that a good way to start forming questions is to consider the research topic, as this should act as a 'map' for the questionnaire. Based on this advice, the questions were divided into the four sections, as described below.

Section 1 contained questions regarding the demographic details of the respondents. In total, there were 9 questions, including requesting details of the participant's gender, age, ethnicity and religion. Other questions about their mother and father's university attendance and number of books in the home were included in the expectation that they would inform the socio-economic status of those completing the survey

(Abramson , Gofin , Habib *et al.*,1982; Looker, 1989) It was decided that this section would be placed at the start of the questionnaire, as it was seen as important that not only the respondents completed it, but also that it would be an 'easy way in' to the survey.

Section 2 contained five questions about the respondent's access to computers and use of the Internet. The aim of these questions was to gain an understanding of how much the Internet is used, along with who, when and where. Both the terms 'computer' and 'laptop' were employed in the questions to ensure there was no ambiguity. The section also contained two questions, aimed at understanding if the respondents use the Internet with their parents' knowledge or blessing. These two questions were taken directly from the Safety Awareness Facts Tools (SAFT) survey (Skakstund, 2006). They were included as it was deemed that young people might participant in different types of activities online if they don't think they are under the watchful eye of their parents.

Section 3 and 4 of the questionnaire contained the core of the questions, designed to gain an increased understanding about the influence of the Internet on young people's character virtues. Section 3 addressed questions about the Internet as a whole, and section 4 was questions specifically about Facebook. The literature review found that the Internet might, in some way, influence up to twenty four character virtues and up to eleven character vices (see table 3 in chapter 3). It was deemed that this would be too many character virtues to be adequately researched in-depth within the confines of the questionnaire. Therefore, in order to reduce the number of questions, and bring some clarity to the area under focus, it was decided that the questionnaire would ask questions relating to the two character virtues of compassion and honesty. These virtues were the ones that were most consistently discussed in the literature (see chapter 3). Drawing on the themes discussed in the literature review, table 9 below shows how compassion and honesty are also two character virtues around which the others might usefully be organised.

Table 9: Prominent Themes In The Literature And Links To Compassion And Honesty

Lead Virtues	Associated virtues	Prominent Themes in the literature
Compassion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring • Charity • Altruism • Benevolence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyber-Citizenship • Social networking among friends • Extreme or sexual violence • Cyber-bullying
Honesty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity • Sincerity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity development • Illegal activities • Misinformation

It is however, important to acknowledge that the character virtues of compassion and honesty that have been selected have close relations to several other character virtues, as displayed in table 9 above. It might be understood that honesty and compassion, for the purposes of this thesis, are the ‘parent’ of several other closely related virtues.

Various means were employed to develop suitable questions for section 3 and 4, including a re-analysis of the themes identified in the literature review and the pilots. Questions about key issues such as cyber-bullying, cyber-citizenship, identity construction, and online plagiarism were included. Some of these questions were included as scales similar to those developed by Rensis Likert (1932). In Likert scaling the respondents are asked to respond to each item by placing their response on a, typically, five point scale. In these scales, the participants are asked to give their opinions, based on how much they agree or disagree with different statements. Some of the themes were also addressed using other forms of direct closed questions. Closed questions are easier to analyse as they can be coded into pre-determined categories, but may leave participants frustrated by not being able to expand on certain answers, or explain why they have answered some questions in a particular way. The questionnaire mainly asks closed questions in the interests of efficiency and expediency, however two open questions were included at the end about what young people like and dislike about the Internet. It was anticipated that these open questions would produce richer answers that give a greater sense of the complexity of views. The open questions were also seen as

being useful for gathering data that would illuminate the quantitative findings. The open questions were placed at the end so that they would not put the participants off completing the other sections.

Throughout its development, the questionnaire was taken through a rigorous process of 'expert review', and 'pilot testing' for the validation and test of reliability. The pre-pilot of the questionnaire took place over lunchtime, with fourteen students from two schools. They answered the questionnaires and then gave their feedback on each question. The students were asked to comment on whether they understood the question, how easy they found it to answer them, and if they had any suggestions for changing the questions. They were also asked to suggest alternative wording for the questions, as well as any additional questions they thought were appropriate. The learning gained from these sessions was used to develop an enhanced and revised questionnaire. The initial pilot showed that the questionnaire was too long and took over 30 minutes to complete. The questionnaire was revised and the overall number of questions was reduced from 56 to 38 by merging overlapping questions, collapsing options into broader ones and simplifying the design of the Likert scale. After the pre-pilot, a second draft of the questionnaire was developed and put forward for pilot.

In all, 35 students from three schools completed the pilot questionnaire. The students were asked to complete a hard copy of the questionnaire on their own and in similar conditions to how the actual questionnaire would be completed. The students recorded how long it took them to complete the questionnaire. The pilot showed that the second draft was both easier to comprehend and quicker to complete, with an average completion time of 20 minutes. For those who did not use Facebook, the average time to complete all the questions was 15 minutes. After completing the questionnaire, the students were provided with an opportunity to give feedback, both verbally and in writing.

After the pilot questionnaires had been completed, an analysis of both the completed questions and feedback was undertaken. Judgements were made on each question as to

whether they should be included in the final questionnaire design, adapted, or left out. These judgements included ensuring that the questions had clarity, were not leading, double-barrelled, hypothetical or too sensitive (Newell, 1993). In addition, the questions were tested to check they were comprehensible, not ambiguous, pitched at the right level and, above all, answerable. As the questionnaire would be completed by 11 to 14 year olds it was also important to consider the level of language, to ensure it was age appropriate. As McNeil (1995, 27) states 'questions must not presume that respondents have more knowledge than in fact they have'. The pilot study helped to determine whether those being studied had the knowledge to answer the question, whether the questions were relevant to them, and whether the participants wished to reveal the information. Finally, the visual appearance of the questionnaire was checked to ensure it was both engaging and user-friendly (see Appendix 2 for more information on decisions taken about changes to the questionnaire after the pilot phases).

The final version of the questionnaire took twenty minutes, on average, to complete. All participants completed the questionnaire online and during school time.

4.2 Group Interviews

Group interviews constituted the second phase of the research design. They provided the possibility of investigating, in-depth, some underlying themes unearthed by the questionnaire. Group interviews, when conducted well, are conversations with the purpose of collecting meaningful and enlightening qualitative data (Rugg and Petre, 2007). They are a popular methodology widely used in social science research. Group interviews normally either use a structured or semi-structured format. Structured interviews follow a pre-ordained set of questions that is universally followed by the interviewer in all of the interviews, and often the questions, and the responses are limited in some way. However, the present research will adopt a semi-structured interview approach, believing it to be the most suitable to meet the research purposes. Such an approach requires the construction of a 'semi-structured interview schedule' that provides a predetermined order of questions. However, during the interviews the order

and wording is modified by the interviewer as the interview progresses. This allows a flexible approach to questioning, enabling the researcher to investigate avenues of interest that may emerge during the interview and expand it to investigate areas not previously conceived of during the planning stage. The aim is for the flexibility to allow a conversation to develop and avenues of investigation about the Internet to emerge freely during the interview. In order to enable a better understanding as to the influence of the Internet on young people, it is important to elicit the experiences of the young people themselves who are at the forefront of the technological advances. However, despite its flexibility, the semi-structured interview also allows the interviewer to maintain some structure to keep the process on track, which also helps with analysing the resulting data.

Semi-structured group interviews have the advantage of being a methodology that is widely used with young people. Heath *et al* (2009, 79) believe that they are 'probably the most widely used research method in youth research'. Focus groups have been described as 'carefully planned discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment' (Kruger, 1994: 6); hence they are considered to be particularly useful tool for research involving children. Unlike individual interviews, group interviews with children remove the emphasis of the adult-child relationship in data collection methods (Heary and Hennessy, 2002) by providing children of similar ages the opportunity to share perceptions and experiences among their peers. Horner (2000: 510) suggests that children 'are more relaxed and willing to share perceptions when discussions are held with a group of peers'. Edger and Fingerson (2003) believe that interviewing young people in groups should be the 'default' option, as such a setting is more 'natural' for younger people – as they are used to getting and giving knowledge through interaction and shared processes. In their research they show that group interviews 'grow directly out of shared process' (2003: 35) and that group settings will lessen the influence of adults and create a less threatening environment to be interviewed in. Edger and Fingerson (2003:36) argue that the interview schedule should be semi-structured. They state: 'in studies of youth it is especially important for interviews to emphasise non directed, open and inclusive questions'. If the questions are

open then young people will have more opportunity to bring in topics and modes of discourse that are familiar to them. Fine and Weiss (1998) suggest that a group interview format is more empowering and emotionally supportive for young people. Borland *et al.* (2001) ran focus groups with young people to ask them what their preferred method of research was. Their research showed that 'small group discussions' were very popular with many young people as the discussions made young people less shy, generated more ideas and were considered fun, quick and convenient.

However, when conducting groups interviews with young people, it is important to be aware of possible 'answer dialogue' (Heath, 2009) where young people are familiar with school protocols and try to answer questions in the 'right' way, as they feel there might be negative consequences if they get things wrong. Fosh *et al.* (2003) state that young people might equate the group interviews to another difficult lesson. It is therefore important for the interviewer to set a tone from the start that encourages young people to feel they can speak freely and honestly. Another potential drawback of group interviews is that they can be heavily influenced by peer pressure, and can over emphasise the voice of particularly powerful individuals. This means that meanings are not shared, but simply represent the view of the strongest individual that others in the groups agree with, not through their beliefs but by their position in a pre-existing power structure.

4.2.2 Constructing the Group Interview Schedule

As discussed previously, this thesis employs a sequential triangulation research design. A particular feature of such a design is that the research is iterative and, as such, each phase builds on the findings of the previous phase. Therefore, it was important to identify an area of particular interest in the questionnaire findings that had scope for further and more in-depth research, and most importantly, would help to answer the research questions. Through this method, it was decided that cyber-bullying would be the theme that the group interviews would focus on.

The main aim of the group interviews was to provide evidence that would answer the third over-arching research question which is: *Why might the Internet have an influence on character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England?* It was decided that a focus on a particular moral problem that had been significant in the questionnaire findings would be the most suitable approach. This micro level investigation would enable a closer examination of how cyber-bullying differs from face-to-face bullying and therefore, what features of the Internet might be having a particular influence on character virtues. Based on this rationale, the group interviews were also designed to answer the following four secondary questions:

SRQ6 How is cyber-bullying conceived and experienced by 11 to 14 year olds in England?

SRQ7: Do 11 to 14 year olds in England perceive cyber-bullying to be more prevalent than face-to-face bullying? If so, why?

SRQ8: Do 11 to 14 year olds in England perceive there to be a difference in the moral motivations of online and offline bullies? If yes, what are they?

SRQ9: Can 11 to 14 year olds in England be educated not to cyber-bully? If so, how?

The research questions were designed to unearth new information about particular aspects of cyber-bullying that could not be answered by the questionnaire. For example, rather than simply finding out how much cyber-bullying is experienced by young people, the interviews sought to understand why it might be occurring. A key concern of the group interviews was to tease out the difference between online and offline forms of bullying, as this would help to show what influence the Internet had had on the issue.

The questions contained in the interview schedule were drawn from the findings from the questionnaire, and in reference to recent and relevant literature on cyber-bullying. Definitional issues about the term 'cyber-bullying' have been found to be a problem for researchers studying the problem, as there is no unified conceptualisation of the term

(Tokunaga, 2010). However, in most recent surveys investigating the issue, the term ‘cyber-bullying’ is used, and therefore it was also used in the present interview schedule. The term was also checked during the pilot phases where it was found that young people had a fairly common understanding of the term. However, as this is a key issue not only for this research but other studies, a discussion of how young people define the term and how this might be problematic for researchers, is included at the start of chapter 8.

A critical review of previous surveys on the subject, as well as consultations held with teachers and academics, also informed the development of the interview schedule. The surveys identified in table 10 were particularly useful as sources for questions.

Table 10: Recent Surveys On Cyber-Bullying

Author	Type	Description	How used for development of interview schedule
Joinson (2012)	Interviews with teachers	An exploratory qualitative study of cyber-bullying from the perspective of teaching professionals.	Framing questions about cyber-bullying concepts and definitions.
Hinduja and Patchin (2008)	Questionnaire with under 18 year olds	An exploratory analysis of factors related to offending and victimisation of cyber-bullies.	Framing questions about features of the Internet that impact on cyber-bullying prevalence – e.g. anonymity
Smith <i>et al.</i> (2008)	Questionnaire with 11-16 year olds	An investigation into cyber bullying, its forms, awareness and	Framing questions about different forms of cyber-bullying and their impact on young people.

		impact, and the relationship between age and gender in cyber bullying.	
Ybarra <i>et al.</i> (2007)	Interviews 10-15 year olds	Examining the overlap in Internet harassment and school bullying: Implications for school intervention.	Framing questions about the similarities and differences between online and offline bullying.
Kowalski, and Limber(2007).	Questionnaire with 6-8 graders	Investigating electronic bullying among middle school students.	Framing questions about concerns about cyber-bullying and also how young people deal with it.

After the pre-piloting and piloting stages, the final interview schedule contained four sections. Section one dealt with how young people conceive and experience cyber-bullying in their everyday lives. The first questions addressed how and when young people use the Internet, before moving to questions relating young people's own conceptualisation of cyber-bullying. These questions aimed to develop an understanding of what young people consider to be cyber-bullying, and how these different expressions of uncompassionate behaviour are experienced by different young people in their daily lives. It was hoped this section of questions would provide context as to the nature and prevalence of cyber-bullying.

The second section of questions considered the difference between face-to-face and online bullying. The section sought to understand if there are particular features of cyber-bully online that make it different to what might be considered as more traditional

forms of bullying. In particular, the questions sought to understand if there was something particular about the technology that made cyber-bullying more prevalent; because of the way young people display character virtues, such as compassion, differently online. Key issues that were addressed included anonymity and absence of visual clues. In particular, this section aimed to discover what might make a young person act differently online and offline, and if this has any implications for how they perceive what is right and wrong.

The third section aimed to develop a greater understanding as to the motivation of cyber-bullies. The questions sought to consider what would motivate someone to cyber-bully, and whether these motivations are different in offline and online bullying situations. In particular, the questioning sought to consider reasons one might or might not choose to cyber-bully, relating to the moral theories addressed in chapter two. These included an assessment of the influence of rules, duties and consequences. The question also sought to consider the place of individual character and virtues as a possible determining factor in cyber-bullying. This section aims to uncover what might be the moral motivations of cyber-bullies.

Questions relating to Internet literacy, effective strategies to educate people not to cyber-bully, and whose responsibility is it for addressing issues of cyber-bullying, were covered in the final section. The section provides evidence as to what an appropriate educational response to cyber-bullying might look like and what strategies might be most effective to tackle the issue.

As with the questionnaire, the group interview schedule was pre-piloted and piloted to ensure that it was 'fit for purpose'. Initially, a pre-pilot was conducted with six 11 to 14 year olds from one school. After the interview, the students were asked to give feedback on the process and make comments about the suitability of the questions, as well as suggest new avenues for consideration. The pre-pilot interview was transcribed and subjected to an initial analysis, to determine the suitability of the data. After minor

modifications of the schedule, it was piloted with another group of six students, who again were given the opportunity to provide feedback. The final version of the interview schedule was developed in the light of the comments from the pilot students and an analysis of the interview transcript.

The group interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. On average, there were six students in each group. All participants were informed about the nature of the research and were asked to give their consent to take part. Parents of the participants also gave consent for their children to be involved (see section on ethics below). The interviews were all recorded and transcribed.

5 Data Analysis

In this section, the procedures that were followed to analyse the qualitative and quantitative data are discussed.

5.1 Analysis of the Questionnaire Data

Once the research strategy and design was decided upon, it was important to consider suitable statistical procedures to analyse the questionnaire data. The first stage of the analysis involved familiarisation with and cleaning of the data. The data was initially downloaded from SurveyMonkey into Excel. At this stage, an investigation was carried out to remove any participants that were deemed to be invalid for the purposes of the research. 1314 respondents had completed the questionnaire on SurveyMonkey. However, a total of 48 respondents were removed from the dataset for the following reasons:

- 37 of these respondents were outside of the age requirements for the focus of the study when they completed the questionnaire (11 to 14).
- 2 of the respondents' data were deemed unreliable. This was because they had given 3 or more answers that were not considered within the norm; for example,

that they used Facebook 5 million minutes a day, or they answered that they went to a school that did not exist and were not in the study.

- A further 9 respondents were discounted as the return was incomplete. A return was considered incomplete when less than 50% of the questions were answered.

The remaining data was cleaned in Excel, before being loaded into SPSS for analysis. The following decisions about cleaning up the data were made (Field, 2005). A full description of the decisions taken, regarding clearing up and preparing the data can be viewed in Appendix 4.

- All variables that had binary answers were assigned a code (e.g. yes =2, no=1)
- All variables that had numerical open responses (i.e. how many friends do you have on Facebook) were first put into groups and then assigned a code - e.g. 200-300 friends was given code 2.
- If a comment box was provided alongside a question, any comments in this box were used to help understand ambiguous responses.
- All variables that had open non-numerical responses (i.e. where do you use the Internet the most) were assigned a code – e.g. on my phone = 3.
- If 2 answers were provided for any question then the first one was selected.
- If a question was answered incorrectly (i.e. the answer did not make sense) then it was recorded as missing data.

A summary of the questionnaire data can be viewed in Appendix 5.

Statistical research software, such as SPSS, allows for relationships to be identified in data containing a large number of variables and cases. Using SPSS, a number of analyses were run on the questionnaire data. Initially, the frequencies of all the data were looked at to obtain a descriptive overview of the data set. Next, cross tabulations were run on all the questions so that the frequencies between the answers could be compared. This analysis made it possible to see the relationships between two variables. Any relationships that were deemed theoretically interesting were included in the results and represented

mainly in tables. In order to analyse the relationship or, lack of relationship, between two variables, such as 'compassion' and 'religion', a chi-squared test was performed. The chi-square test provides a method for testing the association between the row and column variables in a table. In all the tests run, the null hypothesis assumed that there is no association between the variables, whilst the alternative hypothesis claims that some association does exist. All the results tables include the significance level. For all of the tests alpha level was set at 0.05, which is considered standard for social science research (Field, 2005). Finally the consistency of several questions, that were anticipated to measure the same thing, were checked using the Cronbachs Alpha scale. Any set of grouped questions that scored above .7 on the Cronbach's Alpha scale were considered to be measuring the same underlying concept (Nunnally, 1978).

5.2 Analysis of Interview Data

The qualitative interviews, as described above, were semi-structured and aimed at accessing the participant's perceptions of cyber-bullying particularly in relation to character virtues. Qualitative interviews permit access to unanticipated types of data, as their purpose is to permit participants to produce their own narratives and to identify the themes most appropriate to their understandings of their own experiences of cyber-bullying. This approach means that the data that is produced, unlike quantitative data, can be seen as a 'messy record' (Richards, 2005: 34) and therefore some order needs to be imposed on it. For this reason, the data was analysed utilising a predominately thematic deductive approach, as the themes the data were organised by had already been sourced, shaped and established by the prior literature review and questionnaire findings.

The critical investigation of the group interview data started with compiling the primary records for preliminary analysis. These records included the full transcriptions of the interviews alongside notes taken during each of the group interviews. Heeding Richards' (2005:79) advice, the transcripts were revisited many times during the project, as each time something different would be likely to be seen. During this exploratory analysis, key

categories relating to each research question were identified. Within these categories, a number of themes were identified and a coding structure developed.

Although some features of grounded theory (Glaser, 1965) were adopted, such as the use of coding, the analysis cannot be considered grounded theory, as pre-determined themes will be imposed on the data, rather than left to emerge out of it. A thematic deductive approach to the analysis was selected as it was felt to be the best way of exploring and then explaining the complexity of the area under investigation. It would also help ensure that the resulting findings could be linked back to the primary and subsidiary research questions. Thematic analysis is a way of ensuring that all the important elements of the data are unearthed and that their significance is understood (Boysatzis, 1998). It allows for recurring messages across the narratives of different participants to be considered as one, and dominant features of the phenomenon to rise out of the data. However, the method does allow for some scope for new areas of knowledge to arise out of the data as after the initial categories had been established, an iterative approach to analysis was allowed for. Therefore new sub-categories were identified and, as such, the coding was revised. The resulting findings included those that had a theoretical basis, or were anticipated from the findings of the quantitative analysis, as well as others that were not.

6 Validity, Reliability and Limitations

The research design aims to deliver reliable data as this is 'a necessary precondition of validity' (Cohen *et al.*, 2000 p.105). Reliable data is data that is consistent from one measurement to the next, and the researcher must therefore be concerned with maintaining accuracy, precision and consistency in the use of research tools so that they are uninfluenced by change. Validity is the extent to which the research methods are capable of accurately measuring any particular concept. Edwards and Talbot (1999) note that reliability in terms of consistency cannot always be a goal in social sciences, since the researcher cannot entirely control context and the way in which questions will be interpreted. Therefore, reliability in terms of getting the fullest, richest and best picture of a complex situation should be the goal. The terms validity and reliability have different

meaning and application in relation to the different approaches and traditions of research, and it is warranted to consider both validity and reliability within the parameters of qualitative and quantitative traditions (Cresswell, 1998). As such, each of the research phases will be discussed in turn below.

In phase 1, the questionnaire largely sought to collect quantitative data. Reliability of quantitative data is dependent on factors such as the suitability and accuracy of the instrument. The practicality of administering questionnaires as well as their reliability and validity are increased through piloting (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). Pilots can also help to identify bias and correct inconsistencies. As such, the initial draft of the 'Young People and the Internet' questionnaire was taken through a series of processes to ensure it was fit for purpose. Initially, a draft of the questionnaire was shared with several teachers and, importantly, young people, for evaluation that included an examination of the relevancy and appropriateness of the measurement methods, format, language and conditions of administration. For this purpose, academics from the University of Birmingham, and teachers and students from the research schools were approached. The first draft of the questionnaire was pre-piloted and the second draft piloted with select groups of 11 to 14 year olds. The process and results of these pilot phases have been described above.

One of the biggest threats to the reliability and validity of the data in the first phase of the research is the issue of self-reporting. The validity of the questionnaire findings rests on the research participants answering the questions both honestly and accurately. However given the potentially sensitive nature of some of the questions, this should not be assumed. As discussed at the start of this chapter, accurate self-reporting on issues of character and virtues is questionable, due to issues of social desirability. Attempts to negate the issue of untruthful responses were therefore integrated into the programme of research. The anonymous nature of the questionnaire, and the confidentiality of the data, were emphasised in the participant information sheet. Respondents were encouraged to answer the questions honestly, based on their own experience. Anonymity

with questionnaires encourages greater honesty than in interviews, but may leave dishonesty undiscovered since responses cannot be probed (Cohen *et al.*, 2000).

The structured nature of the questionnaire adds to reliability since interviewees have essentially been asked the same questions, presented in the same order and in the same manner. The use of structured questionnaires will have permitted the involvement of respondents who are reluctant to, or who cannot respond at length. However, this will be at the expense of losing an opportunity for participants to express their own individual perspective (Cohen *et al.*, 2000: 121). Another threat to the validity of the questionnaire data is that some of the participants can fail to respond and therefore, the sample is skewed and unrepresentative. However, as the questionnaire was being completed in school time as part of a taught lesson, it was expected that the non-response rate would be low. This assumption was born out by the teachers charged with administering the questionnaire, who reported a good response rate.

Finally, in quantitative research in particular, sample sizes are also important indicators of the stability of results, and a larger sample size reduces the probability of results by chance. There is no agreement on the definition of 'large', however it is generally agreed that in a research project of this scope, a sample size of over 1,000 is considered appropriate to ensure the data is reliable. A smaller sample would present the threat that the respondents are different from the broader sample population (Tashakorri and Teddlie, 1998, 2003). Other concerns regarding the use of questionnaires are the tendency to draw incorrect inferences from correlations in the data, which means that researchers must tread carefully when suggesting findings from any set of data.

Similar approaches to reliability and validity were imposed on phase 2; the group interviews. A number of measures were implemented to ensure that the interview schedule was fit for purpose. Steps included: pre-piloting and piloting the interview schedule (as described above); recording interviews and transcribing them without alteration; adopting a natural style for the group interviews; and ensuring that open-

ended, non-leading questions were asked. The intention of the group interviews was to capture the voices of young people and allow them to speak for themselves. Stephens and Squire (2003:161) warn that young people, when being interviewed, should not be portrayed as 'victims or dupes to structures' nor 'erroneously celebrated as completely free actors' for ideological reasons, instead they should 'simply be listened to'. It is therefore important that the researcher carrying out the interviews tries to remain objective and ensures no agenda or predetermined narrative is placed on the research. The faithful representation of the views of the young participants is important for securing objective and reliable data.

A further threat to validity and reliability is truthful reporting of the participants. Given that group interviews are, by their very nature, not confidential the young participants might not be willing to speak the truth in front of their peers (Morgan, 1998). To try to negate this concern, the participants were not asked any potentially sensitive questions about their own behaviour online, rather, they were asked to speak generally about cyber-bullying. By also being asked to speak generally about the moral problem and not make reference to their peers, it was hoped that openness was promoted in the group setting, and the tendency for giving socially desirable responses was reduced.

An important aspect of developing trustworthy, reliable and valid research is that researchers are up front and honest about the limitations of any findings. The limitations of the research conducted in this thesis are therefore explained in the section below. There are a number of unavoidable limitations in the research design and these mainly relate: to i) sample size; and, ii) the use of self-report instruments. Each of these will now be addressed in turn.

There is a limitation relating to the sample size of both the qualitative and quantitative phases of this research project. As the study is being carried out by a part time lone researcher, it has only been possible to collect questionnaire responses from around 1,300 young people attending 6 schools. Although the schools were selected to be broadly representative of the wider population, to be confident of being able to

generalise the results to the larger population it would require a larger sample size, from a greater number of schools across England.

Likewise, as the study obtains the participants' perspectives of cyber-bullying through the use of qualitative methodology, caution should be applied if they are to be generalised beyond the experiences of the children in the sample. It is difficult to determine to what extent their perspectives might apply to children in different schools or geographic locations. Another possible limitation is that the group interviews are not intending to elicit the students' own experiences and involvement in cyber-bullying. As is advisable in collecting sensitive data in the context of a group, by design, the young people were asked to speak in general, as opposed to specific terms, about cyber-bullying.

A methodological limitation, discussed extensively above, is the use of self-report survey techniques. It has not been possible to gather data that can be independently verified, and the evidence is therefore all drawn from young people's own accounts of their Internet use. This means there might be some bias in the data due to selective memory, exaggeration and / or embellishment, among other things.

7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for the study are drawn from the guidelines provided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). The research was also subject to the University of Birmingham Ethical Review Board, and permission from it was granted for the study before it was carried out. The particular ethical considerations taken into account before carrying out the research were: i) the particular sensitivities of researching young people; ii) issues of seeking informed consent; and, iii) issues of confidentiality and anonymity.

Research with young people of such an age calls for particular considerations about how best to collect as well as analyse data. Key issues regarding ethics are also heightened when working with young people, and therefore the research must be undertaken in a

well-considered and sensitive way. Tisdall *et al.* (2009) call for researchers to 'think differently' when conducting research with young people, and try to see the world from a different point of view. Barnes (1979:16) believes that ethical decisions arise 'when we try to decide between one course of action and another not in terms of expediency or efficiency but stands of what is morally right or wrong'. Ethical decisions in research are perhaps more significant when the participants are young people. Farrall (2005) believes that children are increasingly seen to inhabit risky spaces and research with children is a risky enterprise. He suggests that 'high end protective measures' are required when researching children and there is a requirement to balance the potential benefit of the research against any possible harm it might cause. In undertaking this research, it was important to reassure the young participants that the research was important and their participation would be beneficial. It was also important to clearly explain the aims of the research so that the participants could make up their own minds about whether they wanted to be involved, and could give informed consent. Letters and information sheets, written in language assessable to the age group, were given to all the participants to explain the research and seek their permission for their involvement. It was important that the young people did not become 'unknowing objects' of the research, and instead, were fully informed about the nature and purpose of the research and willingly gave their consent to be part of it. It was understood that to be 'informed', the young person must fully understand what they are undertaking. This meant undertaking a process of checking the language of information letters and consent forms to ensure that they were 'child friendly'.

Other additional measures were also implemented to ensure the research was ethical. Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the questions, it was made clear at the top of questionnaires that the young people did not have to answer all the questions and could skip any they were uncomfortable with. Furthermore, young people were involved from the start in developing and shaping the research through the pilot and pre-pilot stages. They were encouraged to be active participants in the development and creation of the

research tools. Finally, research methods, such as focus groups and questionnaires that the literature considers young people friendly, were utilised.

BERA (2011: 2) guideline 8 states that 'care should be taken when interviewing children and students up to school leaving age; permission should be obtained from the school and if they so suggest, the parents'. However, Masson (2004:36) comments that 'children and young people are rarely free to decide entirely for themselves where or not to participate in research'. She states that schools are often considered the gatekeepers and it becomes their responsibility to safeguard and protect young people. In order to ensure that it was not only the schools giving their consent, permission was also gained from the participants' parents and, as discussed above, the students themselves. However, face-to-face discussions about the nature of the research were also held with teachers in each school to ensure they understood the purpose and nature of the research. The teachers' input into the content of the questionnaires and focus group schedules were also sought.

Prior to the data collection, the procedure of this study was, as noted above, approved by the Ethics Committee at the University of Birmingham. It was accepted by the committee that in the case of the questionnaire, the young people and their parents should be informed and have the option to 'opt out' and not take part in the questionnaire. In regards to the interviews, as the research was considered more invasive, both the young people and their parents / guardians had to be informed and given the opportunity to 'opt in' to the research. Finally, all the data was considered confidential and the questionnaire data was also anonymous, which all involved in the study were made aware of. When audio recording was necessary, written consent was obtained from the participants. Schools and young people in both quantitative and qualitative data were anonymously coded and participants were never mentioned by name. See Appendices 6, 7 and 8 for examples of information sheets and consent forms given to participants and their parents / guardians prior to taking part in the group interviews.

8 Summary

This chapter has explained why a mixed-methods survey design has been selected as the chosen method to answer the thesis research questions. It explained how the tensions between the positivist and interpretivist paradigms are to be rejected in favour of adopting a pragmatic approach to the research, which rationalises the chosen research design. At this stage, the particular concerns with developing a methodology that addresses the focus of the research, namely character virtues, are acknowledged. Each of the two phases in the research design are described in detail. Firstly a description was provided of how the questionnaire was developed and how the questions are designed to meet the purpose and aims of the thesis. A similar description was provided for the development of the interview schedule. The chapter closed with a discussion about the reliability and validity of the research as well as acknowledgment of its possible limitations and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER FIVE:

ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the *Young People and the Internet* questionnaire. The results and findings from each section of the questionnaire are reported upon. After initially providing a profile of the respondents, three areas are covered. Firstly, an analysis of how often and where young people use the Internet is undertaken, followed by a consideration of the questions relating to its influence on the character virtues of honesty and compassion. Finally, an analysis is made as to how this influence might vary between young people from different backgrounds. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings.

2 Profile of the Respondents

1,314 students from six schools completed the questionnaire. After the data had been cleaned (see previous chapter) a total of 1,266 respondents were deemed valid for the study. There were marginally more female respondents (52%) than male respondents (48%). Most of the respondents were either 12 (31%) or 13 (36%) years old and most likely to be in year 8 or 9 at school. There were slightly more 14 year olds (16%) than 11 year olds (13%). Participants who fell outside of the 11 to 14 age range were discounted from the sample at the data preparation stage. The majority of the students (68%) reported themselves to be from a white British background. The second biggest group was Pakistani students (20%). This group was largely made up of students from two schools that serve a predominantly Pakistani community. There was a very low number of Black or Black British (1.9%) and mixed race students (3.6%) in the dataset.

The majority of the students reported having no religious affiliation (45%). Over a quarter (27%) of the participants identified their religion as Islam and a smaller

percentage (18%) identified themselves as Christian. Nine percent stated that they were religious, but not Christians or Muslim. Other religions identified included Judaism, Buddhism and Sikhism. There is a correlation between the religion and ethnicity variables. The majority of Pakistani students were also Muslim (99%). Likewise the majority of white students were either Christian (26%) or had no religion (62%). Over three quarters (78%) of the sample lived with both of their parents; the rest (22%) were from single parent families, mostly living with their mothers.

A new composite variable for socio-economic status was created. This comprised of the variables 'books in the home', 'father attended university' and 'mother attended university' (see discussion in previous chapter for explanation about the choice of these variables). If the respondent's mother or father attended university, these were scored 5 points for each, and if they did not, or answered 'don't know,' this was scored 0 points. A score of 1-6 was also given to the respondents answer to number of books in the home (less than 10 = 1, over 500 = 6). This meant that all students were given a score of 1 to 16. Scores of 1-5 were considered to be from a lower socio economic group, scores of 6-10 in the middle socio-economic group and scores of 11-16 were considered to be in the highest socio-economic group. Table 11 below shows that the majority of the responders were in the lower socio-economic group (59%), followed by the middle group (23%).

Table 11: Socio-Economic Groups

Group	Frequency	Percent (%)
Low	722	59.4
Middle	280	23
High	214	17.6

N = 1266

Although these composite scores cannot be said to be a perfect guide to socio-economic status, they are supported by the fact that they align with the free school meal data (see Table 12).

Table 12: School And Socio-Economic Groups Cross-Tabulation

School	Free school meals	Low (%)	Medium (%)	High (%)
A	Higher than national average	75.0	21.2	3.8
B	Well below national average	45.6	20.2	34.1
C	Higher than national average	50.4	27.9	21.7
D	Higher than national average	68.3	20.7	11.1
E	Average	61.4	23.8	14.8
F	Higher than national average	63.7	24.0	12.3

N = 1266

Although the alignment between free school meals and socio-economic groups is not perfect it is fairly close – for example, schools with the greatest number of free school meals (Schools A, D and F) also have the highest number of students in the lowest socio-economic group. In comparison, School B has the lowest percentage of free school meals and has the greatest number of respondents in the high socio-economic group.

3 Analysis of the Data

The following section contains the analysis of the questionnaire data. The findings are organised around the research questions. The results are laid out in tables and in all cases they contain valid percentages excluding non-responses and missing data. Significance is determined by use of the Chi-squared test and the results are deemed to be significant if $p = <0.05$.

3.1 To what extent and in what ways is the Internet used by 11 to 14 year olds in England?

Table 12 below provides a summary of the participants' use of computers and the Internet. 62% of the 11 to 14 year olds reported that they owned their own computer or laptop. A similar proportion (66%) said that they had a computer in their bedroom connected to the Internet (Table 13).

Table 13: Computer And Internet Use By 11 To 14 Year Olds In The Questionnaire

Question	No. of responses	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
Do you own your own computer?	1111	62.2	37.0	0.8
Do you have a computer in your bedroom connected to the Internet?	1109	66.0	32.6	1.4

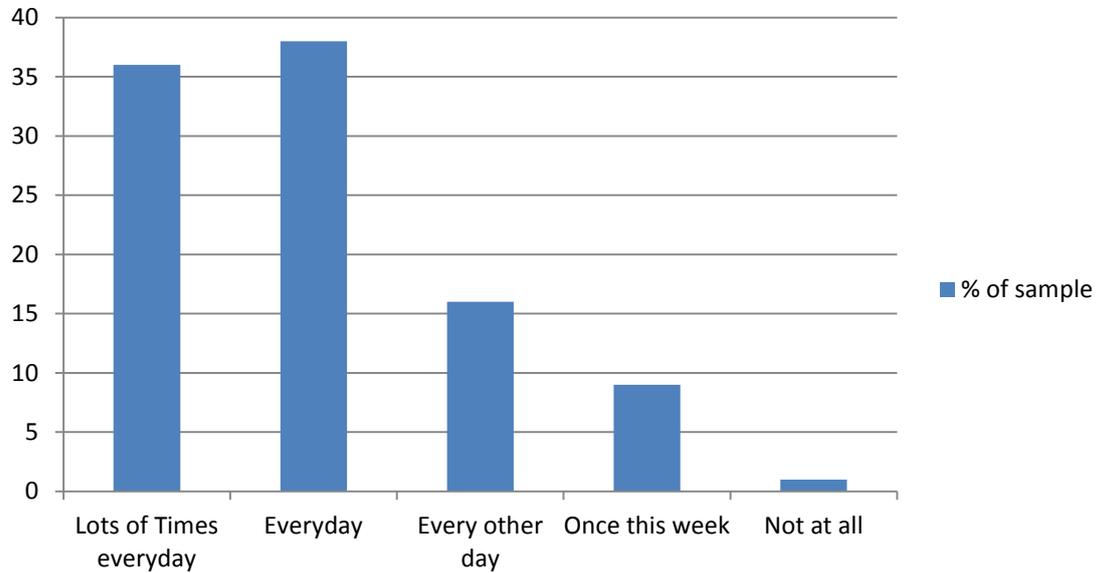
N =

1266

The proportion of respondents reporting they owned their own computer (62.2%) and had access to a computer in their bedroom increases with age. Seventeen per cent of 11 year olds say they don't have a computer in their own bedroom compared to 11 % of 14 year olds. More Muslim respondents don't have computers in their bedroom (31%) compared to Christian students (18%). Those in the low (64%) and high (62%) socio-economic categories were less likely to have a computer in their bedroom than those in the medium category (71%).

Question 12 asked the sample how many times they had accessed the Internet in the last seven days. The question clarified that this included accessing the Internet on their mobile phones. Chart 2 shows that 74% of respondents used the Internet 'lots of times every day' (36%) or 'every day' (38%).

Chart 2: Internet Use in the Last 7 Days



67% used the Internet most often at home. In addition a further 17% say they used the Internet most often in their bedrooms. The results for this variable did not vary substantially by gender, age or religion. Those in the low and medium socio-economic categories were slightly more likely than those in the high socio-economic group to report using the Internet *every day* and *several times every day*.

Facebook was the most frequently used website for those in the sample, with 34% of the participants indicating that it was the website that they used the most. Of the whole sample, 69% of the respondents said that they used Facebook. The third section of the questionnaire contained questions specifically about Facebook and therefore, only those who said that they used Facebook, were able to access these questions. The sample size for the questions on Facebook therefore dropped from 1266 to 758.

The Facebook users in the sample are regular and consistent users. On average, they have 305 friends (mean) and use Facebook for 101 minutes a day. The majority of the respondents updated their Facebook profiles at least once a week, and 20% of them

multiple times a day. Eighty six per cent of the 14 year old respondents stated that they use Facebook, compared to 54% of the 11 year olds. The split between male and female users is almost even - 49% female and 51% male. Seventy eight per cent of those who do not have a religion use Facebook, compared to 50% of the Muslim and 75% of the Christian respondents. There is little difference in the use of Facebook amongst those in different socio-economic groupings.

3.2 What Might be the Influence of the Internet on Two Key Character Virtues: Honesty and Compassion?

The character virtues of compassion and honesty were deemed, after a review of the literature, to be the most likely to be influenced by the Internet. It is for this reason, that the following analysis of the questionnaire data has been organised around these two virtues. The analysis provided below is organised around the secondary research questions outlined in chapter 4.

3.2.1 Compassion

This section is concerned with how respondents show compassion on the Internet. Firstly, the section reports the responses to questions about the Internet generally (i) and secondly, it reports the responses to the question specifically about Facebook (ii).

3.2.1.1 How do 11 to 14 Year Olds in England Report Their Actions and Attitudes Relating to the Virtue of Compassion on the Internet?

Table 14 below shows the total percentage of the agreement / disagreement with the statements made in the questions about the Internet generally.

Table 14: Attitudes And Actions About Compassion And The Internet

Question No.	Question	No. of responses	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
15.1	Has anyone ever been unkind to you online, such as saying bad things about you on the Internet?	1109	30.8	63.2	6.0
15.2	Have you ever written something nasty about someone else on the Internet?	1108	18.9	74.3	6.7
15.14	Have you ever visited the website of a charity?	1101	47.1	41.4	11.4
15.6	Have you ever helped someone else on the Internet?	1102	71.2	21.7	7.0
21	Have you ever written comments on the Internet that might upset someone else?	1100	17.3	63.2	19.3

N=1266

Questions 15.1, 15.2 and 21 are about when the respondents might have demonstrated or been the recipients of uncompassionate behaviour on the Internet. Nearly a third of the respondents (31%) have *had someone being unkind to them on the Internet, such as saying bad things about them*. A smaller number (19%) say that *they themselves have written something nasty about other people online*. A slightly smaller percentage of respondents (17%) gave the answer to a similar question, which came later in the questionnaire, which asked *have you ever written comment on the Internet that might upset someone else*. Questions 15.6 asked about times the responders might have shown compassionate behaviour online. 71% of the respondents claim that *they have helped other people on the Internet*. Finally, 47% say *they have visited the website of a charity*. Although visiting the website of a charity is not necessarily a demonstration of compassionate behaviour, it is perhaps an indication of an intention to demonstrate compassionate behaviour.

3.2.1.2 How do 11 to 14 year olds in England Report Their Actions and Attitudes Relating to the Virtue of Compassion on Facebook?

The questions specific to compassion and Facebook can be divided into two sub-sections. One sub-section deals with questions that relate to compassionate attitudes or actions on

Facebook. The second sub-section deals with questions about non compassionate actions or attitudes online.

Table 15: Attitudes and Actions About Compassionate Behaviour On Facebook

Q No.	Question	No.	Disagree Strongly (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither Agree or Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Agree Strongly (%)
29.14	I have helped other people on Facebook	640	3.9	6.0	24.3	37.3	28.4
29.15	I use Facebook to make a difference to other people	639	10.5	25.9	41.8	14.1	7.5
29.17	I have joined a Facebook group that seeks to help others	637	16.2	24.4	28.9	13.5	16.9
29.18	I have started a campaign on Facebook that seeks to help others	636	20.2	32.4	34.8	4.6	7.9
29.21	I care about all of my 'friends' on Facebook	643	8.2	16.1	27.9	28.2	19.5
29.25	If I see something unfair of Facebook I do something about it	638	9.0	16.0	38.3	20.9	15.6
29.26	I am respectful of other people's views on Facebook	635	4.6	3.2	27.3	36.9	27.8

N= 758

Some of the questions relate to what might be considered compassionate attitudes. More of the respondents said that they *care about all their friends on Facebook* that said they did not and this finding is supported by the assertion that an overwhelming majority said that they are *respectful of other people's views on Facebook*. Sixty five per cent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, compared to only 8% who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The questionnaire also asked about specific actions that might be considered compassionate. The majority of the responders either agreed (27%) or strongly agreed (28%) with the statement that *they have helped other people on Facebook*. Likewise,

the majority of respondents either agreed (26%) or strongly agreed (10%) with the statement *I use Facebook to make a difference to other people*. However, more people either strongly disagreed (16%) or disagreed (24%) with the statement that they have *joined a Facebook group that seeks to help others*. This is 10% more than those who agree or strongly agree with the same statement. Likewise, 52% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that they have *started a campaign on Facebook that seeks to help others*, compared to only 13% who either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Finally, most of the respondent agreed or strongly agreed that *if they saw something on Facebook that was unfair they would do something about it*. Thirty seven per cent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, compared to 25% who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the same statement.

Three of the questions (29.22, 29.23, 29.24) deal with actions that might be considered non-compassionate behaviour. The responses to these questions are shown in Table 16 below.

Table 16: Attitudes and Actions About Uncompassionate Behaviour On Facebook

Q No.	Question	No.	Disagree Strongly (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither Agree or Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Agree Strongly (%)
29.23	I have written nasty things about other people on Facebook	638	31.9	24.9	21.3	12.2	9.4
29.24	Facebook makes it easy to say nasty things about other people	636	16.1	18.7	21.7	23.0	20.2
29.22	I have witnessed bullying on Facebook	637	16.3	21.0	19.0	23.7	19.8

N= 758

43.3% of the responders believe that Facebook *does have the potential to increase non compassionate behaviour, such as saying nasty things to other people*. This is 8% more of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement than disagreed or strongly disagreed. This seems to correlate with those who say *they have witnessed bullying on Facebook*. Again, more people agree or strongly agreed (44%) with this statement than

disagreed or strongly disagreed (37%). However, most of the respondents *say they have not actually written nasty comments about other people on Facebook*. There was a strong disagreement with this statement.

3.2.1.3 Consistency or Responses Relating to Compassion

The consistency of the responses to questions relating to compassion that appears to be theoretically associated can be checked using the Cronbach's Alpha scale. Cronbach's Alpha measures the internal consistency of questions designed to measure the same thing. Before the test was run, all 'Don't know' answers were removed from the sample as, in all cases, these were less than 5% of the data and therefore were not expected to significantly affect the findings. The results for the questions relating to compassion can be viewed in table 17 below.

Table 17: Internal Consistency Of Questions Relating To Compassion

Theme	Questionnaire Items	Cronbach's Alpha reliability
Written nasty comments about others online.	Have you ever written something nasty about someone else on the Internet? (n=1108) Have you ever written comments on the Internet that might upset someone else? (n=1100)	.849
Cyber-citizenship on Facebook	I have helped other people on Facebook (n=640) I use Facebook to make a difference to other people (n=639) I have joined a Facebook group that seeks to help others (n=637) I have started a campaign on Facebook that seeks to help others (n=636) If I see something unfair on Facebook I do something about it (n=638)	.707

There was a consistency of .7 or above found for both sets of questions; writing nasty comments about others online, and undertaking cyber-citizenship activities on Facebook. The grouped questions scored above .7, which, on the Cronbach's Alpha scale, means they are generally considered to be measuring the same underlying concept. Nunnally (1978) argues that a score of .7 and above is acceptable reliability, however Kline (1999)

argues that when dealing with social and psychological constructs, as in this study, a value of below .7 can be realistically expected because of the diversity of the constructs being measured. It is therefore likely that the two themes identified have a high internal consistency and, therefore, it is plausible that they also have construct validity.

3.2.1.4 Compassion: Summary of Results

The questionnaire results reported above relate to the following two secondary research questions. These are SRQ 1: How do 11 to 14 year olds in England report their actions and attitudes relating to the virtue of compassion on the Internet?; and, SRQ 2: How do 11 to 14 year olds in England report their actions and attitudes relating to the virtue of compassion on Facebook? Overall, the data relating to the Internet generally and Facebook more specifically present a mixed picture of the respondents' compassionate behaviour online. The results show that some 11 to 14 year olds in the sample claim to participate in activities that might be considered uncompassionate; for example, sending unkind messages. However, there is also evidence that the Internet and Facebook are used as tools to participate in activities that might be considered compassionate; for example, joining an online group that seeks to make a difference to others. In addition, the results about Facebook seem to indicate that expressions of what might be called 'informal' compassionate behaviour (making friends and helping others they know) is more prevalent than taking part in perhaps more formal and structured opportunities, such as starting a campaign that aims to make a difference to others.

3.2.2 Honesty

This section is concerned with how respondents report their actions and attitudes relating to the virtue of honesty. Firstly, the section reports the responses to questions about the Internet generally (i), and secondly, reports the responses to the question specifically about Facebook (ii).

3.2.2.1 How do 11 to 14 year olds in England Report their Actions and Attitudes Relating to the Virtue of Honesty on the Internet?

Table 18: Attitudes And Actions About Honesty And The Internet

Question No.	Question	No. of responses	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
15.4	Have you ever copied someone else's work from the internet and pretended it is your own work?	1108	25.0	68.9	5.8
15.8	Have you ever lied about your age on the Internet?	1097	53.2	40.9	5.8
20.1	Have you ever pretended you have a different name?	1098	25.0	67.3	7.5
20.3	Have you ever pretended you are younger than you actually are?	1095	6.3	90.1	3.5
20.2	Have you ever pretended you are older than you actually are?	1094	50.5	44.0	5.4
20.4	Have you ever pretended you have a different physical appearance?	1095	10.8	82.1	8.9
20.5	Have you ever pretended you can do something that you actually can't?	1094	17.3	76.4	6.2
20.6	Have you ever pretended you have a different personality?	1093	12.7	81.7	5.4

N =
1266

All of the questions in table 18 relate to activities carried out online, which might be considered dishonest. Q15.4 shows that a quarter (25%) of respondents say they *have copied someone else's work from the Internet and pretended it was their own work*. Question 15.8, 20.3 and 20.2 relate to how the respondents represent their age online. Question 15.8 shows that over half the respondents (53%) have *lied about their age online*. Q20.3 shows that very few of the respondent *pretend that they are younger than they actually are*, whereas Q20.2 shows that in contrast 51% say *they have pretended that they are older than they actually are*. Questions 20.1, 20.4, 20.5 and 20.6 ask if the respondents have ever pretended other things about themselves online. Twenty five per cent say they *have used a different name online* (when not playing a game and asked to choose a name for themselves); 17% have *pretended that they can do something when they actually can't*; 11% have *pretended they have a different physical appearance*; and,

12% say that they *have pretended that they have a different personality*. The percentage of respondents giving a positive answer to this question is reasonably low (between 10% and 25%) and shows that most of the respondents claim that they do not make up things about themselves online that are not true.

In addition to the variables considered above, there was one further question relating to dishonest behaviour online. This showed that 12% of the respondents use the Internet many times when they have been told not to by their parents, and 17% said that they sometimes had. Less than 40% said they have never used the Internet when they were not allowed to by their parents.

3.2.2.2 How do 11 to 14 year olds in England Report their Actions and Attitudes Relating to the Virtue of Honesty on Facebook?

Similar questions about the virtue of honesty were asked of the respondents who use Facebook. The results from these questions can be seen in Table 19.

Table 19: Attitudes And Actions About Dishonest Behaviour On Facebook

Q No.	Question	No. of responses	Disagree Strongly (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither Agree or Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Agree Strongly (%)
29.1	I trust all of my friends on Facebook	666	3.7	10.3	24.0	34.6	27.2
29.2	I think I would find it easier to lie to my friends on Facebook than to them face-to-face	660	11.4	16.5	22.3	31.5	18.2
29.3	I always tell the truth about myself on Facebook	657	3.3	8.1	19.3	36.4	32.8
29.4	Everything I write on Facebook is True	656	2.8	8.7	19.6	34.0	34.7
29.5	I have lied about my age to register on Facebook	655	10.8	9.6	12.3	30.4	36.9

N = 758

Most of the respondents either agreed (34%) or strongly agreed (27%) with the statement *I trust all of my friends on Facebook*. A small percentage (4%) disagree with this statement, indicating that there is a high level of trust amongst friends on Facebook. Nearly 70% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *everything I write on Facebook is true*. In contrast, most respondents either agreed (22%) or strongly agreed (18%) with the statement *I think I would find it easier to lie to my friends on Facebook than to them face-to-face*. This compares to 16% who disagreed and 11% who strongly disagreed with this statement. There is also a high percentage of respondents who say they *have lied in order to register on Facebook*. Thirty six percent of the sample strongly agreed with the statement that they lied about their age in order to register on Facebook, compared to only 11% who strongly disagreed with this statement. However, seemingly to contradict this assertion, 69% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *I always tell the truth about myself on Facebook*.

3.2.2.3 Consistency of Responses Relating to Honesty

A Cronbachs alpha test was used to test the internal constancy of the questions relating to honesty. The table below shows that the set of questions relating to representation of identity score .737 and therefore can be considered to have good internal consistency and can be considered to be measuring the same thing.

Table 20: Internal Consistency Of Questions Relating To Honesty

Theme	Questionnaire Items	Cronbach's Alpha reliability
Representation of Identity	Pretended you have a different name Pretended you are older than you actually are? Pretended you are younger that you actually are? Pretended you have a different physical appearance? Pretended you can do something that you actually cannot? Pretended you have a different personality?	.737

3.2.2.4 Honesty: Summary of Results

The questionnaire results reported above relate to the following two secondary research questions: SRQ 3 - *How do 11 to 14 year olds in England report their actions and attitudes relating to the virtue of honesty on the Internet?*; and, SRQ 2 - *How do 11 to 14 year olds in England report their actions and attitudes relating to the virtue of honesty on Facebook?* The results show that some 11 to 14 year olds report that they are dishonest online. Perhaps most strikingly, the majority of the participants admit to having lied about their age and this finding is supported by a similar question relating to lying about age in order to register on Facebook. The data shows that young people might also be dishonest by copying other people's work and not acknowledging it, either by pretending to be someone else, or by saying they are able to do something that they cannot. Some of the participants also report that they believe Facebook makes it easier for them to lie to their friends. However, in contrast, the participants appear to have a high level of trust in their friends and most of them also claim that they are always truthful on Facebook.

3.3 Is There a Relationship between Gender, Religion or Socio-economic Status and the Influence of the Internet on the Character Virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England?

As specific demographic data about the questionnaire participants was collected; this could be analysed against the questions relating to compassion and honesty. The section below reports the findings from this analysis.

3.3.1 Gender

The analysis below relates to the questions concerned with compassion and honesty, and investigates any differences between the male and female responses. Table 21 below only includes data from the questions where there was a discernible difference observed between the male and female responses, and the results have a significance level less than 0.05.

Table 21: Relationship Between Compassion And Honesty Variables And Gender

Question	Gender	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)	Total	Sig
Has anyone ever been unkind to you online, such as saying bad things about you on the Internet?	Female	17.6	29.1	3.5	553	.002
	Male	13.5	33.9	2.4	547	
Have you ever visited the website of a charity?	Female	26.6	18.3	5.5	551	.001
	Male	20.5	23.1	6	541	

Four per cent more female respondents answered positively to the question *'has anyone ever been unkind to you online, such as saying bad things about you on the Internet?'* than male participants ($p=.002$). More female respondents (27%) were also more likely to say they had visited the website of a charity than male (20%) respondents ($p =.001$). For all the other questions the significance level was above 0.05. In addition, for most questions relating to honesty the female respondents have a lower percentage of yes answers than the male respondents – however, the difference was only between 1-2%.

In the questions relating to honesty / compassion on Facebook, only one question generated a statistically significant difference between the male and female responders. The data showed that the male respondents are more likely than the female respondents, to tell the truth about themselves on Facebook. Although a similar percentage agree or strongly agree with this question, nearly 10% more of the male respondents ticked strongly agreed for this question, than the female respondents.

3.3.2 Religion

Table 22: Relationship Between Compassion And Honesty Variables And Religion

Question	Religion	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)	Total	Sig
Has anyone ever been unkind to you online, such as saying bad things about you on the Internet?	Muslim	17.2	79.9	2.9	314	.000
	Christian	35.0	58.9	6.1	197	
	None	36.6	56.0	7.4	486	
Have you ever written something nasty about someone else on the Internet?	Muslim	14	80.9	5.1	314	.000
	Christian	11.7	82.1	6.1	196	
	None	24.3	67.5	8.2	486	
Have you ever written comments on the Internet that might upset someone else?	Muslim	11.8	75.5	12.7	314	.000
	Christian	14.3	65.3	20.4	196	
	None	22.1	55.1	22.8	479	
Have you ever helped someone else on the Internet?	Muslim	64.3	31.5	4.2	308	.000
	Christian	68	22.3	9.6	197	
	None	75.9	17.1	7.0	486	
Have you ever visited the website of a charity?	Muslim	54.2	34.3	11.5	312	.000
	Christian	44.2	40.6	15.2	197	
	None	40	49.1	11	483	
Have you ever lied about your age on the Internet?	Muslim	32.6	59.0	8.4	310	.000
	Christian	55.7	38.1	8.2	194	
	None	63.1	32.6	4.4	482	
Have you ever pretended you have a different name	Muslim	33.3	58.3	8.3	312	0.01
	Christian	19.0	75.4	5.6	195	
	None	22.1	70.8	7.1	479	
Have you ever pretended you are younger than you actually are?	Muslim	8.7	84.9	8.4	311	0.00
	Christian	1.0	95.4	3.6	196	
	None	6.3	91.6	2.1	477	
Have you ever pretended you are older than you actually are?	Muslim	31.7	60.5	7.8	309	0.00
	Christian	55.4	37.7	6.7	195	
	None	58.2	37.6	4.2	479	
Have you ever pretended you have a different physical appearance?	Muslim	13.2	78.7	8.1	310	0.05
	Christian	4.1	88.8	7.1	198	
	None	11.2	82.0	6.7	478	
Have you ever pretended you can do something that you actually can't?	Muslim	11.6	80.6	7.7	310	0.03
	Christian	12.8	80.5	6.7	195	
	None	21.9	73.5	4.6	479	

N =

1266

Table 22 above shows the relationship between the compassion and honesty variables and the different religious groups. Compared to gender, religion appears to have a much

greater influence on how the participants respond to questions relating to honesty and compassion on the Internet.

A much smaller percentage of Muslim participants (18%) report that someone has been unkind to them online, such as *saying bad things about you on the Internet* compared to Christian responders (35%) and those who say they have no religion (37%) – ($p = .000$). A smaller percentage of Muslim (14%) and Christian (12%) participants say they have themselves written something nasty about other people on the Internet, compared to those who say they have no religion (24%) – ($p = .000$). The answers are similar for the question - *Have you ever written comments on the Internet that might upset someone else?* In contrast, a higher proportion of respondents who claim they have no religion (78%) say they helped other people on the Internet compared to Muslim (65%) and Christian respondents (68%) ($p = .000$). Muslim and Christian participants were however more likely to have visited the website of a charity ($p = .000$).

Likewise, for many of the variables, the Muslim and Christian participants report themselves to be more honest than the students who say they have no religion. For example, 63% of participants who claim they have no religion, admit to lying about their age on the Internet, compared to just 33% of Muslim and 56% of the Christian participants ($p = .000$). Similar results are seen in the question *have you ever pretended you are older than you are*. One question that seems to buck this trend is *have you ever pretended you have a different name*. A considerably higher proportion of Muslim participants (33%) admit they have, compared to just 19% of Christian and 22% of participants who say they have no religion ($p = 0.01$). The discussion will now turn to a consideration of the results for Facebook.

Table 23: Religion, Facebook And Honesty And Compassion

Question	Religion	Disagree Strongly (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither Agree or Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Agree Strongly (%)	Total	Sig
I always tell the truth about myself on Facebook	Muslim	3.1	7.4	18.1	23.0	47.2	122	.003
	Christian	2.4	6.3	28.6	35.7	27	226	
	None	3.9	8.8	17.8	41.7	27.8	331	
Everything I write on Facebook is true	Muslim	2.3	7.6	16.8	23.7	44.6	131	.007
	Christian	1.6	5.6	24.2	39.5	29	124	
	None	3.4	10.7	21	36.3	28.7	328	
I have lied about my age to register on Facebook	Muslim	23.7	16	119.1	13	28.2	131	.000
	Christian	7.9	7.9	9.5	39.7	34.9	126	
	None	5.8	8.6	11.7	35.7	38.2	325	
I have helped other people on Facebook	Muslim	11.0	10.2	22.8	18.9	37.0	127	.000
	Christian	0.8	5.0	33.1	43.0	18.2	121	
	None	2.2	5.6	23.8	46.2	22.2	320	
I have joined a Facebook group that seeks to help others	Muslim	20.6	27.8	21.4	7.9	22.2	126	.002
	Christian	11.7	31.7	35.8	12.5	8.3	120	
	None	18.1	24.1	31.6	15.9	10.3	320	
I have started a campaign on Facebook that seeks to help others	Muslim	25.4	30.2	26.2	4.0	14.3	128	.002
	Christian	19.2	37.5	39.2	1.7	2.5	120	
	None	20.9	34.7	32.5	6.9	5.0	320	
I have written nasty things about other people on Facebook	Muslim	31.2	28.0	18.4	9.6	12.8	125	.002
	Christian	43.1	30.9	16.3	5.7	4.1	123	
	None	27.3	24.1	24.8	15.4	8.5	319	
If I see something unfair on Facebook I do something about it	Muslim	14.2	13.4	26.0	20.5	26.0	127	.002
	Christian	8.1	21.1	39.0	20.3	11.4	122	
	None	8.5	15.8	43.0	20.9	11.7	316	

I have witnessed bullying on Facebook	Muslim	27.9	24.8	19.4	7.8	20.2	129	.000
	Christian	15.8	29.2	13.2	23.3	18.3	120	
	None	12.0	17.1	23.1	29.7	18.0	316	
I am respectful of other people's views on Facebook	Muslim	7.9	5.6	20.6	23.8	42.1	126	.002
	Christian	3.3	2.5	28.1	43.0	23.1	121	
	None	4.1	2.8	30.4	39.2	23.5	319	

Firstly, the results relating to the virtue of honesty will be discussed. The results show that the Muslim respondents report that they are more *likely to tell the truth about themselves on Facebook*, than the Christian participants, and those who claim they do not follow a religion. Forth seven per cent of the Muslim students strongly agreed compared to 23% for both the Christian participants, and those who say they do not follow a religion (.003). Similar results are seen for the statement *everything I write on Facebook is true*. Only 28% of the Muslim responders strongly agreed with the statement *I have lied about my age to register on Facebook*, compared to 35% of Christian and 38 % of those who claim to not follow a religion (p=. .000).

This section reports the results relating to the virtue of compassion. The Muslim (37%) responders were significantly more likely to agree with the statement that they have helped other people on Facebook than the Christian (18%) responders or those who do not follow a religion (22%) - (p= .000). Likewise, the Muslim participants are more likely than the Christian participants, and those who do not follow a religion, to join a group and / or start a campaign on Facebook that seeks to help others. The Muslim participants are more likely than the Christian participants, or those with no religion, to agree strongly with the two statements *If I see something unfair on Facebook I do something about it* and *I am respectful of other people's views on Facebook*. However, the Muslim responders are marginally more likely to strongly agree with the statement *I have written nasty things about other people on Facebook*, than those in the other groups, as well as marginally being more likely to strongly agree with the statement *I have witnessed bullying on Facebook*. However, they are also more likely to either disagree or strongly disagree with the same statements.

3.3.3 Socio-economic Status

Table 24: Relationship Between Compassion And Honesty Variables And Socio-Economic Status

Question	Religion	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)	Total	Sig
Have you ever written comments on the Internet that might upset someone else?	Low	18.5	62.9	18.5	631	.017
	Middle	17.1	58.5	24.4	246	
	High	12.6	72.6	14.7	190	
Have you ever visited the website of a charity?	Low	43.7	44.5	11.7	631	.016
	Middle	48.2	39.7	12.1	247	
	High	57.9	32.6	9.5	190	

When analysed by socio-economic status, most of the questions pertaining to honesty and compassion produced a non-significant result. Table 24 above shows the two questions where the results were $p = <0.05$. Those in the high socio-economic group (58%) were more likely to have visited a charity website than those in the middle (38%) and low (44%) socio-economic groups ($p=.016$). What is more, there was a difference in the responses to the question - *Have you ever written comments on the Internet that might upset someone else?* Those in the high socio-economic group (73%) were 10% more likely to say no to this question than those in the low socio-economic group (63%) and 14% were more likely to say no then those in the middle group (59%) – ($p- .017$). None of the results for the questions relating to Facebook were statistically significant.

3.3.4 Summary

Religion appears to have a greater influence on how 11 to 14 year olds answer questions about honesty and compassion on the Internet, than their gender or socio-economic status. Overall the Muslim participants in the questionnaire are significantly more likely to self-report being honest and compassionate online on almost all indicators. In contrast, those with no religion are most likely to be dishonest and less compassionate. However, there are some anomalies to this trend; for instance, although the Muslim respondents are less likely to say they have written unkind comments on the Internet, they are slightly more likely to say they have written nasty comments about someone else on Facebook than those from that are Christian or of no faith. In the questions that

related to compassion and honesty on the Internet, there was little difference between the male and female respondents. The most significant result is that a greater proportion of female respondents say they have been the victims of unkind behaviour than male respondents. Socio-economic status made little difference to the results.

4 Overall Summary of Key Findings

The following section provides an overview of the key findings from the questionnaire and shows how they help to answer the research questions. The implications of these findings, in relation to the literature, are discussed in the next chapter.

RQ1: To what extent and in what ways is the Internet used by 11 to 14 year olds in England?

The 11 to 14 year olds in the sample are prolific users of the Internet. Nearly all the participants used the Internet every week and most, several times a day. A majority owned their own computer and laptop, and the majority also had computers connected to the Internet in their own bedroom. The most popular website is Facebook, which nearly 70% of the participants used. There is little difference between how male and female, those with low, middle and high socio-economic status, and, those from different religions or of no religion, used the Internet.

RQ2: What might be the influence of the Internet on two key character virtues; honesty and compassion?

Many 11 to 14 year olds in the questionnaire admitted to being uncompassionate online. Nearly a third of the respondents (31%) had had someone be unkind to them on the Internet, such as saying bad things about them. Nineteen per cent say that they themselves had written something nasty about other people online. Similar findings are found in the questions relating to uncompassionate behaviour and Facebook. The participants also used the Internet for expressions of compassionate behaviour; for

example, 71% of the respondents reported that they have helped other people on the Internet. Likewise, questions about compassionate attitudes and actions on the Internet are similar to questions about compassionate attitudes and actions on Facebook.

Participants in the sample admitted to being dishonest online. Over 50% say they have lied about their age and up to 25% 'misrepresented' other features about themselves, such as their appearance and / or name online. In addition, 25% of respondents reported to have copied someone else's work from the Internet and pretended that it is their own. Conversely, the young people in the sample also said that they are generally trusting of their friends online.

RQ3: Is there a relationship between gender, religion and socio-economic status and the influence of the Internet on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England?

A difference can be seen between how those from different religions respond to the questions relating to honesty and compassion. Overall, the Muslim participants were less likely to be dishonest or uncompassionate online, followed by the Christian participants. Socio-economic status and gender did not make much difference to how the questionnaire participants reported their virtuous behaviour online. The most notable findings were that female respondents were slightly more likely to have been both the victims and perpetrators of uncompassionate behaviour, whilst those in the high socio-economic group were less likely than those in the low or middle groups to write comments on the Internet that might upset someone else.

CHAPTER SIX:

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION: QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS

1 Introduction

The findings from the questionnaire, as well as the implications of these findings, are discussed in this chapter. The discussion will be based on the findings that relate to the questionnaire participants use of the Internet more generally. However supporting evidence from the questions relating to Facebook will also be drawn upon, and evidence drawn from other sources that corroborates or contradicts these findings will also be considered. The final section of the chapter provides a summary of the main findings as well as an analysis of the strengths and limitations of the questionnaire data.

2 Internet Use by 11 to 14 Year Olds

An important objective of the thesis is to establish the extent to which the Internet is used by 11 to 14 year olds in England. Before attempting to understand the influence of the Internet, it is important to establish where, when and why young people utilise it. These findings will help to determine both the significance of the other findings, as well as provide some context for them. If it is found that the Internet has an important role in the lives of 11 to 14 year olds, then it might be expected that any influence it has on their character virtues will be of greater significance.

The questionnaire shows that the 11 to 14 years olds who participated are frequent users of the Internet. They access the Internet using computers, laptops and phones, regularly throughout the week. Question 12 shows us that almost all (98%) of the young people use the Internet at least once a week and the majority of them (74%) every day. These findings are broadly consistent with other sources of Internet usage data collected at roughly the same time, although on a larger scale. For example, an Ofcom (2013) report

on Internet use showed that all (100%) of 12 to 15 year olds used the Internet in 2012. The report also found that 12-15 year olds use the Internet on average around 17.1 hours a week and in 2012 (for the first time ever) they spent as much time on the Internet each week as they did watching television. It is clear from this data that the Internet plays a significant role in young people's lives, and one that perhaps could never have been imagined less than twenty-five years ago, when the technology was invented.

Interestingly, whereas 62% of the questionnaire respondents said that they owned their own computer or laptop, a higher proportion (66%) said that they had a computer connected to the Internet in their own bedroom. This seemingly inconsistent finding can perhaps be explained in one of two ways. Either the respondents do not own the computers they say are connected to the Internet in their bedrooms, or they are accessing the Internet by other means, such as on their mobile phones. Either way, the number of young people who access the Internet in their own bedroom provides an interesting context for the discussions that follows. It might be expected that 11 to 14 year olds will behave differently when on their own in their own bedrooms, than they would when they are in public and in the company of adults. Young people are perhaps more likely to 'do the right thing' and, for example, be more honest if they are in the company of others, and in particular, when being observed by their parents or teachers. An Ofcom (2013) report showed that 35% of children (5-15 year olds) mostly used the Internet on their own and also, that parenting styles impact on how young people use the Internet when on their own. Valcke *et al.* (2010) conducted a study addressing a similar question, involving 533 parents of children in primary schools. The results showed that parenting styles significantly affects how, and in particular how much, a child uses the Internet. The highest child usage level is experienced when parents adopt a 'permissive' parenting style; the lowest level is observed when parents adopt an 'authoritarian' parenting style. In addition, other variables such as parents own Internet behaviour and parent educational background also significantly predicts Internet usage, as well as the behaviour online of children using the Internet at home.

The technology that young people use to access the Internet also appears to be changing. Evidence from the questionnaire showed that although the participants were most likely to access the Internet on a home computer, a significant proportion also accessed the Internet on their mobile phones. Ofcom (2013) reported that for the whole UK population, access to the Internet using a mobile phone more than doubled between 2010 and 2013, from 24% to 53%. As mobile phones become more sophisticated, as Internet speeds increase, and with the roll out of 4G, it can be expected that access to the Internet by young people on mobile phones might increase even further over the next few years. Internet access on mobile phones is more immediate and spontaneous, and enables young people to be on the Internet at any time, and in any place. Therefore, it is likely that mobile phones will intensify Internet use of young people.

The discussion above has two implications for this thesis. The first is that it seems clear that the Internet plays a significant, and perhaps increasingly significant role in the lives of young people. Secondly, the context in which young people access the Internet appears to be changing. Evidence gained from other sources, as well as the questionnaire shows that increasingly, young people are accessing the Internet in their bedrooms in private or through mobile phones, and this is likely to have an effect on how they use the technology and therefore, the potential influence it has on them.

Before proceeding to a discussion about character virtues, it is important to observe at this stage that despite the seemingly high rates of Internet use by 11 to 14 year olds, it does not necessarily follow that any influence it has on them will be predictable, or indeed uniform. The nature of any influence is more likely to be shaped by the particular websites young people access. Therefore, although the questionnaire showed that Facebook was the most popular website, the participants also claimed to access hundreds of other websites for a variety of reasons; some for entertainment, some for communication, some for information and some for learning. It is ultimately young people themselves who decide what websites they access and, perhaps more importantly, what they do on these websites. This important point relates to a theme

that will be considered in much more detail later on in the thesis; namely technological determinism. Ellerman (in Gackenbach, 2007: 31) argues that a 'users and gratifications' approach should be adopted when considering technology. This approach, used by social psychologists, balances technological determinism with human agencies. It acknowledges that it is ultimately humans who choose whether or not to use the Internet, and they adapt it to their own needs. Ellerman argues that the way the Internet is used is not necessarily uniform and therefore the influence it has on one person is unlikely to be the same as on the next person. Just because 11 to 14 year olds use the Internet heavily, it does not necessarily mean that it will have a predetermined influence on all of them.

3 The Influence of the Internet on Honesty and Compassion

After establishing that young people use the Internet regularly, findings from the questionnaire are now discussed with relevance to the influence it is having on their character virtues. The following three findings from the questionnaire will be prioritised in the discussion, as they are understood to be the most pertinent to the research questions outlined at the start of the thesis; i) some 11 to 14 year olds engage in acts of uncompassionate behaviour online; ii) some 11 to 14 year olds use the Internet as a tool for expressions of compassionate behaviour; and iii) some 11 to 14 year olds admit to being dishonest online.

3.1 Some 11 to 14 year olds Engage in Acts of Uncompassionate Behaviour Online

Evidence from the questionnaire showed that some 11 to 14 year olds might use the Internet to commit acts of unkind and uncompassionate behaviour. Nearly a third of the sample reported that they had been recipients of unkind words online, and nearly 20% admitted to writing something unkind on the Internet about someone else. Furthermore, 17% also admitted to writing comments on the Internet that might upset someone else.

Similar results were found for the questions about uncompassionate behaviour on Facebook.

As the questionnaires relied on self-reported behaviour, it is likely that there is a bias for social desirability (Holtgraves, 2004). This might mean that some respondents did not want to admit to committing acts of non-virtuous behaviour. Interestingly, nearly 20% of the respondents of question 21 answered the question 'have you ever written comments on the Internet that might upset someone else?' with the response 'don't know'. This is a much higher 'don't know' response than to most of the other questions. This suggests that either the young people do not know what the outcomes are of the comments they write online, or they are unable themselves to distinguish between comments that might or might not upset someone. The former is an issue that is commonly addressed in the literature surrounding cyber-bullying. The absence of visual clues when writing on the Internet means that there is a greater chance of upsetting others through online writing than in face-to-face communication (see, for example, *Cross et al*, 2009).

The questionnaire results broadly align with similar studies in the UK and on an international level. European and UK rates for cyber-bullying in young people have been reported by several surveys to be around 20% (Livingstone, 2007) with similar cross-cultural rates also being identified in America, Canada and China (Hinduja and Patchin, 2008; Li, 2005). Hasebrink *et al.* (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of results from European Union countries and estimated (via median results) that approximately 18% of European young people had been 'bullied/harassed/stalked' via the Internet and mobile phones. They also found that cyber-harassment rates for young people across the EU member states ranged from 10% to 52%. Ackers (2012) in her study of 325 12 year olds found that 11% reported they had been cyber-bullied (33% per cent of the overall sample also reported that they knew of somebody who had been cyber bullied, and 7% said they had cyber bullied someone else). A further 29% of the subjects stated that they had received an electronic message (for example, text or e-mail), which had made them feel bad, however they did not class it as cyber-bullying.

Although the questionnaire provides some evidence about the possible levels of unkind or cyber-bullying behaviour experienced by 11 to 14 year olds, it does not reveal the nature or severity of this behaviour. For example, the questionnaire did not ask how often the participants sent or received unkind messages, or of the nature of these messages. It might be that some of them had been the recipients or perpetrators of just one instance of unkindness, whereas others received sustained and regular instances of unkind behaviour online. Communications in the latter category might more accurately be called cyber-bullying as this is generally defined as 'repeated' acts of hostile behaviour online (Belsey, 2005). The findings from the questions about Facebook specifically provide some clarification as to the nature of the unkind behaviour. One question specifically asked if the participants had *ever witnessed bullying on Facebook* and 7% more of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with this statement than disagreed or strongly disagreed with it. This would suggest that many of the recorded instances of unkind messages sent and received online might also be regarded as cyber-bullying.

Furthermore, the questionnaire did not reveal if the Internet had been an 'influence' on the prevalence of cyber-bullying online. This point is discussed in relation to themes such as anonymity, access, and connectivity in much greater detail later on in the thesis. However, there are some clues in the questionnaire findings that might point to differences between online and offline forms of bullying. One finding in the questionnaire was that more of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed (43%) than disagreed or strongly disagreed (34%) with the statement *Facebook makes it easy to say nasty things about other people*. Therefore, the perception of young people is that Facebook has provided a tool that makes it easier to bully other people if they wish to do so. This finding is backed up by analysis undertaken by Greenfield (2004) who found that social networking websites may not be positive for young people's development, as many communications on them promote sexual infidelity, prejudice and other unkind behaviour. She argues that although these concerns are not exclusive to the Internet, the potential for anonymity that chat rooms and social network websites afford, may lead to

young people engaging in more degrading communications, and that the effects of these communications are likely to be amplified. Ybarra *et al.* (2007) also found that many victims of cyber-bullying have not previously faced bullying via traditional face-to-face methods and therefore, their use of technology has opened them up to a new area of vulnerability. Likewise, The Cyber-bullying Research Centre at Florida Atlantic University (Hinduja, 2008) argues that the Internet has encouraged greater amounts of non-compassionate behaviour in society generally. The research found that 'without question, the nature of adolescent peer aggression has evolved due to the proliferation of information and communications technology'.

However, not all the literature presupposes that young people are helpless victims of potential bullies. Dunckels (2008) found, in a study involving 104 interviews in Sweden, that the children she interviewed have positive relations to the Internet. The children in the study handle the drawbacks of the Internet well, and not simply because they are naive and unable to see actual threats. Dunckles argues that in her research she found many young people to be responsible and aware of threats in their digital environment.

Although the questionnaire findings cannot show if the Internet has had an impact on the uncompassionate behaviour of young people, it does show that it has the potential to. It reveals that the Internet is a place where many young people are unkind to each other and in more serious cases, bully each other. However, further research is needed to discover more about the exact nature and prevalence of the uncompassionate behaviour and, more importantly, if there are specific features of the Internet that mean that young people are more likely to be uncompassionate online than offline.

3.2 Some 11 to 14 Year olds use the Internet as a Tool for Expressions of Compassionate Behaviour

The findings from the questionnaire not only showed that the Internet might be having a negative influence on compassion, it also showed that it may be having a positive influence on the same virtue. Specific questions relating to the concept of 'cyber-citizenship' (see chapter three) sought to explore this aspect in more detail.

The respondents were asked if they had ever visited the website of a charity, and just under half said that they had. This question alone is not enough to determine levels of compassionate behaviour, as it might be expected that those who answer this question positively are not all exploring ways they can help others, and the questionnaire cannot provide evidence as to the motives of the respondents. For example, they might have visited a charity to find out how they can volunteer, help out or take part in an online campaign, or they might have been instructed to do so as part of a school project. Whatever the motives, the Internet has provided a new way for young people to access and find out about charitable activities, and it is clear that many of them are taking up the opportunity to do so. In addition, micro-volunteering – participating online in small increments of time, in particular through the use of technology – has recently attracted increasing attention (Jocham and Paylor, 2013). However, for this finding to have greater significance, it would be important to develop a better understanding as to what levels of engagement the young people had with the charities, and what effect accessing the charities through a website had on this engagement. The questionnaire participants were also asked if they had ever helped someone online. Whereas visiting a charity website might be interpreted as an action that might or might not have compassionate intentions, this question sought to find out if the respondents had undertaken an online activity that they believed had actually helped someone. Nearly three quarters of the respondents said that they had helped other people on the Internet. In addition, over 55% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they have *helped other people on Facebook*. The data does not show what

the nature of this 'helping behaviour' was or indeed, even if the 'help' was welcomed by the recipient, therefore, further evidence about the nature of the 'helping' activity and its consequences would be useful to illuminate this finding.

The questions specifically about Facebook do however provide more information on this theme. For example, nearly 40% of the respondents reported they had joined a Facebook group that sought to help others, and about 13% claimed to have started a campaign that aimed to make a difference. These results provide some indication that social networking websites such as Facebook are used by some as a tool for reaching out and trying to help others. However, the majority does not. Evidence drawn from other sources provides some support for these findings. For example, the *Service Generation* (Birdwell and Millar, 2013) report showed that around 340,000 British Facebook users between the ages of 13 and 20 have an interest relating to social action. This statistic was compiled by searching the social networking website for terms such as volunteering, activism and social action. However, 340,000 represents just 5.5% of the 13 to 20 year olds who use Facebook, which is much less than then 13% in the questionnaire who claim to have actually started a campaign that aims to make a difference.

The questionnaire results also suggest that a helpful distinction might be drawn between acts of compassionate behaviour that might be considered formal, structured and proactive, and acts of compassionate behaviour that might be considered informal, unstructured and perhaps more spontaneous in nature. Those in the former category might include the participants who reported that they have set up an online campaign or actively promoted a charitable cause, whereas those in the latter category might be participants who agree to being someone's friend online, or taking action when they see something unfair online.

There are several limitations in the questionnaire data relating to compassionate behaviour online. Firstly, although the questionnaires provide some evidence as to the types of compassionate activities that might be undertaken online, they do not provide

any evidence as to the potential 'quality' of these activities (Davies and Sant, 2014). For example, simply clicking on a link to join a group, without any real thought about the nature or activities of this group might not be deemed an intentional act of compassionate behaviour. Terms such as 'clicktivism' and 'slacktivism' have been used in an increasingly pejorative way to belittle activities that do not express a full-blown political commitment (Christensen, 2011).

Secondly, it would be impossible to tell from the questionnaires alone if the Internet has changed or increased how young people engage with seemingly compassionate causes. Has the Internet been a driver for 'new' acts of compassion, or have these acts simply been extensions of offline expressions of the same virtue? For example, the Internet might be viewed as a good information source about charities and good causes, but other activities that might be deemed to be an active expression of compassion occur less regularly in cyber-space. Interestingly, the organisation Civic Web (2014) found that although young people increasing use the Internet as a way to connect with civic causes, it was also found that the Internet is generally more effective as a tool for those who are already engaged, than as a means of connecting with those who are currently excluded.

3.3 Some 11 to 14 Year Olds Admit to Being Dishonest Online

The questionnaire results show that some of the respondents admit to being dishonest online. This dishonest behaviour can be classified into two particular themes: plagiarism and misrepresentation, and both will be discussed in turn below.

A quarter of the sample admitted that they had copied other people's work online and pretended it was their own. This practice is commonly known as online plagiarism and is considered to be dishonest behaviour. However, although this figure is high (particularly given the aforementioned potential for bias due to social desirability) it does not show if young people themselves think that copying other people's work and representing it as their own is dishonest. Many young people might believe this to be common practice and in some sense normal behaviour, perhaps in the same way that research has shown

that many young people now see it as acceptable to download music and films illegally (Lysonski and Durvasula, 2008). Advances in digital compression technologies have drastically increased the level of online digital sharing, much of which is illegal. Lysonski and Durvasula conducted a study with 364 students and their results clearly showed that downloading of films and music continues at a higher rate today, driven by strong belief that it is not ethically wrong.

Although the 11 to 14 year olds in the questionnaire admitted to copying others work, they might not believe they are being dishonest or doing anything that is considered ethically wrong. There are two possible causes identified in the literature for this possible change of perception. The first is that it is much easier to copy and paste information directly from the Internet, and in some schools this practice is commonplace and considered 'research' (Sutherland-Smith, 2008). Secondly, young people, particularly those of school age, report they are unsure about the 'rules' regarding copying other peoples work online (Freestone and Mitchell, 2004). Therefore, although the results relating to online plagiarism might look particularly stark, they might not necessarily be an indicator of 11 to 14 years olds being deliberately dishonest.

Another issue in the questionnaire findings related to the virtue of honesty is 'misrepresentation'. Several questions asked if the 11 to 14 year old participants deliberately pretend to be someone they are not, and therefore misrepresent who they are online. The responses to the questions relating to lying about age online were particularly striking. Over 50% of the respondents admitted they had lied online, and compatible results were seen for a similar question relating to Facebook.

The explanation for the high percentage of participants who admitted to lying about their age online is possibly straightforward. The minimum age to register on Facebook (as well as many other social networking websites) is 13, and most of sample were either under this age or had registered on Facebook before they were 13. There are two reasons that the age is set at 13. The first is that 13 years is the age set by Congress in the Children's

Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA, 2014), which prohibits websites from collecting information on children younger than 13 years without parental permission. Secondly, the official terms of service for many popular sites now mirror the COPPA regulations and state that 13 years is the minimum age to sign up and have a profile. However, research other than that in this thesis has shown that millions of under-13 youth are on Facebook (Lenhart *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, it has been found that many parents actively help their children register on Facebook under the age of 13 and parents are often not aware of the age restrictions (Boyd *et al.*, 2011). The fact that the most popular websites have age restrictions is seemingly encouraging young people to lie about their age. Added to this, there are little, if any, consequences for registering online whilst underage, and the social websites themselves make little attempt to check; therefore, it might be considered easy to do so by many young people. It is also worth noting that 'lying about ones age' is common in other areas of young people's lives – such as trying to buy cigarettes or get into a cinema underage.

Many of the respondents also admitted that they made things up about themselves when on the Internet, such as pretending they had a different name (25%), and pretending they can do something they actually could not (17%). Gakenback (2007) and Valkenburg (2005) believe that there is a good reason why many young people might want to misrepresent themselves online. The Internet has afforded young people the opportunity to develop a new authenticity for themselves, and to try out, or try on different identities and personalities in ways that are just not possible in face-to-face realities. Gakenback (2007) argues that the Internet has allowed young people to have 'multi-identities', as opposed to discreet selves, and that going online is a way of trying out being someone else. He believes that this explains why many people who are very honest in face-to-face situations, are less so when they describe themselves online. Gakenburg contends that it does not hold that just because individuals are dishonest online they are also dishonest in person. Furthermore, the behaviour should not be considered dishonest, but simply young people exploring different sides to themselves

and their personalities. Therefore, rather than the young people 'lying', they are actually conducting experiments with the truth.

Valkenburg (2005: 383) found that identity expression online is increasingly becoming the norm. In a survey of 600 18 year olds, 50% were found to have engaged in 'internet based identity experiments'. Three reasons were given for this misrepresentation of self online; social exploration (trying other representations of self), social compensation (to overcome shyness) and social facilitation (to meet new people). The study found that most of the sample pretended to be older than they were (50%) whilst others presented as more flirtatious, or as an elaborate fantasy persona. This effect has been popularly termed 'disinhabitation' (Suler, 2004), and Joinson (in Gakenburg, 2007) describes it as a state when young people become more comfortable with themselves online, and are therefore more willing to express or enhance certain things about themselves. If these theorists are correct, then it might be important to distinguish between what might be considered 'healthy' expressions of self-online and those who might be deliberately misleading and therefore harmful to others. In an age where identity and self-expression seem to matter more than ever, the Internet enables young people to explore their identities in a way they never could before. As online identities, such as those depicted in social networking profiles, have arguably become as important as face-to-face identities for many young people, it is therefore to be expected that young people will be motivated to look as good as possible online.

Harmen *et al.* (2005:1) refers to misrepresentation as 'faking' as opposed to 'lying'. In a study they found that young people between the ages of 11 to 16 are more likely to 'fake' online if they had poor social skills, lower levels of self-esteem, high levels of anxiety and higher levels of aggression. In addition, they found that the frequency of Internet use did not affect the factors. Harman *et al.* are, however, concerned that 'maladaptive behaviour could permeate into a child's off-line life'. Curtis (1997:4) also worries that misrepresentation might make children more aggressive.

There are several seemingly contradictory results in the questionnaire that are worth reporting. For example, although there was a high level of trust amongst friends on Facebook, the participants also acknowledged that Facebook makes it easier for them to lie to their friends than when face-to-face. Likewise, most of the respondents strongly agreed that they know what is right and wrong on Facebook, however over a third of the respondents also strongly agreed with the statement that they had lied about their age to register on Facebook. This last set of findings in particular seem to indicate that although some 11 to 14 year olds know what is generally perceived as honest behaviour, they do not always act honestly online.

4 Gender, Religion, Socio-economic Status and Virtuous Behaviour Online

The following discussion interprets the results in the questionnaire relating to gender, religious affiliation and socio-economic status of the participants. The aim of the discussion is to interpret whether any influence that the Internet might be found to have on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds is evenly distributed across various pre-determined demographic groups.

4.1 Gender, Compassion and Honesty

The questionnaire shows that gender seems to have little influence on how young people report their virtuous behaviour online. In only two questions was the difference between the male and female results statistically significant. The first was in a question relating to the prevalence of unkind behaviour online, and the second related to accessing charitable websites.

The female questionnaire participants were 4% more likely than the male participants to say they have been recipients of unkind behaviour online. Several findings relating to this theme, and specifically about Facebook, seemed to support this finding (although most showed a non-significant trend). For example, 10% more female than male respondents agreed with the statement *I have witnessed bullying on Facebook*. These findings also

corroborate data from other, larger, surveys. For example, a survey of 2,000 young people carried out by the Cyber-bullying Research Centre (Hinduja and Patchin, 2008) found that adolescent girls are significantly more likely than boys to partake in and experience cyber-bullying. Furthermore, the survey found that the type of cyber-bullying tends to differ by gender; girls are more likely to spread rumours, whilst boys are more likely to post hurtful pictures or videos.

The only significant result in the questions relating to compassionate behaviour online was that the female participants are more likely than the male participants to report they had visited the website of a charity. However, no other literature was found to either support or negate this finding. There was also little difference in the responses by male and female participants to all the other questions about what might be termed pro-social or compassionate online behaviour. A study by Demos (Birdwell and Millar, 2013) into the social action groups joined by 13 to 20 year olds online, found similar results. The study found that male and female Facebook users are members of roughly the same amount of social action groups. However, the study did find visible demographic distinctions within the type of groups that members of each gender are likely to join, with the female participants stating they were more likely to be interested in volunteering groups and male respondents in protest groups.

There was also a consistent, if only slight, difference between how the female and male respondents answered the questions relating to honesty. On every question about the Internet, the male respondents were more likely to be dishonest than the female respondents. However, in most cases, the differences between the responses are too narrow to perhaps be of interest. There was an insignificant trend for the male responders to be more likely to lie about their age than the female respondents. Interestingly, Whitty (2002:343) found, in her research into openness and dishonesty in chat rooms, that men were more likely than women to lie, and when women did lie in chat rooms they reported it was for safety reasons.

4.2 Religion, Compassion and Honesty

The findings from the questionnaire show that there does appear to be a relationship between religion and virtuous behaviour online. There were marked difference in the results for the questions relating to both compassion and honesty. Many of the results were also statistically significant.

A striking result was that nearly twice as many respondents with no religion reported that they had been recipients of unkind words over the Internet than those that follow the Muslim faith. Likewise, those who do not follow a religion were also twice as likely to admit to writing something nasty online then the Muslim respondents. The Christian respondents were also much more likely to have been recipients of unkind behaviour online than the Muslim respondents. Perhaps conflicting with these findings, the Muslim respondents on Facebook were also marginally more likely to both strongly agree as well as strongly disagree with the statements that *they have witnessed bullying on Facebook* and that *they have written unkind comments about others on Facebook*. The Muslim respondents were also nearly 10% less likely to say they have actively helped someone else on the Internet compared to those with no religion. They were also more likely to care about all their friends on the website, and much more likely to do something if they see something unfair on Facebook. Across the board, the participants who identified themselves as following a religion were more likely to report being honest online. For example, 63% of participants who do not follow a religion admit to lying about their age on the Internet, compared to just 33% of the Muslim participants. Similarly, on Facebook, the Muslim respondents were more likely to report telling the truth about themselves on Facebook and less likely to admit lying about their age than the Christians participants, or those who claim to have no religion.

No other research relating to religion and the expression of character virtues online was identified in the literature review, and this is an area that requires further investigation. However, a link between virtues and religion has been variously made throughout history from the writing of Aquinas on the cardinal virtues through to contemporary philosophers, writing from a secular position, such as the philosopher Alan de Botton

(2012) who has highlighted the role religion plays in the promotion of virtue. As the display of virtue is a recognised theme in many major religions, it might be expected that those in the questionnaire who state they actively subscribed to a religion would self-report that they demonstrate greater virtue in their online actions. Further evidence to support this assumption includes the recently published Knightly Virtues report (Arthur, Harrison *et. al*, 2014) that found that 9-11 year olds in Britain who attended church schools had a stronger grasp of virtue language and concepts than those who did not attend faith schools. However it is also worth noting that the gap between pupils attending the two types of schools closed significantly after they experienced an intervention designed to enhance virtue language, knowledge and understanding.

The difference between the results relating to religion might also be explained in a number of other ways. Firstly, the Muslim students largely came from the same schools, which predominately catered for Muslim students (although they were state not Muslim schools). Therefore, there might be some conflation of the results, i.e. it might not be possible to distinguish between the influence of the school and the influence of religion. Schools with a strong religious character tend to put a stronger focus on the virtues (Pike, 2010, 2011; Arthur *et al*. 2014a) and the present findings might support such a conviction. Likewise, research has shown that faith based schools are more likely to be value driven (Smith and Smith, 2012). Grace (2006: 225) found that Catholic head teachers saw it as part of their role 'to promote the moral formation of their students as good people'. There is also research evidence which indicates that religious practice and education have an explanatory value when discussing virtue (see Burford, 2014). Such evidence suggests that, expressions of non-virtuous behaviour online are more likely to be considered wrong and clamped down on in schools that predominantly cater for religious students, such as those that serve the Muslim students who participated in the survey. Another explanation might be the different ways that young people report their affiliation with religion. Arthur (2010a) has previously found that many Christian students have identified themselves as 'Christian' in surveys to make a statement about their identity, as opposed to necessarily being strong followers of the religion. Therefore there

might be a discrepancy between the results of the Muslim young people who might be considered to be 'stronger' and more disciplined followers of their faith and its teaching than the Christian students who use the religion simply as a label, but in actual fact have a little affiliation with the religion. Related to this discussion is emerging research that shows that increasingly the Internet is being used by Muslims to create 'imagined communities' (Murcotte, 2010). Muslims use chat rooms and online forums to forge relationships with other Muslims who they identify with. The practice also allows them to strengthen their own identity; particularly in secular societies that they might feel are hostile to them.

4.3 Socio-Economic Status, Compassion and Honesty

There appears to be little relationship between the socio-economic status of the participants and how they report expressions of virtuous behaviour online. One significant difference is that those from a higher socio-economic status are much more likely to visit the website of a charity than those from a low socio-economic status. Previous research undertaken by Cremin *et al.* (2011) supports this finding. Research conducted with over 1,000 11 to 16 year olds and over 100 volunteering organisations found that those from higher and middle socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to take part in 'traditional' citizenship activities such as volunteering and giving to charity.

There was no strong relationship found in the questionnaire results linking socio-economic status to questions about honesty. There was a non-significant trend that those in the high socio-economic category were marginally more likely to be dishonest than those in the middle or lower groups. However, this small margin of difference, and lack of statistical significance is in contrast to a general perception that those from lower socio-economic groups are less likely to be virtuous. Some research purports there is a link between socio-economic status and behavioural problems in children (Farrington, 1978; Rutter, 1976). Research has also shown links between economic hardship and how a child is socialised (McLoyd, 1989). Empirical research has also supported such beliefs, such as the study by Dodge *et al.* (1994) that found a correlation between socio-

economic status and teacher rated peer aggression of children in primary schools. The results from the present study do not appear to confirm this previous research.

5 Summary

There are a number of interesting findings from the questionnaire relating to young people's virtuous and un-virtuous behaviour online. There is evidence that some 11 to 14 year olds demonstrate both compassionate and non-compassionate behaviour online, and also that some report to undertake activities that might be considered dishonest. Some of findings were particularly striking; in particular those relating to being unkind to others online, helping others online, and lying about age and appearance.

The questionnaire has provided some partial answers to some of the overarching research questions outlined at the start of the thesis, although there are clearly limitations to the findings. Perhaps most usefully, the findings have provided a macro level picture of how some of the issues identified in the literature review influence the character virtues of the sample population of 11 to 14 year olds who completed the questionnaire. However, although they show that the Internet has the potential to be an influence the character virtues of honesty and compassion, it did not reveal why this might be the case. For example, although it has been possible to discover that some young people are being unkind to others online, it has not been possible to discover the nature of this unkind behaviour. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, the questionnaire findings did not show if the behaviour of 11 to 14 year olds online is different to how they behave offline. For example, the questionnaire shows that some young people seem to be dishonest online, but it does not show if they are more dishonest than they would be in face-to-face situations. Likewise, the questionnaire does not help to answer important questions such as whether more young people lie about their age on the Internet than face-to-face, whether they are more likely to plagiarise online than offline. A further limitation of the questionnaire was that as it was cross-sectional and conducted at one specific period, it is not possible to determine if the

situation is changing over time. For example, it would be interesting to know if young people are becoming more or less honest and compassionate online over time.

To enable a more in-depth understanding of these issues and how the Internet might be influencing the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds, a different method is required. It is for this reason that the second phase of the research (see chapters 7 and 8) utilises group interviews as the research method of choice. The interviews will attempt to address some of the questions that have been unearthed by the questionnaire, but remain unanswered. Ultimately the interviews will be aimed at gathering data that will help to answer the third over-arching research question - *why might the Internet be having an influence on character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England?*

CHAPTER SEVEN:

GROUP INTERVIEWS

1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the qualitative data obtained during the group interviews. Twelve group interviews were undertaken in six schools between September and November 2013. In total, sixty 11 to 14 year olds were interviewed, of which thirty-five were female and twenty-five male. The group interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. The data collected in the interviews was analysed thematically using a deductive approach of qualitative interpretation (for more information about the group interview data collection and analysis see chapter 4).

The chapter presents a cumulative understanding of the major themes identified in the group interviews and prioritises those that link to the research questions. Initially, a background to the interviews is provided, outlining why 'cyber-bullying' was identified as the major theme to focus on. Next, the interview participants conception of cyber-bullying is explored, followed by a consideration of the differences between online and offline forms of bullying. The analysis then turns to focus on how the differences discovered between offline and online forms of bullying might influence young peoples' character virtues. This section provides a better understanding of why people might behave differently when using the Internet to when they are interacting with people face-to-face. Finally, consideration is given to the data pertaining to how schools and teachers might deal with the issue of cyber-bullying.

2 Background to the Group Interviews

Group interviews are generally considered to be more successful when the researcher has identified a clear focus for their work (Rugg and Petre, 2007). It was therefore important to draw out from the questionnaire findings some promising avenues that might be explored in the interviews. The following four themes that relate to the questionnaire findings all seem to offer fertile ground for the focus of the interviews:

- i) Cyber-bullying: How does 'unkind behaviour' or 'cyber-bullying' manifest itself online? Is it different from face-to-face? What is the role of social networks, and have they made the situation better or worse? If so, why? What is it about the nature of the Internet that might make young people behave differently?
- ii) Cyber-citizenship: What does cyber-citizenship look like online? What sorts of activities do 11 to 14 year olds undertake to help others on the Internet? Are they more likely to help others online than face-to-face? What is the difference in the quality and quantity of the helping behaviour online as compared to face-to-face?
- iii) Online dishonesty: What is considered dishonest behaviour online? How is plagiarism and the illegal downloading of music / films online perceived by 11 to 14 year olds? Are they more likely to plagiarise / steal music online than offline? If so, why?
- iv) Misrepresentation: Why do 11 to 14 year olds misrepresent themselves online? How important is online identity for 11 to 14 year olds? Do young people trust other young people online? Is it easier to be dishonest about 'oneself' online or in person?

Any one of these four themes would provide a relevant and interesting focus for the second phase of the research. However, of these themes, cyber-bullying was chosen as the issue to be investigated further in the group interviews for the reasons listed below.

The first reason is its significance: Cyber-bullying is currently a 'hot topic' in schools and it is therefore anticipated that a great deal of useful data will be generated during the focus groups as the theme will appeal to young people. Shariff (2008), amongst others, has noticed the increasing attention that schools and teachers are paying to the issue of cyber-bullying, as it is becoming an increasing problem. In addition, research by Mishnan *et al.* (2009) has shown that young people are willing to talk about cyber-bullying in interviews, as it is a topic that motivates them to discuss their own experiences. A further reason is that despite the fact cyber-bullying has been the subject of considerable research, little, if any of it to date focuses on character virtues. Menesini *et al.* (2011:3) found that 'despite its importance, only a few studies have examined the relationship between the personal value system of children and adolescents and risk behaviours, including violent, antisocial, and aggressive behaviours'. Menesini *et al.* (2013:4) conducted an investigation into cyber-bullying, making reference to values – but most of these values (security, self-direction, achievement, hedonism) would not be considered moral virtues for the purposes of this thesis. It seems there is a case for a greater focus on moral virtues in research into cyber-bullying as the literature is so sparse.

It is hoped that building a qualitative inquiry approach, on top of the previously conducted quantitative phase, enables a research design capable of discovering some of the nuances related to cyber-bullying that might be less visible if only one method was utilised. As Livingstone and Haddon (2008:317) argue; little research into the Internet 'is qualitative or multi-method in nature, so we have less knowledge of children's own experiences or perceptions, or of the ways in which online activities are contextualised within their everyday lives'. It is expected that the data generated by the group interviews focusing on cyber-bullying will both compliment the questionnaire data, whilst also offering new perspectives. Ultimately, the aim is to discover new data that will help to answer the overarching research question - why might the Internet be having an influence on character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England? In order to do so, the following four secondary questions were addressed in the research:

- How is cyber-bullying conceived and experienced by 11 to 14 year olds in England?
- Do 11 to 14 year olds in England perceive cyber-bullying to be more prevalent than face-to-face bullying? If so, why?
- Do 11 to 14 year olds in England perceive there to be differences in the character virtues of online and offline bullies? If yes, what are they?
- Can 11 to 14 year olds in England be educated not to cyber-bully? If so, how?

The data pertaining to each of the research questions is provided below and illustrated with representative quotations from the group interview participants. Each quotation is annotated with either an (m) or an (f) to show the gender of the participant.

3 How is Cyber-bullying Conceived and Experienced by 11 to 14 Year Olds in England?

The group interviews began by asking the participants about how, when and why they use the Internet. It was clear from the discussions that the Internet is a major part of the lives of the 11 to 14 year old participants. Comments such as ‘I will die if I don’t have the Internet’ (f) and ‘the Internet is like nicotine. Young people today are addicted to it’ (m) and ‘the Internet is the best thing about my life’ (m) were recorded. These are representative of many of the opinions of the interviewees. However, a small minority claimed they rarely, if ever, used the Internet.

Following the opening ‘ice-breaker’ questions, the participants were asked about their experiences of cyber-bullying. The aim was to develop a better understanding of how young people conceptualise the moral issue in their own words. Although the questionnaire conducted in phase one (chapter 5), showed that 11 to 14 year olds are both victims and perpetrators of online cruelty, it did not reveal the nature of the cruelty, or its effects. The initial interview questions therefore aimed to generate greater understanding of this area by revealing how young people themselves experience and define cyber-bullying.

Although none of the sixty participants used the actual term 'uncompassionate' in the interviews, the language many did use suggested that they felt cyber-bullying was a display of uncaring behavior which is what made it an issue of concern for them. Terms like 'uncaring' (f), 'cruel' (m) and 'nasty' (m and f) were used to describe cyber-bullying. However, the extent to which it was a concern for them varied somewhat amongst the participants. The words used to describe the level of concern ranged from 'annoying' (m) to 'potentially fatal' (f). Many stated that it was their biggest concern and in one group five out of six of the participants said it was 'the worst thing about the Internet' (m and f). However, others said that although they knew it was a great concern for others, it was not an issue they were particularly worried about. There appeared to be some correlation between those who showed the most concern for cyber-bullying and those who had experiences of it.

Around half of the participants were able to give examples of cyber-bullying. These were either first hand examples or more often cases that they had heard about. None of the students admitted to knowingly cyber-bullying someone else, but this is not surprising given the group nature of the interviews, the fact they were being conducted in schools, and possible concerns about social desirability. Some students who had been victims of cyber-bullying did explain what had happened to them. In most cases it was the female students who were able to give a first-hand account. For example, one said they had been the recipient of 'regular nasty messages' (f) on a social networking website, another stated that an anonymous individual had 'said horrible things' about her appearance (f) and a third that a group of girls had spent 'all night commenting on [her] Facebook about something that happened at school' (f). Another student explained how she 'had an Ask FM account, but deleted it as people were saying horrible things like 'I should overdose and have cancer and all stuff that really hurt' (f). In the cases where students were talking about personal experiences of cyber-bullying; most said it had occurred on a social networking website. There were no first hand experiences of the participants in terms of sustained attacks that happened over a long period of time, and many of the instances described were normally either a one off or irregular.

More participants were able to give examples of cyber-bullying that they had heard about, rather than describe instances that had directly happened to themselves. For example, one girl talked about 'pictures with nasty comments of a girl at my school' (f) being sent round on Twitter, and another of her friend 'being ganged up on by a group of bullies whose comments got worse and worse over time' (f). Finally, many of the participants related experiences of cyber-bullying they had heard about in the media. Several students talked about high profile cases of cyber-bullying, such as Hannah Smith and Amanda Todd. These two victims both committed suicide, and their cases were brought up on several occasions by the interview participants.

The language that was used to describe cyber-bullying and its effects was illuminating and provided an insight into how young people define the issue. Various words were used including 'cowardly' (m), 'disgusting' (f), 'stupid' (m) and 'dangerous' (f). Another student commented that 'it has taken all the fun out of going online' (m). Several of the participants also described it as a 'moral' problem. Students were also able to identify the effects of cyber-bullying, and these included a 'loss of confidence' (f) and 'affecting friendships' (f). One student appeared to speak from first-hand experience when she said 'being cyber-bullying really knocks your confidence about yourself and I don't think people deserve to feel like that' (f). More serious effects were also mentioned, and these included 'depression' (f), 'mental illnesses' (m) and one student stated that 'cyber-bullying might lead to death' (m). Likewise, another male participant commented that although most 'people are unaware of the issues and think they are safe online, actually on the Internet bullying can be fatal' (m).

The causes of cyber-bullying were also discussed. Several participants commented that instances of cyber-bullying often spiraled out of something that had happened in real life. For example, one student commented:

I think if something happens in real life, like me and one of my ex-friends once had a like a massive argument and then she got all her friends to start bullying me on the Internet and it kind of spiraled from that (f).

This participant also explained that her main concern was how unfair it was because she was not able to defend her case. Others said that cyber-bullying can get out of hand quickly, as it can 'start with two people having a bit of an argument and then lots of people get involved'(f). Some students thought that some instances of cyber-bullying were the victim's own fault. For example a female student explained that:

Girls post stupid pictures, like half naked or something and they can't get rid of that because now someone's taken a screen shot. Before they know it It's going to go round and someone is going to hurt because they don't know what they have done to begin with, but when they realize what they have done they feel stupid for it (f).

In a similar vein, students talked about people they know purposely visiting and registering on websites that are known for 'hate'. A male student said 'it's ridiculous; there is a high chance of getting hate messages because you're in a position where you are incredibly vulnerable. If you put yourself out there anyone can say anything to you' (m). The same student went on to comment that 'on Facebook you know your friends, but out there, there are lots of random people who will say horrible things, if they go on these sites they are asking for it' (m).

Another concern for some of the interview participants was that cyber-bullying is wrongly labeled, as it is sometimes committed mistakenly. One student said that 'the word is used too casually at school, most times it is not cyber-bullying' (f). Another female student explained 'I might be like having a moan to my best friend but it becomes cyber-bullying' (f). For many students there was a great deal of potential for online messages to be interpreted incorrectly, and this is an issue that is discussed in greater detail below. There was also no agreement amongst the participants about what actually constitutes cyber-bullying. Some students thought that one hurtful message should be labeled cyber-bullying, whilst others thought that for it to be called cyber-bullying, there had to be lots of messages that were regularly repeated over a sustained period of time. For example, a female student commented 'it's like normal bullying, if you say something once, that might be okay, but it is bullying if you say it several times' (f). There was a general agreement that cyber-bullying builds and gets worse over time. For some, this

was because the victim had not reported the issue or taken steps to stop it. Likewise, students were able to describe instances where one experience of cyber-bullying had led to others. Most notably, this was often linked to high profile cases, such as that of Amanda Todd. One female student said 'there was a picture posted of a cut arm and said this is Amanda Todd's arm, the comments on there from other people were vile...like she deserved to die and I can't believe that, it's disgusting' (f).

The group interview data discussed above backs up the questionnaire findings in that the majority of the young people interviewed were both aware and concerned about cyber-bullying. However, the interview data provides a more illuminating and nuanced picture about how it is actually experienced by 11 to 14 year olds. The data shows the picture is not straightforward, and young people conceive as well as experience the problem in different ways. Building on these findings, the next section considers how young people explain the differences between online and offline bullying.

4 Do 11 to 14 Year Olds in England Perceive Cyber-bullying to be More Prevalent than Face-to-Face Bullying? If So, Why?

This thesis is concerned with identifying and explaining the influence of the Internet on young people. Whilst the questionnaire was able to show that the Internet had both a positive and negative influence on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds, it was not able to show how this influence might be different from offline influences. In order to develop a better picture of what features of the Internet might make online cyber-bullying behaviour different to offline bullying behaviour, a series of questions relating to this point were asked in the group interviews. It was found that the young people were able to identify a number of differences between the two types of bullying and that most were related to particular features of the Internet. The differences identified by the participants will now be explained in more detail below.

4.1 Anonymity

One difference between online and offline forms of bullying that was raised more consistently, and with the most vigor by the participants, was the possibilities the Internet allowed for anonymity. Most believed there to be a difference between being bullying openly in a playground by someone they knew, and being bullied through the Internet by an anonymous person. It was 'easy' according to many of the male and female participants to be anonymous on the Internet if they a person so wished. For example, it was explained that some of the websites commonly used, such as ASK FM, actually had 'anonymous' buttons on them, where it was possible to click and the profile and name would be hidden. The students explained that it is easy to set up fake Twitter, Facebook or email accounts. However, the biggest fear for most of the interviewees was that of identity theft, as 'people often pretend to be someone else online' (m). One participant described the Internet as a 'mask' (m) as you 'never know who you are talking to'. Another said it was a 'costume' (f) that bullies put on to avoid being detected. Many of the participants were able to describe instances when they thought they were communicating with friends, but it turned out to be someone else. For example, a male student described how easy it had been to take another person's profile picture and pretend to be them. Others in the same group reflected that this why they are often suspicious about whom they were actually talking to online. One commented that 'you have no real idea who anyone is online' (f) and another that 'you never know who you are talking to' (m). As such, cyber-bullying was often described as being 'darker' (m) and more 'underground' (m) than playground bullying. It was also agreed by many of the participants that both the causes and effects of cyber-bullying were harder to determine because of the possibilities for anonymity the technology allows.

An interesting related discussion was about the likelihood of detection. There were also differences in opinion about whether those who operate online anonymously can stay anonymous. Some believed there is no way of finding out who people really are online, whilst others believed that it was possible to track down anonymous people through their IP addresses. These participants were able to provide examples of when people had

been caught. However, one participant explained that even if an anonymous cyber-bully was caught, they might try to get out of it by 'pretending to have been hacked' (m).

4.2 Lack of Visual Clues

Another theme that was prominent in the group interview discussions was a belief that people communicate differently online than they do face-to-face, and that this was particularly relevant to cases of bullying. The Internet was described by the participants variously, but words such as 'impersonal' (m) and 'faceless' (f) were used. For many, the main concern was the lack of 'visual clues' (m and f), which meant communication could often 'go wrong' (m and f). This led many of the interviewed students to believe that there is a great deal of potential for misinterpretation online. For example, a male participant said 'some bullies don't even know they are bullying someone' (m). Some of the participants were able to provide first-hand examples of when this had happened to them, and they had offended someone by mistake. One male student also mentioned a case where a famous footballer had their *Twitter* messages interpreted in the wrong way and had been in trouble in the media. The absence of visual clues and the fact that 'people are communicating behind screens' (f) meant the participants felt that many of the common ways people make sense and bring meaning to words are lost. In addition, there was concern that 'you can't see people's reactions, so you might not be able to tell when you are offending them'(f). Some students felt that the bold and stark nature of black and white text can make some messages seem more threatening than intended. One student explained that this is why 'emojis are used as you can't tell the tone of a message' (f). Other students also pointed to advances in technology making things better, such as the increased use of live filming, through *Skype* or *Facetime*, for communicating. Such tools are increasingly being used to ensure communication online is more effective.

4.3 Features Specific to the Internet - Increased Connectivity, Twenty four Hour Bullying and Permanency

Many of the differences between online and offline forms of bullying discussed during the interviews were related to specific features of Internet technology. Perhaps the

feature most discussed was the opportunity the Internet provided for connecting instantaneously to a potentially infinite audience. This viewpoint was expressed by a male participant who said 'in the olden days bullying was all in the playground' and now 'it is possible to potentially bully at any time of the day, from any location and any number of people might be involved' (m). The potential for messages to spread quickly through the school and also beyond school was a real concern for some of the students. When describing instances of cyber-bullying they often commented on how messages had been seen by everyone in a school, and one student described that often 'something small can become something big very quickly' (f). Websites, such as Twitter were identified as making it easy to reach infinite audiences quickly. For some, this feature of the technology made cyber-bullying much worse than its offline equivalent. One student commented that 'the more people who witness it, the worse it is' (f) and another 'if you bully someone in the playground it seems a lot less humiliating cause there is not as many people in the place and it spread quicker on the Internet' (m). This pervasive concern was summed up neatly by a male participant stating 'once it's out there you can't get it back' (m).

Another feature of the Internet that the students identified is that as it is always on, it is always available to be used for abusive purposes. Many students said that this situation had got a lot worse recently as most people now had phones connected to the Internet. One feature of this greater connectivity was that disputes that might have once started and stopped at school were now being carried over into out-of-school settings and throughout the night. The Internet was described as both prolonging and intensifying bullying. The ease of getting online, for many, made this situation even worse. One student said 'new technology makes bullying so easy'(f) as 'you got a laptop in front of you, it's like Facebook, two clicks and you're on, Instagram one movement of your thumb you're online, it is so quick and easy and can be really instantaneous' (f). This leads to people 'cyber-bullying without any thought – saying things when they pop into their heads without any real thought about the consequences' (m).

Many participants also identified the 'permanent' (m and f) nature of online messages as troublesome. One said that online messages 'last forever' (f) and 'can always be gone back to' (f). This feature brought about different reactions from the interview participants. Some felt that this made communication more honest as there was always evidence about exactly what had been said. For example, a male student commented 'it's in black and white so there is evidence and proof that can't be argued with' (m). This led one student to say 'If I'm on the Internet I take more caution than what I say face-to-face' (f). Another said 'this should mean there is less cyber-bullying as people should think harder about what they are writing' (m). Negative features relating to the permanent nature of online messages were also identified. One female participant commented 'if someone said something to you on Monday by Wednesday you would forget about it. However on the Internet it just carries on and on' (f). Whilst another male participant said 'comments online are always there, they go back and forth – bullies do it more as know they are getting a reaction' (m).

As an addendum to this particular discussion, some of the students thought that the features that made online bullying different to offline bullying, such as increased freedom and connectivity, were the same features that made the Internet so popular with young people.

5 Do 11 to 14 Year Olds in England Perceive There to be a Difference in the Character Virtues of Online and Offline Bullies? If Yes, What Are They?

The aim of this thesis is to explore the influence of the Internet on character virtues. As discussed in the previous section, although the interviewees were able to identify differences between online and offline bullying this does not necessarily mean that these differences have an influence on character virtues. This section analyses the interview data that relates directly to this point. The analysis aims to discover; i) what young

people perceive to be the differences between online and offline forms of bullying; and, ii) how these differences might impact on their behaviour in the online worlds.

5.1 How Young People Describe the Internet

Before tackling directly the issue of character virtues, it is interesting to report on the language and discourse that the students used to describe their online and offline lives. In almost all of the focus groups the participants sought to make a clear distinction between how they view the two 'worlds' they inhabit. Almost universally across the groups, the offline world was described as 'real life' (m and f) or 'real world' (m and f). Similar language was also used, such as 'it's like a different culture' (f), and 'the Internet is like a community, outside the normal real community' (m). When this issued was probed further, many of the participants were able to describe the differences between their 'real' and 'online' worlds. For example, a male participant commented 'the Internet gives you a break from real life, if the rules were the same then there isn't a point going online. There is more freedom on the Internet' (m). Others said that the boundaries are different and that this means that people behave differently online to offline. For example, a female participant described how she might say something online, but not face-to-face to someone as the rules are different. She said 'I couldn't just say Chloe you're ugly, in society it's wrong. But on the Internet it's not real life so it not as bad' (f). Another example is a male participant who felt that people were less honest online and stated 'I think it's more free then real life because you can lie on the Internet' (m). When questioned about the differences between online and offline examples of bullying, many students also believed that people behaved differently. One participant said 'it is easier to do it (cyber-bullying) online because you don't mind hurting their feelings online because it doesn't mean as much' (f), whilst another that 'bullies feel safer on the Internet than in real life and therefore behave differently' (m). It was clear from the analysis of the transcripts that many young people believe that they are operating in different worlds online to offline. This in turn has implications for how they act and behave and therefore ultimately, who they are in each domain.

5.2 Behaving Differently Online

One topic that dominated discussions in several of the group interviews was a belief that young people are different online to offline. In most cases it was felt that they are bolder and more confident, and try to be someone they are not. Comments such as 'I think you're a bit bolder online' (m) and 'everyone sorta tougher' (f) were representative of this viewpoint. Examples of people acting tougher online were discussed at length in some of the group interviews. For example, a female participant explained that 'some people act all confident and rude on social networking sites and in person they are really quiet and that can cause arguments and stuff' (f) whilst a male participant explained 'Yeah, they try to act so tough but really they are like a little kid on the other side that you know, scared' (m).

Reasons given for why people are different online varied, and were often linked to the opportunities to invent an online persona and the potential to be anonymous. Comments expressed included people feel 'braver behind a screen' (m) and 'it is easier to say things you want to if you think you can't be found out' (f), and 'it is easier to be who you really are when people are not looking at you directly' (m). Some believed it was because the Internet provided protection and was described by two students as being like a 'shell' (m and f). Another described it like 'a costume you put on to change yourself' (f). This belief had implications for the students as to why people might bully online but not face-to-face. For example, a male participant commented 'I think cyber-bullies are like cowards, they are hiding in their shells which is the Internet' (m). Another said

Some people use the Internet to reinvent themselves to be like a completely new person. But it can actually lead to cyber-bullying, what they say behind screens might be different to what they say to your face. (m)

However, several participants were keen to point out the positives of behaving differently online. Some thought it was more representative of the person as they were more likely to be honest about who they were. Another student said that rather than people being

nastier online, they might actually be friendlier as they want to be your friend. Another commented 'some people might say nice things, when in real life they are just rude' (f). There was also a reaction against people who pretend to be someone else online. For example, one stated 'I'm the same online you should be who you are wherever you are. You should say it to their face what you would say online' (f). However, others thought it was 'harmless' (f) and a good way for 'people to express themselves when they don't feel confident doing so face-to-face' (m). It is a chance for people to 'get out all the things they wanted to say in person' (f).

5.3 Lack of Rules and Guidance

A reason why many of the participants identified for a perceived increase in cyber-bullying was that going online gave young people lots of freedom. Almost all of the participants agreed that rules and guidance online are far less strict and obvious than offline. Discussions about the 'absence of online rules' (m and f) were common to all the group interviews. Opinions such as 'I don't know anyone who follows rules on the Internet, I don't even know where they are' (m) and 'what rules?' (f) were expressed. Furthermore, comparisons with the 'real world' were made and life online was contrasted with life at school. In schools it was generally agreed that students know what is expected of them, and what is right and wrong. Furthermore, rules were enforced in schools. However, a distinction was drawn between school, which is 'full of rules' (m) and the Internet, which is a 'free for all' (m). One participant stated 'There are rules at school about no bullying, no fighting. The teachers sort this out. They don't online'(f).

Although some of the young people said that teachers, parents and others had made rules for them when they are online, and most knew what they should and should not do, these were often not followed. For example, a participant commented 'my parents give me some guidelines, but they do not check up on me online, I can do what I like' (f). Likewise, another participant commented 'in real life people tell you if things are right or wrong, but they don't properly enforce right and wrong on the Internet' (m) and another 'if you do it online no one is there to stop you, in real life people come up to you and tell you to stop it' (m). However, there was some dissent from this position expressed

by a male participant who stated 'rules are just as clear online and offline from teachers it is just people ignore online ones more' (m).

Many of the participants thought it was not the job of teachers or parents to enforce rules, rather the people who make the Internet programmes they use. However, many of these students also noted that although websites used by young people should have more rules and regulations they will not enforce these 'as young people won't use their sites' (m). As one student put it 'young people want freedom online' (f). Despite this, many of the participants did acknowledge there are terms and conditions when they sign up to a website. However almost all these students also said they had not properly read them so they did not know if they contained anything about cyber-bullying. Representative of this view were comments such as 'I just scroll down and tick I agree' (m) or 'I have a quick look but they are so boring I skip them' (f). Another student commented 'Yes you have to agree to terms and conditions...like bla bla sign this. I will read through them quickly, but never think of them as rules' (m).

Many of the participants thought that even if there were rules about not cyber-bullying, they would not be enforced. A number of reasons were given to explain why this was the case. A male participant commented 'the Internet is such a big place there is no one to monitor it. So for Facebook there is so little staff and a billion people using it' (m). Another belief was that no one would respect rules given by an inanimate object. This position was summed up by the comment 'rules in real life are more intimidating because you know that they have authority, whereas on Facebook there is no person enforcing them' (f) and 'programmes can't tell you when you're right or wrong, you need humans to do that' (f). So for many of the interviewees, even if there was rules online this would not stop them breaking them.

Even systems that are put in place to try and report wrongdoing seem ineffective. Several students talked about reporting nasty emails to the social networking website and nothing had been done. A common complaint was 'I used a report button and nothing happened'. Another tactic had been to block people, but again it was feared that

this might not work, as people would just register themselves online again. There was also pessimism amongst many that things would get done even if the wrongdoing were exposed. One student commented 'people always cross the line on cyber-bullying and nothing gets done about it' (f). However, there was disagreement in several of the interviews. Many students thought that actually cyber-bullies could be tracked down. One student commented 'some people are careless as they don't think they will be found, but they are wrong there is lots of technology that can track them. They will be found out' (m).

A position that was commonly represented was the fact that the Internet is not about rules and this is what makes it so unique and special. For some of the participants, the best thing about the Internet is its freedom and this would be killed off with increased rules and regulation. One male participant expressed their belief that 'it's not about rules it's about freedom, that what makes the Internet special' (m). Another female participant said:

The Internet is free, and it is a free country and people can do whatever they want. If there were certain rules and people actually wanted, and I'm not trying to be weird or anything but life would be a bit boring if you had no free will or anything it's just boring. (f).

Finally, a few students thought things might change, and that 'the Internet is quite new, perhaps they will put more rules on there soon?' (f).

5.4 You Can't See the Consequences of Actions

Many of the interview participants identified the fact that it is hard to always see the consequences of actions, as a reason why people act differently online. It was a commonly held belief that seeing consequences is a moderator of behaviour. One student said 'seeing the consequences is a good learning tool for getting better' (f). However, it was also a commonly held belief that it is harder to see the consequences of actions online. This was for a number of reasons, including the lack of visual clues, a

belief that distance often dampens human emotions, such as guilt, and that issues such as cyber-bullying frequently go unreported.

Many participants believed that it felt less personal when communicating online than face-to-face and they pointed to this as a cause for why people might cyber-bully (either purposely or inadvertently). One student commented, 'as you aren't face-to-face with the guilt of them confronting you – so you don't feel bad about saying bad things about them online' (f). Likewise a male student said 'they think it's [cyber-bullying] a victimless crime, nothing is going to happen to anyone, don't see people getting hurt, so why not' (m). Some felt that being unkind online was not as bad as it 'does not mean as much online' (m) because it is 'hard to feel as bad about online actions as those you see first-hand' (m).

However, the distance between any two participants of online communication also caused some concern for the interviewees. One stated 'because you can't see others you don't think about their pain' (f) which led another in the group to say 'I bet some cyber bullies don't even know they are bullying someone' (f), followed by the personal reflection 'I might put a snide comment online which you can take one way or another and my friend always takes it the wrong way' (f). As one participant put it 'in real life you can see it and will say sorry about things. Many don't realise their mistakes and that they are hurting you' (f).

Some of the interview participants felt that cyber-bullies used the lack of visual clues as an advantage. 'If cyber bullies are lying online you can't tell, because if they lie face-to-face you can tell by their body language or facial expressions. Lying online is easy' (f). Another saw the advantage of a lack of face-to-face feedback. He said 'On the Internet you can say what you like without knowing initial reaction. So you can basically say what you like' (m). Even feedback from friends does not help as 'sometimes you think you have done the right thing online because your friends told you, you have, but actually you are hurting someone you don't know' (f).

5.5 Character Virtues

Several of the questions sought to address the role that character and virtues play in cases of online bullying. These questions related to students' perception of the need to take responsibility for moderating their own characters online. It was a theme that was regularly returned to in many of the discussions.

Many students thought that whether a person cyber-bullies or not depends on the kind of person they are. One student said 'it depends what your personal character is if you bully others or not'(f). Many of the participants agreed that on the Internet people have to take responsibility for their own behaviour. In this respect, many students thought that online behaviour should be the same as offline behaviour. One student commented, 'the ways you treat someone online does not make any difference to the ways you treat a person'. Another recognised that people are the same online as offline and should therefore be treated the same. They commented 'on the Internet you are the same as everyone else and you should treat them so' (f). A third could not understand why young people might be different online and offline and stated 'when you're little you learn right and wrong. The Internet should not change the way you have been thinking and been brought up. It is still down to you what you do' (f).

Almost all of the participants thought people were more likely to bully because there were no formal rules, and even if there were these are not enforced. This meant that regulating behaviour was therefore the responsibility of individuals themselves. This is because there was a general feeling that there is more freedom, less monitoring and a greater sense of being able to 'get away with things' (m) online. Therefore, some of the participants believed it was imperative that Internet users policed themselves. One student said 'there is no-one watching over you, telling you what is right or wrong, it is down to you what you do and say online' (m). Another talked about their own self-awareness that they were doing something wrong. They said 'I think when you are writing nasty things you know they are bad. You know how you would feel if you were sent to you, so you should understand what you are saying' (f). However, many students did acknowledge that their behaviour was in some ways guided by others, it was

ultimately down to them what they did. Several talked about parents being a guiding authority online, and summed up nicely by this comment by a female participant 'You need your mums voice in your head when you're online' (f). Another female participant summed up this viewpoint with the comment:

'It all comes down to your personality, the way you have been brought up with the Internet. Like your parents have told you right and wrong. You must bring that to the Internet with you. You have to decide based on what you know is right'. (f)

For many, perhaps the biggest influence on how young people behave online is their peers. Many of the students said they knew what the right thing to do was, but often their behaviour was influenced by their friends. For the 11 to 14 year old group this seemed to be the most talked about pressure. One student said of cyber bullies that 'it's not who they are, it's who they follow, they are easily influenced' (m), and another 'I think some people don't really know who they are. They are pressured by trying to be someone else, by their friends and end up doing the wrong thing, it does not mean they are a bad person, just at that time' (f). Some said that it was easy to be led in the wrong direction as you think 'everyone else has done it, so why not me' (f).

Some of the students mentioned particular virtues that help them to not cyber bully online. Virtues that were mentioned in the interviews included; 'thinking of others' (f), 'empathy' (f), and 'being kind and compassionate' (m and f). One male student said 'You need common sense to do the right think online' (m) whilst another 'You have to take responsibility for yourself and to be honest' (m). Self-discipline was also mentioned several times as online users need self-discipline to stop themselves doing something wrong when they are tempted. For some students, they thought the character trait you need more than most when communicating online, is empathy. There was a need to think about the consequences of your actions before you send any messages. For example a female participant said:

You have to understand how what you're going to say is going to affect them and their perspectives so you have to imagine how they are going to be feeling, if you have said something to them. So you would have to be like cautious of like the consequences of your actions and be responsible for what you're going to say? (f)

Likewise other interviewees talked about learning through experience. For example, a female student commented 'my friends all act the same online as they understand what it is like to be backstabbed' (f) and another that 'sometimes you know afterwards you have done wrong – you read back and think why did I write that' (f).

6 Can 11 to 14 Year Olds in England be Educated Not to Cyber-bully? If So, How?

The fourth research question sought to gain a better understanding of how schools currently tackle the issue of cyber-bullying. The aim was to generate a better understanding of 'what works' and what might be done better. Most of the young people interviewed said that they had had some form of education about cyber-bullying. For most, this consisted of a one-off lesson or assembly on the topic, although one group said it was an issue that they came back to regularly. For most, the issue was discussed as part of their PSHE lesson. One participant said that they had recently had an assembly on cyber-bullying as they felt it had become a big issue at their school.

Several participants thought that it was schools' responsibility to teach about the issue of cyber-bullying to try and reduce the problem. A male student summed up this position by saying 'schools say we can't control what happens on the Internet and it's not their responsibility. But some people are too scared to go into school because of the Internet. So it's sort of their responsibility, because it's their students getting hurt and their students hurting other people' (m). However, there were different opinions about how

effective, education might be. Many students thought that the education about cyber-bullying education they had received had been ineffective. A few students thought it was ineffective because the issue was presented in a 'boring fashion' (f), and a male participant stated 'I think the things we do in schools need to be more interesting, we do Internet safety but I don't listen and I don't know what could make it better' (m). Another believed that 'assemblies on cyber-bullying at school don't really do anything, because no one really listens' (m).

However some of the interviewees had ideas about how lessons on cyber-bullying could be built into the curriculum. One participant thought that ICT had the wrong focus and should be about issues such as cyber-bullying, whilst another interviewee said it should be part of PSHE because 'because that's the lesson you develop a voice in your head that helps you talk about society and stuff' (m). However, there was also a strongly held contrary view that there was actually no point teaching about cyber-bullying. One student with this view stated 'there is no hope that anything will change, it is a waste of time' (m) and another said 'the Internet is as safe as it is ever going to be, schools can't change the bad things' (f).

There were suggestions made about how education on cyber-bullying could be improved. For example, a female participant said 'every single year we do it in ICT, we just watch the same videos about a story of a girl being bullied and then she's happy at the end. I think they need to find one from the victim's point of view' (f). Some students felt that the best way to motivate bullies to stop is to get them to feel empathy for their victims. They felt that this approach might work because on the Internet it is difficult to see what damage you are causing others. For example a male student said:

To show a film of a victim, it would guilt them out of bullying. You can show them the effects of after, 'cause if you were to cyber bully someone into suicide, and if the police found out it was you, the family wouldn't forgive you. (m).

One female participant stated by showing films of the victims 'the message comes across clearer because you can see that it can happen to anyone. It can happen to any random

people' (f). One student gave an example of a film they had seen recently that they felt worked. They said 'it showed a girl with a rope, it was hard hitting and you saw her emotion. It was hard because you couldn't do anything, you wanted to help her, but you couldn't because it was just a video' (f). Some students felt that the films had to be about real people as this would have more impact. For example one said, 'they showed the Amanda Todd video in assembly and gave evidence of how it was real because some people just say they're showing it 'cause they don't want it to happen in the future' (m). Other students felt that by making it real and hard hitting it would shock people into action, and also make potential victims more aware and more likely to report issues. They stated 'there is the mentality that it won't happen to me. But if they had someone our age, we could relate to then we would think that it might happen to us and we can think about what to do about it' (m). However, despite these positive comments about the potential for educating cyber-bullies, there was also a great deal of uncertainty from some participants that this would make any difference. This viewpoint was summed up by male participate who said 'bullies just don't care' (m).

7 Summary

In this chapter the voices of young people have been represented in order to gain an insight into how they experience, describe and understand cyber-bullying. The aim of the group interviews was not simply to gain more knowledge about if cyber-bullying occurs, but to find out about how and why it might occur. Particular attention was paid to the differences between online and offline bullying, as well as the moral motivation of cyber-bullies. The group interviews also sought to discover how young people are currently educated about cyber-bullying, as well as the effectiveness of this education.

It was found that the participants in the group interviews were all aware of cyber-bullying and many believed it to be the 'worst thing about the Internet'. Several were able to retell their own personal experiences of being cyber-bullies and were also able to identify the effects of it on victims. However, the interviews also showed that 11 to 14 year olds have different conceptions about what constitutes cyber-bullying, as there appeared to

be no uniform or agreed understanding of it amongst the participants. The interview showed that what one young person takes to be cyber-bullying, another might think is something more innocent. As such, conceptions of cyber-bullying appear to be personal and defined on a case-by-case basis, by young people.

There was a fertile discussion about the differences between offline and online examples of bullying. Perhaps one of the most interesting findings from the group interviews was the different language the young people employed to describe the 'two worlds' they inhabit. Use of the terms 'real life' was regularly used to describe the participants' offline worlds, and this gives rise to a sense that the young people believe that this world is more genuine and based in reality.

The interviewees were also able to identify several differences between online and offline bullying. The differences identified included features of the technology that allowed the possibility of anonymity, greater connectedness, and access to much larger audiences. It was acknowledged by the interview participants that these features were not all positive, as there are limitations of technology, which can make communication confusing and can ultimately lead to misunderstanding. There was also some disagreement about whether online bullying was worse than offline bullying. The general consensus amongst the group was that cyber-bullying had the potential to be worse and become a bigger problem due to the features of the technology mentioned above.

This chapter has provided evidence to show that young people are concerned about cyber-bullying and that they can identify differences between online and offline forms of the moral problem. Furthermore, it appears that these differences might explain why people do not always behave the same in the two domains. These findings will now be discussed in the next chapter, with particular reference to the focus of this thesis, namely the influence of the Internet on character virtues.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION: GROUP INTERVIEW FINDINGS

1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, findings from the group interviews, linked to the research questions, were presented. In this chapter, the most significant of these findings is discussed and interpreted in relation to the wider literature. The chapter will start with a consideration of how cyber-bullying is conceived and defined by young people. It then examines the issue of cyber-bullying from the perspective of the three moral theories discussed in chapter two: deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics.

2 How Cyber-bullying is Conceived and Defined by Young People

Since cyber-bullying has been at the forefront of public attention, there have been numerous attempts to define it (Dooley *et al.*, 2009). In fact, a persistent criticism of previous research in the field is that because there is no established definition of cyber-bullying, studies focusing on the issue might be investigating different experiences (Tokunaga, 2010). It was for this reason that an analysis of how the group interview participants define and conceive cyber-bullying was considered important from the outset, as it would provide a context for the current research.

Most of the participants were willing to discuss their experiences of cyber-bullying and agreed that it was both wrong and something that concerned them. In addition, there appeared to be some common features of cyber-bullying as it was described using similar language by the majority of the participants. The features of cyber-bullying most regularly mentioned were; i) it consists of unkind, nasty or hate messages; and, ii) it comes in various forms and takes place on different websites. It was evident that the

participants' conceptualisation of cyber-bullying appeared to be closely linked to their own experiences of it. Some thought that cyber-bullying was extremely serious, which sometimes ended in the victims committing suicide, whilst others thought that it was often simply innocent messages that had been misinterpreted by the recipient. There was also a concern by some that cyber-bullying is an emotive word and might be used incorrectly in order to gain attention.

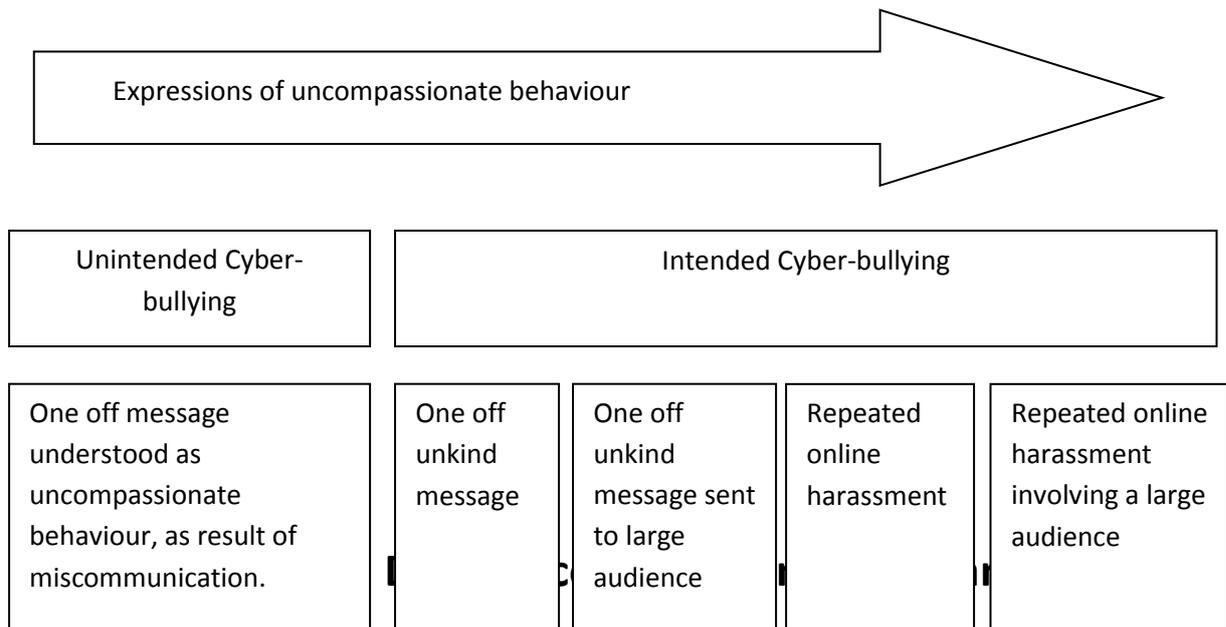
A definition of cyber-bullying that is widely used in the literature is that of Smith *et al.* (2008: 378). They describe cyber-bullying as 'the intentional aggressive behaviour of an individual which has a repetitive character, conducted individually or by a group using electronic media towards a person who is not able to defend themselves'. Whereas the majority of the interview participants agreed that cyber-bullying was 'aggressive behaviour' and used 'electronic media', there was departure from this definition in two important areas. Firstly, some of the participants thought that single instances of unkind messages constituted cyber-bullying and that it did not necessarily have to be 'regular or consistent over time'. This position is backed up by other studies that have shown that a single act of cyber-bullying has similar effects for the victim as repetitive aggressive attacks (Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, 2008; Ybarra *et al.*, 2007). In addition, due to the nature of the Internet, one instance of cyber-bullying might in fact have a similar character to repetitive attacks, as one upload of humiliating photos, videos and other visual material to the Internet is permanent and at the same time, available to a wide audience (Heirman and Walrave, 2008). Secondly, several participants thought that unkind messages online should still be called cyber-bullying even if the victim was able to defend themselves.

It seems that given the lack of agreement over what constitutes cyber-bullying, there is a need to think carefully about how it might be defined. Pyzalski (2012) uses the term 'electronic aggression', as he believes this term is more general and is a better descriptor of the reality of cyber-bullying for young people. It also encompasses the wide range of experiences that young people might perceive to be cyber-bullying. Under the term

'electronic aggression', Pyzalski includes any type of harassment or bullying (such as teasing, telling lies, making fun of, making rude or mean comments, spreading rumours, or making threatening or aggressive comments) that occurs through email, chat rooms, instant messaging, websites and text messaging. Likewise, Menesini *et al.* (2012) found that in several countries it is normal for young people to both experience and conceptualise cyber-bullying in different ways. Their research shows that cyber-bullying is best viewed as a 'monodimensional model', where each item lies on 'a continuum of severity of aggressive acts'. Using such a model, their research has shown that the less severe acts are silent/prank calls and insults on instant messaging, and the most severe acts are unpleasant pictures/photos on web sites, phone pictures/photos/videos of intimate scenes, and phone pictures/photos/videos of violent scenes.

Although the participants in the current research also described cyber-bullying in different ways, there was almost universal agreement amongst them that it is an expression of uncompassionate behaviour. Several of the participants actually described it as a 'moral' problem. Drawing inspiration from the work of Pyzalski (2012) and Menesini *et al.* (2012), cyber-bullying as described by the interview participants in the present research could also be conceived of as a moral typology, with different levels of uncompassionate behaviour at either end of the classification. At the one end, it is a serious expression of uncompassionate behaviour, which might consist of repeated instances of online harassment that involves a large audience. At the other end, it is a less extreme expression of uncompassionate behaviour that might consist of one unkind message between two people, which may not even be intentional (see Chart 3). Such a typology reflects more accurately the variety of experiences the interview participants expressed when asked to describe cyber-bullying.

Chart 3: Typology of Compassion and Cyber-bullying



4 Bullying

There is a growing body of literature that draws comparisons and contrasts between online and offline forms of bullying. With the recent ubiquity of access to digital technology, cyber-bullying has been recorded extensively in research as increasingly being part and parcel of the everyday lives of young people. Bullying as a form of aggression is not new and as Mark and Ratliffe (2011:92) state, cyber-bullying has ‘introduced new elements to a seemingly age old practice’. Evidence from the interviews seems to back up this assertion. Whilst Froese-Germain (2008) argues that the motives of the bully have not changed, the interviews seem to show what has changed is the method by which their cruelty is carried out. Whilst elements of cyber-bullying, such as name calling and social ostracising, replicate those of traditional face-to-face bullying, the group interviews identified that new features have emerged. These include the ease and speed with which large audiences can be accessed, the availability of the victim 24 hours a day, and the ability of the bully to remain anonymous. Whilst these elements are identified as negatives for the victim, they might be viewed as positives for the bully and constitute additional reasons why individuals may choose this approach over traditional

forms of bullying. The interview findings seem to suggest that the Internet has 'modernised' some of the traditional aspects of bullying.

Similarities and differences between the online and offline forms of bullying are also reported in other research into the area. Similarities include evidence that shows that both forms are often analysed in a similar way (Mishan *et al.*, 2010), that motivations of bullies have been found to be the same (Froese-Germain, 2008) and that both forms normally occur within the context of the same social groups and relationships (Mishan *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, peers are seen as pivotal instigators of both online and offline bullying (O'Connell *et al.*, 1999). Lenhart (2007) states that cyber-bullying is simply an online expression of an offline behaviour. However, this thesis is more interested in the perceived differences between online and offline forms of bullying. If any can be identified then it is possible to understand why the Internet might be having an influence on the character virtues of young people. Furthermore, if it is found that young people who bully online do not bully offline, then this might provide some evidence that the Internet is having a negative influence on the character virtues of some young people.

In 2014, a report found that for the first time, young people in Britain are more likely to be bullied online than face-to-face in the playground (Livingstone *et al.*, 2014). The report found that nearly 12% of the young people questioned for the research said they had faced cyber-bullying, compared to 9% who said they had been picked on face-to-face. The findings mark a significant shift since 2010 – the last time the study was conducted – when 16% of children reported being bullied face-to-face and 8% on the Internet. However, although this shows that online forms of bullying are on the rise, it does not necessarily mean that that people express different character virtues online to offline – only that the means of bullying is changing.

To date, there have been no large-scale empirical studies confirming or denying if people who bully online, also bully offline. Ybarra *et al.* (2007) found that many victims of cyber-bullying have not previously been bullied face-to-face. However, their research did not show whether the bullies are different, just the victims. Hinduja *et al.* (2008) argue that

the Internet creates new bullies simply due to the fact that the proliferation of online information and communication technology makes it much more likely to occur. However, this is a deterministic view of technology and one that suggests that just because the technology exists, people will act differently. There is also little evidence to back up their assertion.

The interviews did show that many young people perceive their online and offline worlds as being different. They describe the two worlds in different ways, employing distinctive language for each, which might lead them to believe the 'rules' in each of the worlds are not the same. For example, McLaughlin *et al.* (1995) found that when people feel disembodied from the real world, they act differently. However, Valentine and Holloway (2002) disagree with this position and contend that it is wrong to assume that just because the Internet is described differently by young people, that the 'virtual' world is necessarily false, inauthentic, threatening and polluting 'the real' world. The authors have noted that many commentators view the offline world as traditional, and therefore more genuine and authentic (Valentine and Holloway, 2002: 304). Others have also argued that in most cases young people engage and act with both worlds in generally the same way (Davies, 2009; Thomas, 2007). Davies believes that there is in fact a great deal of overlap between young people's online and offline worlds, often because the people they communicate with in the two domains are the same. Valentine and Holloway (2002) argue that it is better to view young people's interactions along a continuum in which their online and offline experiences merge. Their position is that the two worlds should not be conceived distinctly or separately, as young people are the same online and offline. For these authors, the online world is simply an extension of the offline world.

However, evidence can be found in the interviews to refute this position. Many of the participants believed that people often behave differently online to how they behave offline. They described how particular features of the Internet, such as the possibility for anonymity, encouraged people in their school to act differently when on the Internet. For example, the participants were able to describe people they knew who acted 'tougher' or 'more aggressive' online. On this evidence, it is possible to make a case that

the Internet does influence the morality of some young people. There is also an increasing amount of evidence in the literature that concurs with this position.

Although moral development and bullying (both offline and online) research has generally developed independently, recently there have been several small-scale studies that have looked at the links between bullying and morality. This research has largely drawn on moral disengagement theory (Bandura, 2002) to explain why people might bully others online. For example, a study conducted by Gini (2006) found that the Internet acted as a 'moral disengagement mechanism' and that young people felt they were doing less moral wrong if they bully on the Internet than if they bully face-to-face. Furthermore, the same study found evidence that online bullies felt less inclined to justify their actions against moral expectations than those involved with face-to-face bullying. A similar study by Perren and Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger (2012) showed that adolescents involved in bullying showed the highest levels of morally disengaged reasoning. Such findings are consistent with previous research that revealed a positive association between bullying in adolescence and morally disengaged or egocentric reasoning strategies (e.g., Menesini *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, a longitudinal study found an association between moral disengagement and chronic aggression (Paciello *et al.*, 2008). Ang and Goh (2010) claim that specific characteristics of cyber-bullying (e.g. the anonymity of the perpetrators and the absence of direct confrontation with the victim) seem to result in lower levels of both affective and cognitive empathy. Their research suggests that the latter may play a more important role in cyber-bullying than in offline bullying. Other studies have also shown that cyber-bullies have less shame and guilt than offline bullies (Menesini and Camodeca, 2008) and a greater lack of moral compassion (Gini *et al.*, 2010). Finally, Hymel *et al.* (2005) found that 12- to 16-year-olds in Canada who reported that they were bullying others extensively showed greater moral disengagement in their attitudes and beliefs than students who sometimes or never bullied others.

This embolic body of research seems to provide some evidence that the Internet is having an influence on the moral virtues of some young people. Evidence drawn from the group

interviews backs this up and also provides some explanations for why the Internet might be having an influence on the moral virtues of 11 to 14 year olds which will now be discussed in more detail.

4 Cyber-bullying and Moral Theory

The following section provides a consideration of the differences identified in the group interviews between online and offline forms of bullying and relates these to three prominent moral theories; deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics. The discussion will provide further insight into why some young people, in the case of cyber-bullying, might behave morally differently online to offline.

4.1 Cyber-bullying from a Deontological Perspective

A deontological position on morality presupposes that people behave well and become morally responsible by adherence to what is expected of them by society. The expectations are the generally agreed rules about what the right thing to do is in any given situation. However, there are two recurring themes identified by the interview participants that might explain why, from a deontological view, young people have a different perception of morality when they are online. These themes are: i) a reduction in rules and increase in freedom online; and, ii) anonymity. Each of these themes will be discussed in turn below.

4.1.1 Reduction of Rules Leading to an Increased Sense of Freedom Online

Many of the young people interviewed felt that they had more freedom online as there are fewer rules governing what they should and should not do in any given situation. They explained that their actions are rarely guided by an adherence to rules, and even less so by advice from adults or others who might seek to direct their online behaviour. They explained how the lack of any 'central power' or 'hierarchy' controlling the Internet gives rise to a belief that there are no rules in cyberspace. In fact, it is exactly this freedom that appears to make the Internet so attractive for many of the young people interviewed.

Even since its invention, the Internet has had no obvious centralised control and has largely grown organically with the expansion and creation of endless new online environments. Many of the people developing these new environments see themselves as innovative, independently minded pioneers who actively embrace the fact that there is little control over the technology. For example, Tim Berners Lee, the inventor of the Internet, has regularly championed its freedom and criticised any political authority or organisation that attempts to control it. The Internet was originally conceived in a way that minimises authority through the reduction of any controlling force or rules. As such the rules of 'real life' are often not perceived to be enforced to the same extent in the cyber-world. It seems that for many of the interview participants, this explains why some people are more likely to misbehave online. Of course, this should not deny that rules are also socially constructed and that social norms or 'rules' can be developed amongst friends, without an authority.

The interview participants both acknowledged and largely appreciated the increased sense of freedom they enjoyed when online. Research has shown, however, that this increased sense of freedom (and by association, lack of rules) also means that moral concerns, such as cyber-bullying, are more likely to occur. For example, a study by Mishan *et al.* (2009) found that cyber-bullying by young people mostly takes place when young people are alone and not under the watchful eyes of others. This is particularly interesting given the fact that the present study found that the majority of the young people in the sample use the Internet alone and in their own bedrooms. Furthermore, research has shown that cyber-bullies who act anonymously online are less likely to be caught as detecting them is more challenging (Willard, 2006; Akers, 2012) and young people who use their computers privately and away from their parent's supervision are more likely to be bullied (Anirban *et al.*, 2011).

Several studies have found that teachers and parents are often unaware of cyber-bullying (Beran and Li, 2005; Keith and Martin, 2005; Li, 2005). One study shows that 90% of young people do not tell their parents or other adults that they are being cyber-bullied

(Juvonon and Gross, 2008). In addition, the interviews demonstrated that cyber-bullying is particularly difficult for parents and teachers to monitor because it occurs via so many different types of technology, including chat rooms, email, instant messaging, online blogs, social networking websites, role-playing games, and video broadcasting websites. Shariff and Hoff (2007) have also found that schools have a difficult time supervising online activities, knowing when to involve law enforcement, and distinguishing rights of freedom of expression from harassment. If parents, teachers or other adults are unaware of cyber-bullying instances, the problem is at risk of perpetuation and escalation (Mark *et al.*, 2011).

The increased freedom and apparent lack of rules or enforcement of them online presents a challenge to those who champion certain deontological principles as the basis for increasing moral behaviour online. However, such a deontological perspective is based on an assumption that there must be pre-described rules enforced by an authority. However, a normative position on deontology might suggest that rules can also be socially constructed, agreed and enacted amongst friends, or perhaps across society. The lack of online authority therefore does not appear to necessarily present any challenges to this position on deontology. However, the following discussion about anonymity might.

4.1.2 Anonymity

The issue of anonymity was raised regularly in the interviews and is also discussed at length in the literature. It is considered to be one of the biggest challenges for those tasked with identifying solutions for reducing cyber-bullying (Akers, 2012; Mishnan *et al.*, 2009). The possibility for young people to act anonymously whilst in cyberspace also presents a challenge to deontological lines of moral thinking.

The young people in the interviews explained how easy it is to be anonymous online and that some websites even encourage it. Furthermore, chat rooms and social networking websites on the Internet have been found to be conjunct to cyber-bullying (Greenfield, 2004). The Internet was described as a 'mask' and 'costume' by the interview participants

and, as such, was a place where potential cyber-bullies could hide. The participants thought that people who were able to act anonymously were less likely to be themselves, and more likely to do things they would not normally do offline. In this sense, going online anonymously gave some of the young people more confidence. In face-to-face bullying there is a clear power differential, usually where the stronger bully torments the weaker victim, whereas in cyber-bullying the power might also lie in anonymity (Brydolf, 2007; Winter and Leneway, 2008).

Perhaps most significant is that the ability to remain anonymous online leads to a possible lack of accountability. Accountability for many keeps a check on character and without accountability, the negative traits of human nature can be exposed. Websites, such as ASK FM, that purposely allow young people to use them anonymously, are creating situations where young people might feel they do not have to be accountable. These websites encourage a feeling, according to the interview participants, of there being no boundaries in terms of how they are expected to conduct themselves and there is a reduced concern for self-preservation, as well as being judged by others. Mishnan *et al.* (2009) describe the situation as bullies hiding behind the keyboard with little fear of repercussions or of being traced. Weistband and Keisler (1996) found that when using the Internet, individuals reduce their concern for social desirable responses. Anonymity also contributes to a reduction in people's sensibility towards their victims (Ang and Goh, 2010).

Suler (2004:322) described this state of mind as 'dis-associative anonymity' and says that 'in a process of dissociation, they do not have to own their behaviour by acknowledging it within the full context of an integrated online/offline identity.' Many of the interviewees were able to describe people they knew who acted differently online and made a conscious decision to separate their actions on the Internet from their in-person lifestyle and identity. If young people believe they cannot be found out and what they do online cannot be directly linked to other dimensions of their lives, they are more likely to act differently according to Suler. As Menesini *et al.* (2013: 2/3) state:

It is possible that cyber-bullies have levels of aggression which do not allow them to get involved in traditional aggression, but the distance from the victim, their anonymity, and the fact that this form of aggression is considered as less serious, a sort of entertainment that does not produce serious consequences, allow them to cyber-aggress without the need of morally disengaging.

Anonymity allows people to disassociate themselves from reality and become part of the online worlds they inhabit. Therefore, being on the Internet might be considered similar to feeling like one is invisible. This feeling gives young people the courage to go places and do things that they might not do otherwise.

The implications of anonymity for the present study into character virtues is that young people might be tempted to behave differently online when they believe that their behaviour is not restrained through self-consciousness, or checked by accountability. Going online anonymously could be viewed as a deliberate attempt by some to avoid detection when there is an intention to break the rules, or undertake an act that is not morally defensible. So not only are there less rules online guiding conduct, young people are also able to use the technology to actively take steps to avoid being caught out for wrongdoing. This presents considerable challenges for those advocating increased regulation of the Internet to reduce moral wrongdoing. Even from a normative deontological position, when there are generally agreed social norms or rules, these can be bypassed by young people who act anonymously online, in the hope that they will not be detected.

4.2 Cyber-bullying from a Utilitarian Perspective

Utilitarianism philosophy holds that the right course of action is the one that maximises happiness and reduces suffering of the greatest number. Evidence from the interviews is clear; young people think that cyber-bullying is wrong and causes widespread unhappiness. However there is also evidence that although the philosophy provides a useful guide to right and wrong moral actions, features of the Internet make it challenging to enforce the principle.

The 'impersonal' and 'faceless' nature of the Internet was one of the main differences identified by the interview participants between face-to-face and online forms of bullying. Whereas face-to-face bullying was often experienced in the playground and was described as real and personal, cyber-bullying was described as a harder to identify and potentially a more subversive form of bullying. However, the impersonal nature of online communication also led to a concern by some of the participants that their messages might be misinterpreted. The interviewees showed that due to the absence of visual cues, young people often do not realise that what they write online might cause pain to others. Many of the participants expressed concern that they might have bullied someone accidentally, as they were not sure of the impact of something they had written in an online form of communication. The absence of visual clues has been found to make cyber-bullying more likely to occur, either on purpose or by accident (Cross *et al.*, 2009). The literature on cyber-bullying has also shown that sometimes the victims are unintended (Shariff, 2008) insofar as people are more likely to become cyber-bullies and engage in unethical online behaviour when they do not think they are causing perceptible harm to the victim (Willard, 2002; Cross *et al.*, 2009).

The difference between face-to-face and online communication is the subject of multi-disciplinary research, but most notably in the field of linguistics. Research in linguistics has shown that speech typically conveys more explicit information than writing (Crystal, 1987; Chapman, 1984). The reason is that meaning in speaking is not just drawn from the words, but also from the pitch, rhythm and stress that is put on them. In addition, body language is drawn on by listeners to help determine meaning (Biber, 1988). It is also possible for a speaker to gauge the attitudes, beliefs, and feelings of their audience by their verbal and non-verbal reactions. It is these reactions that shape communication and also help those speaking decide how or whether to continue with what they are saying. In contrast, writing is often solitary in process and, as such, conveys a lot less explicit information than speech. Written communication is often considered an inferior

form of communication to speech, and this reality has implications for the present study of character virtues and cyber-bullying.

Learning from linguistics research, it is perhaps pertinent to be cautious about always labeling cyber-bullying as a deliberate expression of uncompassionate behaviour by one individual to another. Some instances of cyber-bullying might be unintentional as the physical distance between two people communicating leads to the possibility that innocently expressed comments intended to be a 'joke' are not be received as such. In addition, because the bully cannot see the reaction of the victim, there is a decreased chance of the perpetrator either resolving the misunderstanding or feeling empathy towards the victim.

Research has shown that cyber-bullies do not see the painful implications of their actions as they are often so far removed from them (Campbell, 2005). When not seeing the direct consequences of any particular online action, it is less likely that guilt will be felt if the action has (intentionally or not) hurt someone. The time / space distance of online messages could leave young people morally disengaged as the Internet enables young people to avoid feelings of guilt (Arsenio, Gold and Adams, 2006; Malti, Gasser and Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2010). Weistband and Keisler (1996) found that when using the Internet, individuals reduce their concern for social desirable responses. Suler (2004) called this effect 'asynchronicity'. Asynchronicity is when online communicators are not faced with the immediate emotional response that might make them check or change their behaviour. This leads to a reduction in accountability cues in private self-awareness and might perhaps lead to a decrease in self-regulation. For Suler (2004:322), attention when using the Internet is often focused on the task and not the recipient and therefore 'moral cognitive processes have been temporarily suspended from the online psyche'. There is, unlike in face-to-face communication, no immediate feedback loop.

The distance and disassociate nature of online communication makes it more likely that Internet users are either unaware or unlikely to be concerned by the consequences of their online actions. Menesini *et al.* (2013) believe that the Internet encourages individuals to participate in 'egocentric reasoning', as they are more concerned with

gaining credibility from their peers than the outcomes of their actions. Research has shown that participants bullied others online because it made them feel as though they were funny, popular, and powerful, although many indicated feeling guilty afterwards (Mishnan *et al.*, 2010). In the literature, this was referred to as the ‘happy victimiser’ paradigm and describes the phenomenon that even though young people understand the validity of moral rules, they still attribute positive emotions to transgressors (Krettenauer *et al.*, 2008). A study carried out by Menesini *et al.* (2013) attempted to prove this point. They collected moral emotion attributions and justifications for a bully in a fictitious story from a sample of 10 and 13-year-olds. The authors showed that bullies attributed pride and indifference to the wrongdoer more frequently than did either victims or uninvolved children. Bullies thought about these feelings mainly from an egocentric point of view, and their thinking centred on receiving personal benefit and profiting from their negative actions.

Utilitarianism, as a moral theory, is based on a belief that we can weigh up moral dilemmas by calculating the consequence of any actions. However, the Internet by its very nature, makes it harder for young people to determine the consequences of their actions. Both the interview data and the literature have shown that sometimes although consequences are unintentional, they are also hard to determine. The evidence leaves utilitarianism as an insufficient moral theory for those seeking philosophical guidelines for moral behaviour online.

4.3 Cyber-bullying from a Virtue Ethics Perspective

As described in detail in chapter two, the most common alternative to deontological and utilitarian moral theories is virtue ethics. The discussion in chapter two argued that virtue ethics is the moral theory that would enable a fruitful investigation of the influence of the Internet on character virtues. Bullying in either online or offline form appears to be predicated on an absence of certain virtues by the bully, such as a lack of care, compassion and untrustworthiness. Many of the young people in the group interviews also made this point, and suggested that although it might be ‘easier’ to bully online, and that the technology makes it less likely for bullies to be found out, a large determining

factor as to if an individual chooses to send nasty messages or not is down to their character virtues. However, one feature of the Internet that was regularly discussed in the interviews does appear to have a particular influence on how young people express their character virtues online. This feature is the increased 'connectivity' the Internet affords its users.

The term 'connectivity' was used by several of the interview participants to describe the new possibilities for communication the Internet has opened up. There was an acute awareness that the Internet was always 'on' and it is now possible to connect to potentially any number of people from any number of places at any time. There was also awareness that communication online took place in the public domain. A shift from school based to 'non-stop bullying' or '24 hour bullying' (Oliver and Candappa, 2003; Agaston *et al.*, 2007) was observed by some of the interviewees. Bullying is no longer considered a school-based problem (Craig and Pepler, 2008) but in some parts of the UK, it is more likely for bullying to take place out of school than in school (Mishan *et al.*, 2009). Victims can now be bullied in their private spaces, such as their bedrooms, and it can intrude into spaces that many young people might have at one time felt were safe.

The increased connectivity, for many of the interview participants, made online bullying different to offline bullying. For some it also made it worse as whereas playground bullying normally takes place in one location, cyber-bullying can take on a life of its own and spread far and wide across the network. Furthermore, cyber-bullying messages can be distributed not only by the perpetrator but also by anyone with access to a computer (Campbell, 2005). This also means that it is hard to contain cyber-bullying as it is impossible to control where messages are sent. The Internet creates the possibility for bullies to connect to large audiences instantly crossing time and space (Oliver and Candappa, 2003).

The access to a larger audience might either encourage or dissuade people from potentially sending harmful messages. Some might see sending such messages in the public domain as a way to reinforce their identity, whilst others might be dissuaded from

doing so as there is a potentially infinite audience watching over what they do. Therefore the increased connectivity actually provides a check on some people's online behaviour as they are more conscious about what they write online and who might end up seeing it. However, it is also likely that some young people do not anticipate the consequences of the messages they send and that a message ends up somewhere unanticipated with unintended consequences. The increased connectivity means there is an even greater emphasis on the character virtues of individuals for determining their online behaviour as there is a requirement for increased personal responsibility to consider the consequences of actions and to use practical wisdom to think about what course of action is the 'right' one.

A moral theory that prioritises human agency over consequences and / or duties is helpful when seeking courses of action for dealing with cyber-bullying. Features of the Internet that might be considered conducive to bullying are still ultimately at the mercy of how any particular individual decides to use the technology. The emphasis is on what personal virtues young Internet users have and how this guides their conduct online. This significant assertion, along with others, will be covered in more detail in the concluding chapter.

5 Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings from the interviews in the light of the relevant literature and related them to moral theory. The chapter has shown that young people have different conceptualisations of cyber-bullying and that there is a concern that the moral problem might be misinterpreted, mislabeled and misunderstood. However, the majority of the interview participants believe the practice of cyber-bullying to be morally wrong. Following on from this, the chapter considered the differences between online and offline forms of bullying in order to identify the Internet's potential influence on the morality of young people. It was shown that the findings from the interviews presented significant challenges for deontological and utilitarian lines of moral thinking. The chapter closed with a brief discussion of cyber-bullying and virtue ethics. The potential for virtue ethics to not only be a useful basis for researching morality on the Internet but

also to offer solutions to moral problems, such as cyber-bullying, was deemed significant and is discussed again in the following chapter.

CHAPTER NINE:

MAIN FINDINGS AND THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

1 Introduction

This concluding chapter revisits the research questions in order to provide a summary of the main findings. It provides a synthesis of the questionnaire and group interview findings and uses these as the basis for suggesting the possible theoretical, as well as practical, implications of the thesis. It ends with some final remarks about the limitations of as well as the possibilities for further research.

2 Synthesis of the Main Findings

This thesis has attempted to answer the primary research question; '*Does the Internet influence the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England?*'. In order to do so, three subsidiary questions were addressed throughout the research. The main findings that relate to each of these subsidiary questions are reported on below, drawing on evidence from both the questionnaire and group interviews and making reference to any particularly pertinent literature.

2.1 To What Extent and in What Ways is the Internet Used by 11 to 14 Year Olds in England?

The empirical evidence, collected for this thesis, shows that the Internet plays a major part in the lives of 11 to 14 year olds in England today. The questionnaire showed that 98% of the sample population use the Internet at least once a week and the majority of the sample use it every day or several times a day. In addition, the majority of

participants owned individual computers on which they were most likely to access the Internet from home. Evidence from other UK surveys, as well as international comparisons, backs up the evidence gathered in the present research and overwhelmingly demonstrates that young people use the Internet regularly, substantially, and that it is an integral part of most of their lives. The data from group interviews conducted in the present research also provides evidence about the extent to which young people use the Internet. Comments such as ‘I will die if I don’t have the Internet’ (f), ‘the Internet is like nicotine. Young people today are addicted to it’ (m) and ‘the Internet is the best thing about my life’ (m) were common and are illustrative of the seemingly visceral connection many young people have to the Internet. Throughout the interviews, participants consistently gave examples of how much their social and entertainment worlds revolve around being online.

The evidence gathered by this thesis backs up the data gathered by larger surveys and does not provide any radically new knowledge about how 11to14 year olds in England have appropriated the Internet. The larger data sets (for example, Ofcom, 2014) are more likely to provide accurate and reliable data as to the uptake and usage of the Internet by the population in question. Nevertheless, the evidence collected by this thesis shows that the Internet is one of the technologies most widely used by young people today, especially when compared with previous generations. It is therefore both relevant and necessary to ask what effect this seemingly integral connection between young people and the Internet is having on their moral attitudes, actions and behaviour. The subsidiary research questions 2 and 3 were directed at tackling this issue.

2.2 What Might be the Influence of the Internet on Two Key Character Virtues: Honesty and Compassion?

The literature review in chapter three brought previous research in the field to attention, and showed that the Internet is likely to be influencing individual online moral behaviour and actions in a number of ways. However, the exact nature of the influence of the Internet on character virtues was difficult to determine from this literature alone;

furthermore, little of it was conducted with 11 to 14 year olds in England who are participants of the present research. It was for this reason that the mixed-method study was carried out, in order to shed some new light on this, as of yet, under-researched area.

Evidence from questionnaires and group interviews showed that the Internet does have an influence on the character virtues of honesty and compassion of 11 -14 year olds in England.

The questionnaire showed that young people behave both compassionately and uncompassionately online and that they are also dishonest. Some striking findings from the questionnaire included over 50% admitting to lying about their age online, and over 25% admitting to online plagiarism. Likewise, nearly 20% of the sample admitted to writing unkind messages about others online, which contrasted with more than 70% reporting that they use the Internet to help others. The questionnaire data showed that the Internet appears to be having both a positive and negative influence on the character virtues of honesty and compassion of 11 to 14 year olds in England (see table 25)

Table 25: Summary Of Main Questionnaire Findings

Virtue	Key Findings – Positive	Key Findings – Negative
Compassion	<p>71% of 11 to 14 year olds have helped other people on the Internet.</p> <p>47% of 11 to 14 year olds have visited the website of a charity.</p> <p>Nearly 60% of 11 to 14 year olds helped other people on Facebook.</p>	<p>31% of 11 to 14 year olds have had someone being unkind to them on the Internet, such as saying bad things about them.</p> <p>19% of 11 to 14 year olds have written something nasty about other people online.</p> <p>17% of 11 to 14 year olds have written</p>

	13% of 11 to 14 year olds either agree or strongly agree with the statement 'I have started a campaign on Facebook that seeks to help others'	<p>comments on the Internet that might upset someone else.</p> <p>More 11 to 14 year olds agree than disagree that they have witnessed bullying on Facebook.</p>
Honesty	70% of 11 to 14 year olds either agree or strongly agree with the statement 'everything I write on Facebook is true'.	<p>25% of 11 to 14 year olds have copied someone else's work form the Internet and pretended that it is their own.</p> <p>53% of 11 to 14 year olds have lied about their age online.</p> <p>17% of 11 to 14 year olds have pretended that they can do something when they actually cannot.</p> <p>11% of 11 to 14 year olds have pretended they have a different physical appearance.</p> <p>40% of 11 to 14 year olds either agree or strongly agree with the statement 'I would find it easier to lie to my friends on Facebook than to them face-to-face'.</p>

The questionnaire data also revealed some differences between social and cultural groups. For example, Muslim participants in the survey appeared to be more honest and compassionate online, compared to those who identified themselves as Christian or as

having no religion. Male and female participants also had varying experiences of cyber-bullying, with females more likely to be both victims and perpetrators. Although the difference was harder to determine, there was also some variance in the data relating to the extent to which 11 to 14 year olds from different socio-economic backgrounds are honest and compassionate online.

It was decided that the second phase of the research would place greater focus on one issue likely to be influencing the character virtue of compassion, namely cyber-bullying. The findings from the group interviews provided evidence that not only backed up the questionnaire findings, but also helped to illustrate them. Most participants had either experienced cyber-bullying, or knew someone who had or were aware of instances that had occurred at their school. When targeted and intentional, cyber-bullying was generally considered to be the worst thing about the Internet and a pervasive and increasingly difficult problem to deal with. However, interviews showed that features of the Internet meant that some appearances of cyber-bullying were being misinterpreted and not all 'nasty messages' sent online were deliberate or necessarily meant to be cruel.

2.3 Why might the Internet Have an Influence on the Character Virtues of 11 to 14 Year Olds in England?

Having discovered via the questionnaires that: i) the Internet was influencing character virtues; and, ii) this influence was both positive and negative, the second phase of the research attempted to ascertain why this might be the case. From the outset, it was understood that this would be a much more challenging question to answer than the previous two, due to the complexity of individual interaction with the Internet. It was decided that an in-depth consideration of cyber-bullying, a moral problem that has both online and offline manifestations, would provide a valuable insight into how and why the Internet might be influencing the moral behaviour of 11 to 14 year olds in England.

An increasing amount of research is being carried out into cyber-bullying, much of it showing that the issue is getting worse - and perhaps most strikingly, that young people are now more likely to be bullied online than face-to-face in the playground (Livingstone *et al.*, 2014). The group interviews conducted for the purpose of the present research largely confirmed findings from other studies, but also shed some new light on the area, with particular regard to the differences between online and offline bullying. It was hoped that by exploring the differences between the two types of bullying, it might be possible to identify how the Internet influences, for good or ill, the virtue of compassion.

Group interviews showed that cyber-bullying was considered to be an expression of uncompassionate behaviour, and one that was of considerable concern to many young people. Furthermore, several distinct features of cyber-bullying were identified by the interview participants, to explain why a young person might be less compassionate online than offline. The most prominent features identified in the interviews are summarised in the table below.

Table 26: Prominent Differences Between Online And Offline Bullying

Difference identified in group interviews between online and offline bullying	Reasons why this might make an 11 to 14 year old MORE likely to bully online.	Reasons why this might make an 11 to 14 year old LESS likely to bully online.
Less rules online	The rules about bullying are less obvious online as well as less likely to be enforced compared to playground bullying.	
Less monitoring of behaviour, leading to an increased sense of freedom	There is a perception that young people are less monitored by teachers and parents online than offline, and therefore there are fewer checks on what is appropriate behaviour.	

Poor reporting of cyber-bullying instances	Cyber-bullying is less likely to be detected and reported to teachers / parents and therefore less likely to be punished than its face-to-face equivalent.	
The possibility of being anonymous online	Cyber-bullies can hide behind a 'mask', reducing the chance of them being caught, and they are also more likely to act tougher than they actually are.	
Lack of visual clues that aid successful communication	Harder to determine meaning in written compared to verbal communication, leading to increased possibilities for misinterpretation of online messages.	
Unable to see consequences of some online actions	Distance from victim means that the cyber-bully is less likely to be able to read emotional cues expressed through body language, thus their empathy for others might be reduced.	
Increased connectivity	Young people are more connected to their peers virtually and can therefore potentially send threatening messages at any time, rather than just when they are physically with them.	
Larger audience		A potentially infinite audience means young people think more carefully before sending a message.
Permanent nature of		Concerns about

online communications		permanency of messages stops young people sending messages in case they leave evidence of their wrongdoing.
Perception that the 'cyber world' is not the 'real' world	Leading to young people thinking what they do online does not matter as much as what they do in the 'real' world.	

The table shows that, on balance, features of the Internet make it more likely that 11 to 14 year olds will bully online. Of the differences listed in the table above, three in particular stood out in the group interviews. The first, and most discussed by the interview participants, was the possibilities the Internet provided for people to operate anonymously online. For many of the young people this meant they often had a lack of trust of people online as they never knew whom they were communicating with. They also felt that acting anonymously meant that people were often not themselves, and this could lead them to do negative things, which they might not do offline. The second most discussed theme was the perceived absence of online rules, compounded by the lack of any obvious online authority. The participants often talked about the sense of freedom they had online that they did not have offline. Most saw this as a being positive, but also recognised the negative consequences of this, such as the fact this encourages some people to behave unvirtuously. The final area that was constantly discussed in all the interviews was the lack of visual clues to aid the interpretation of online communications. The participants felt that this made it much more likely that their online communications would be misunderstood and that their intended expressions of any particular character virtue might be misinterpreted.

The findings from the group interviews help explain why a young person may be more likely to bully others online than face-to-face, or vice versa. By extrapolating and

extending these findings, it is possible to develop hypotheses about why the Internet is having an influence on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England. However, considerably more research on a much larger scale would need to be conducted to test these hypotheses. Different research methods, such as ethnographic studies, might also be required.

The above discussion has summarised the findings from the research relating to each of the three subsidiary questions. Combined, they help answer the primary research question by demonstrating that the Internet is having an influence on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds, as well as providing some explanation for why this might be the case. The next section considers what might be the theoretical and practical implications of such findings.

3 Theoretical Implications of the Findings

The research conducted in this thesis has sought to break some new ground in the field. Although there is currently a great deal of research into the Internet, from a variety of disciplines, the concern is that perhaps we still do not know as much about its influence on individuals and societies as we should. It is therefore hoped that this thesis might make a particular and significant theoretical contribution to the field - promoting virtue ethics as a framework for moral investigations into the Internet.

The merits of virtue ethics, alongside utilitarianism and deontology, have been discussed in various chapters throughout the thesis. Deontology has been found to be a somewhat imperfect guide to online morality. Participants of the research reported that it is often hard to know what is the right or wrong thing to do online in the absence of clear rules and guidance. Although there are not always rules and guidance in the offline world, to guide moral decision making, the feeling from the participants was that moral guidance online was even more opaque, due to the fact it is a largely unregulated domain. This led some of the participants to believe that they have a reduced sense of obligation and /

or duty when they are in cyberspace. Likewise, although utilitarianism offered some sound principles for moral behaviour on the Internet, the theory is easily challenged when attempts are made to apply it in practice. The findings from the research show that calculating the consequences of any particular online interaction is difficult at best and often impossible, and therefore might explain instances of amoral online behaviour.

This is a challenge presented to utilitarianists in the offline world, but the research participants reported that features of the Internet, such as the absence of visual clues during communication, make calculating the consequences of online actions particularly hard to determine. Having said this, utilitarianism and deontology might both provide interesting and useful frameworks for future research into morality and the Internet. However, the thesis has shown that virtue ethics is a theory that has some distinct advantages over the other two.

In comparison to utilitarianism and deontology, virtue ethics, with its focus on character, takes an 'agent orientated' or 'person centered' approach to understanding human conduct. Suler (2004:321) has argued that what he calls the 'online disinhabitation effect' features of the Internet mean that many individuals, consciously or unconsciously, behave differently online. Suler believes that the effect has either toxic or benign effects, where benign effects include people undertaking unusual acts of kindness and generosity and going out of their way to help others. More pervasive are the toxic effects including 'rude language, harsh criticisms, anger, hatred, even threats'. Based on the research conducted in this thesis, what seems to determine whether the effects are toxic or benign is just as much about the character virtues of Internet users as it is about the nature and features of the technology itself. With this in mind, perhaps rather than asking *what influence the Internet has on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds*, it is just as important to ask *how do the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds influence how they use the Internet?* A consideration of the theoretical debates about technological determinism is helpful in relation to this point.

'Technological determinism' is the term used to describe the way technology drives social structure and cultural values. The term is believed to have been coined by the American sociologist Thorstein Veblan (1857–1929). Most interpretations of technological determinism share two central ideas. The first is that technology itself follows a predictable path that is beyond cultural or political influence; secondly, that technology's 'effects' on society are inherent rather than socially conditioned. The theory holds that individuals are powerless in the wake of technological progress, since by its very design, it dictates users' behaviours and consequently diminishes human agency. According to such a view, individual behaviour is shaped by the needs of the technology. For example, Innis (1950) and McLuhan and Fiore (1967) believed that the ways in which we think and act are governed by new technology, and that in some senses we are powerless to determine its influence on us. Extreme technological determinists such as Jacques Ellul (1964) have argued that technology has a life of its own that is unaffected by human agency.

However, such viewpoints are today considered extreme and, increasingly, those working in the field (Thrift, 1996; Bingham, 1996 and Buckingham, 2000) argue that the research into the Internet should avoid being overly technologically deterministic. Such academics argue that new researchers need to distance themselves from old theories based on grand narratives. Bingham (1996) believes that researchers should avoid setting up unhelpful oppositions between technology and individuals, and especially narratives that simply depict a strong technology trumping weak individuals. Buckingham (2000:54) agrees that researchers should not avoid 'awkward empirical questions' when considering the impact of new technology on people. He believes that many researchers fall into the trap of adopting an 'essentialist position' that leads them to argue in absolute terms. It is therefore important that in any research into the Internet, how people interact with the technology is not ignored or sidelined, but is given proper consideration. For example, research looking at particular 'features' of the Internet, such as the opportunity it provides people to 'steal' music online, is insufficient unless it also questions how and why some people choose to use such features and others do not. As

ultimately, it is how individuals use the technology that determines if the outcomes are moral or amoral.

Evidence to support this view is found in the present research. The interviews show that young people perceive their relationship with the Internet to be reciprocal, not unidirectional. They were able to identify that, whatever its features, ultimately it was how they used the Internet that determined the outcomes of any online actions, as there was nothing about the technology that *made* them be cruel, or dishonest. It is this point that gets to the heart of this thesis and its claim that virtue ethics is the most useful moral theory for investigations into moral issues on the Internet. From a virtue ethical perspective, technological determinism is implausible as it is the character virtues of the users of the technology, rather than the technology itself, that determines online behaviour. From this viewpoint, the technology is neither good nor bad (although it has features that might encourage good or bad behaviour): it is the user that determines if it is put to good or bad use. This explains why different groups of young people in the questionnaire appear diversely influenced by the technology.

With this in mind, a more nuanced understanding of technological influence on individuals is required. This should acknowledge that although there are seemingly unique features of the Internet - such as the possibility to be anonymous - which might make it easier for someone to behave immorally online, this does not mean they will necessarily do so. The need, therefore, is not simply to lie down helplessly in the face of technological advances, but instead to develop solutions that might encourage it to be used more morally. A deontological solution might be to bolster the rules and guidance governing what is good and bad online conduct. A utilitarian approach might be to draw greater attention to the negative consequences of immoral issues found online. A virtue ethics approach, in contrast, would prioritise the creation of wise and virtuous online citizens. Such an approach might provide young people with a set of tools to negotiate the inevitable conflicts and moral challenges of using the Internet. This point will be returned to in the practical implications outlined below.

Perhaps one further observation, relating to determinism, should be made at this point. Although the headline figures show the incredible increase of Internet use by young people, it is clear from the interviews that they are not all using it the same way. Therefore, any influence it has on them is likely to also be variable. Likewise, although some interview participants spoke at length about their addiction to the Internet, others said they rarely ever used it. Even ignoring the extremes, it was clear that the participants used the Internet for different activities, at different times of the day, in different places, with others or alone. For example, although the questionnaires showed that Facebook and gaming were the two most popular online pursuits, there were also participants who said they primarily use the Internet for learning or linking up with relatives who live a long way away, or for help with their homework.

It would not be possible or desirable therefore to draw a uniform picture of user experience from the data collected in the thesis. Even looking at the influence of particularly popular websites is problematic, since which sites are most popular at any one time also tends to change. For example, the demise of Facebook has been predicted and it was clear even during the study that Twitter had become more popular. It is impossible to know which website will have the most influence on young people in years to come. However, what influence the character virtues of young people have on the Internet is just as likely to be based on the specifics of the websites accessed by them as it is by the nature of the technology itself. Given the arguments above, it would be difficult to make any very general claims about the nature of the influence of the Internet on young people. Certainly any attempt to make universal claims should be cautioned against, as it is very likely that the influence will vary depending on how, when and why the Internet is being used. Therefore any research ensuing from this thesis would benefit from being tightly focused, perhaps around one particular website or online moral issue.

A fruitful avenue for future research would be to examine how young people apply particular virtues based on practical reasoning in everyday online interactions. Likewise,

those charged with developing strategies for dealing with online moral issues need to discover how young people can be encouraged to use such practical wisdom to do the right thing online in any given situation. Virtue ethics seems therefore not only to offer a promising theoretical basis for researching the influence of the Internet on character virtues but also to provide a promising practical basis for developing educational strategies for dealing with online moral concerns. It is to the practical implications of this that the thesis now turns to.

4 Practical Implications of the Findings

It is likely that the Internet will be a significant part of young people's lives for the foreseeable future. Although this might seem like a self-evident statement, it is also one with profound implications for those dealing with the moral issues that result from young people using the technology. The current research has shown that young people sometimes perceive that they are functioning in an anonymous and lawless 'world' where there are few or no consequences to actions. The research has also shown that young people have a greater tendency to experiment online, by perhaps pretending to be a different age or different person. Likewise, they might have a tendency to commit more unvirtuous acts online than they'd would offline: they might bully online, but not face-to-face; they might plagiarise online, but not from a book; they might download a music track illegally online, but not steal a CD from a shop. Issues such as cyber-bullying, online plagiarism, piracy and others are unlikely to disappear. It is therefore important that strategies are devised that may help to counter the moral problems the Internet has thrown up. Such strategies must take into account the particularities of how young people use the Internet, as well as features of the Internet itself.

One approach might be to consider a deontological based strategy to dealing with issues of morality online. For example, an attempt to reduce cyber-bullying might be for teachers and parents to clarify the rules and guidance detailing appropriate online use and ensure that they are enforced more consistently. This would involve making clearer what is expected in terms of one's obligations to others online. However, judgements

about one's moral obligation based on deontological lines of thinking have been found by the present research to be difficult at times to enforce online. Furthermore, research has shown that traditional strategies such as the use of sanctions to counteract bullying are not sufficient when confronting incidences of cyber-bullying (Hinduja and Patchin 2008; Agatston *et al.*, 2007). The interviews demonstrated that a commonly adopted approach is to appeal to young people's sensibilities by highlighting palpably the consequences of negative behaviour online. For example, adopting what might be considered a utilitarian approach and show films about cyber-bullying victims who have committed suicide. However, in the research, many of the participants reported that such a strategy was often unsuccessful as it was not personal or about their own context, and therefore did not always resonate with them.

Although there is a case for the use of films designed to induce empathy, schools might also think about strategies that involve educating character virtues as a way of reducing cyber-bullying. The rationale for such an approach is that the present research has started to show that young people are as likely to do the right thing online because of their own character virtues as they are to be motivated by rules, duties or consequences. Educational attempts to cultivate virtues such as honesty and compassion would help to combat cyber-bullying. As such, character education (based on virtue ethics) might offer a good foundation from which to develop an approach to enhancing the virtues required for 'good' Internet use. A consideration of what such an approach might look like will be explored now.

Character education is increasingly gaining traction in Britain (Arthur, 2003; 2010a). Character education has been defined as an umbrella term for all explicit and implicit educational activities that helps young people develop positive personal traits called *virtues* (Jubilee Centre, 2013). Although character education has been approached from a number of theoretical stances and conceptual assumptions, a striking feature of recent developments in the field has been the resurgence of Aristotelian or quasi-Aristotelian virtue ethical approaches (Kristjánsson, 2014). Character education is increasingly being used for approaches to moral education that foregrounds the cultivation of moral

character in a broad Aristotelian sense. It is also increasingly being viewed as the best approach to cultivating the virtues of character associated with common morality, enabling young people to become good citizens and lead good lives (see Arthur and Harrison, 2012).

Programmes of study for character education should include a focus on the Internet and becoming a 'good digital citizen'. In this view, young people should not be considered Internet literate unless they know how to use a computer, but they also use it virtuously and with consideration for others. The requirement is that lessons in schools about I.T. should not simply be about enhancing young peoples' proficiency and technical abilities in using the Internet, but also about how users need to apply practical wisdom when online. A renewed focus in education on the virtues of young people will enable better understanding of the importance of good character as a determinant of moral behaviour online. If we make a virtue of virtue in education, then perhaps some or all of the moral issues found online will be reduced.

One method might be a deliberate educational effort to develop moral imaginative mindsets in young Internet users. Such an approach encourages them to imagine the kind of online world they would like to inhabit. This requires young people to be both self-reflective about their own Internet use and its impact on others, as well as the ability to imagine new ways of using the Internet. It demands young people to develop the effective capacities required for making moral judgments – such as how and when to be compassionate and honest. An 'imaginative mindset' would also enable users to see the effects of cyber-bullying from the outset and in turn probably increase online empathy, which may decrease online bullying (Mark *et al.*, 2011). One approach to developing moral imagination in young people might be through the use of story or narrative (see Carr and Harrison, 2015 forthcoming). Grodzinsky (2001:580) states that 'virtue ethics offers a way of teaching self-reflection through narratives and a focus on moral exemplars'. Moral exemplars highlight particular virtues as they showcase individuals that stayed strong and held fast to virtuous ideals. For example, rather than showing films about the victims of cyber-bullies, perhaps films should be shown about young

people who have demonstrated restraint and chosen not to cyber-bully. These stories can then be used as vehicles for reflection on young people's own moral character strengths, weaknesses and aspirations. The use of personal journals could be encouraged, allowing young people to not only reflect on the stories of others, but also to record their own stories about times they have shown virtuous restraint online. These could perhaps be undertaken in the form of a weekly task completed during form time at school, or a relevant curriculum lesson, such as I.T. or PSHE. Reflective journals have been found to enhance the ability of young people to apply learning about virtue from one context into their own (Arthur, Harrison *et al.*, 2014) and guided self-reflection can therefore be an important tool in the development of character in young people. Furthermore journals have been found to help create the cognitive connections required for students to think in terms of virtue concepts when required (Arthur, Harrison *et al.*, 2014a).

Journal keeping activities, such as those envisaged above might actually be accommodated by the Internet itself and designed in a way that character educators can implement them in online environments. For example, they might be developed as online moral dilemma games, where users have to practice making difficult ethical decisions that are presented to them in the form of an online game. Or, journals could be kept in the form of an online (personal) blog. At present, practical interventions that might help develop 'moral online mindsets' in young people are underdeveloped and therefore a considerable amount of further effort is required to create them. A further concern would be to develop suitable methodologies to evaluate their impact to ensure that they meet their stated character and virtues development aims. Although the strategies outlined above will present challenges to both researchers and developers, they are challenges that seem worthy of time and investment.

Therefore, whilst it might be tempting to resort to tighter regulation and sanctions to deal with challenging moral issues that present themselves online, there is also a case for investigating different strategies that seek to develop a moral mindset in young Internet users. Whilst rules, sanctions and other practical strategies will always have a place, these might be more effective in cyberspace if online virtuous behaviour is educated

through formalised character education programmes that are perhaps intergraded into the curriculum.

5 Summary

In general, this thesis has attempted to make a limited but significant contribution to the investigation of the influence of the Internet on young people. As in many cases of research, it has posed rather more questions than it has been able to answer. However, it has also opened up new lines of potential enquiry and directions for future research. It has shed some light on an important area, but also exposed how much more there is to know. It is in this spirit that some final observations are offered as a summary of this chapter and indeed the thesis as a whole.

The evidence has shown that the Internet is likely to be having a positive as well as negative influence on the character virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England. Although the tendency in much of the current literature has been to focus on the negative issues the reality is probably more complicated. It is therefore important in this summary to refrain from making sweeping evaluative judgements about how 'good' or 'bad' the Internet is for young people. It may be wiser to conclude by recognising that whilst the Internet has been found to present new moral problems, such as cyber-bullying, it has also provided new opportunities for moral flourishing, such as cyber-citizenship. In this light, the findings of this thesis could importantly direct its attention to developing new knowledge about how to deal with the specific negative influences as well as how best to promote the more positive ones. For example, rather than research simply offering a critique of the Internet, it might be a better approach for those concerned with moral issues such as cyber-bullying to accept there is a problem, and seek ways to cultivate the virtues of young people that enable them to be more responsible users of technology.

The findings from this thesis support the view outlined in chapter two that character forming theories that focus on moral agency are a useful approach to research into the Internet. This is because virtue ethics is more than simply about offering guidance for

specific dilemmas and more about how best to live the whole of one's online (and offline) life. The new opportunities that the Internet has opened up for young people requires them more than ever to 'do the right thing', not so much motivated by rules, duties or consequences (since these may not always be clear), but having practical wisdom to choose wisely between alternatives. It is strategies, based on these lines of thinking that should be prioritised when developing Interventions designed to educate digitally virtuous citizens. Future research in this area might therefore be wise to focus on a new research question: *what influence do character virtues have on how young people use the Internet?* This is, in effect, a reversal of the original question posed by the thesis.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Internet and Young People Questionnaire

(The questionnaire below is a copy of the online version hosted on www.surveymonkey.com)

THE INTERNET AND YOUNG PEOPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Learning about the Influence of the Internet on the character virtues of young people

We are interested in how, why, where and when young people use the Internet and what influence it has on them. You do not have to complete this questionnaire, but we would be grateful if you did. Anything that you write will be treated as confidential. You do not have to put your names on the questionnaire.

Your teachers, the head teacher and your classmates will not be shown your answers.

No one in the school will know what you write, so please answer truthfully.

1. How old are you?	11	12	13	14	15
2. Are you male or female?	Male			Female	
3. What is the name of the school or college that you attend?					
4. To which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong?	White		Indian		
	Mixed		Pakistani		
	Black or Black British		Bangladeshi		
	Chinese		Other Asian		
	Other ethnic group				
5. My religion is	Church of England (Anglican)				
	Catholicism				
	Other Christian (Methodist, Baptist, United Reformist)				
	Judaism				
	Islam				
	Hinduism				
	Sikhism				
	Buddhism				

	None Other (please specify)
6. Did your <u>mother</u> study at University?	Yes No Don't know
7. Did your <u>father</u> study at University?	Yes No Don't know

8. Who usually lives at home with you (please tick all that apply to you)?

- Mother (including step mother or foster mother)
- Father (including step father or foster father)
- Brother (s) (including step brothers)
- Sisters (s) (including step sisters)
- Grandparents
- Other people (please say who)

9. About how many books are there in your home?

- 0- 10 books
- 11-15 books
- 26-100 books
- 101- 200 books
- 201-500 books
- More than 500 books
- Don't know
- Comments

The following questions are about how you use the Internet.

10. Do you have your own computer or laptop that no one else uses?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

11. Do you normally have a computer or laptop in your bedroom that is connected to the Internet?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

12. How many times have you used the Internet (including on your phone) in the last seven days?

Lots of times every day

Every day

Every other day

Once this week

Not at all

13. Where do you most often use the Internet?

14. Which website do you visit the most?

15. Is it possible for you to use the Internet without your parents knowing about it or finding out?

Yes

No

Don't Know

16. Have you ever used the Internet when you were not allowed to by your parents?

Yes

No

I Don't Know

No.	Question	Yes	No	I don't know
17.	Has anyone ever been unkind to you online, such as saying bad things about you on the Internet?			
18.	Have your parents or your teachers ever talked to you about using the Internet safely?			
19.	Have you ever written something nasty about someone else on the Internet?			
20.	Have you ever copied someone else's work from the internet and pretended it is your own school			

	work?			
21.	Have you ever boasted about your achievements on the Internet?			
22.	Have you ever helped someone else on the Internet?			
23.	Have you ever bought something on the Internet?			
24.	Have you ever lied about your age on the Internet?			
25.	Do your parents know about all the websites you visit on the Internet?			
26.	Do your parents put a block on some websites so that you cannot access them?			
27.	Do you think you know more about how to use the Internet than your parents?			
28.	Do you regularly communicate with people you have never met on the Internet?			
29.	If you see something you like on an Internet site do you want to buy it straight away?			
30.	Have you ever visited the website of a charity?			

31. Do you think your parents trust you to use the Internet responsibly?

Yes

No

Don't Know

32. Do you have an email account that your parents do not know about?

Yes

No

Don't Know

33. Please put one tick in all the boxes in the table below that apply to you.

	My parents have set this	I follow this	This is not something I
--	--------------------------	---------------	-------------------------

	rule for me	rule	have ever thought about
I am not allowed to give out any personal information when on the Internet			
I am not allowed to visit certain sites or chat-rooms			
I have to tell my parents if I find something on the Internet that makes me feel uncomfortable			
I am not allowed to say insulting things, whilst chatting or in e-mails I send			
I am not allowed to meet in person someone I only know from the Internet			
I am not allowed to copy words, music or pictures from someone else's website without their permission			
I am not allowed to talk to strangers in chat rooms			
I am not allowed to download music or films illegally			
I am not allowed to buy things online			
I can only use the Internet for a certain amount of time each day			

34. Have you ever written comments on the Internet that might upset someone else?

Yes, many times (five or more)

Yes, sometimes

No, never

I don't know

35. When you are on the Internet, have you ever ...? (Please tick all that apply)

Pretended you have a different name (apart from when you are playing a game where you can choose a new name for yourself)

Pretended you are older than you actually are?

Pretended you are younger than you actually are?

Pretended you have a different physical appearance?

Pretended you can do something that you actually cannot?

Pretended you have a different personality?

Please use this space to make any comments you have about your answer.

36. Which Social Networking websites have you looked at in the last seven days?

(please tick all that apply)

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Facebook | <input type="checkbox"/> | Freindster | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Twitter | <input type="checkbox"/> | MySpace | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bebo | <input type="checkbox"/> | Xanga | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hi5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Last FM | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tagged | <input type="checkbox"/> | Classmates.com | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other(s), please state which

.....

37. Do you use Facebook?

Yes

No

38. What age did you start using Facebook? _____ years old

39a. About how many friends do you have on Facebook? _____

39b. About how many of these friends would you say you really care about?

40. How often do you update your status on Facebook?

Multiple times a day

About once a day

Several times a week

About once a week

Once a month
 Less than once a month
 Don't Know

41. About how many minutes do you spend on Facebook on a normal day?

42. Please say if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I trust all of my friends on Facebook					
I think I would find it easier to lie to my friends on Facebook than to them face-to-face					
I always tell the truth about myself on Facebook					
Everything I write on Facebook is true					
I have lied about my age to register on Facebook					
I am more confident with people on Facebook than when I meet them face-to-face					
I communicate with people on Facebook that I don't normally communicate with in person					
I am careful about who I allow to be my friend and see my profile on Facebook					
I sometime exaggerate my achievements on Facebook					
What my Facebook profile page says about me is important to how I feel about myself					
It is important to present myself well in my Facebook status updates and profile page					

Other people's Facebook profiles and status updates sometimes make me jealous					
I think it is important to be modest about yourself when using Facebook					
I have helped other people on Facebook					
I use Facebook to make a difference to other people					
I believe that Facebook can make the world a better place					
I have joined a Facebook group that seeks to help others					
I have started a campaign of Facebook that seeks to help others					
Facebook makes me a better person					
I care about all of my 'friends' on Facebook					
I have witnessed bullying on Facebook					
I have written nasty things about other people on Facebook					
Facebook makes it easy to say nasty things about other people					
If I see something unfair of Facebook I do something about it					
I am respectful of other people's views on Facebook					
I know what is right or wrong on Facebook					

43. The best thing about Facebook is?

44. The worst thing about using Facebook is?

Appendix 2: Changes Made to Questionnaire After Pilot

The originally conceived questionnaire was piloted and pre-piloted. In the following table the changes made to the questionnaire after the pilot are described.

Phase	Original Question(s)	Issue	Decision Made
Pre-pilot	A question was asked about which jobs they most likely to want to do in the future. There were groups of jobs given	Many of the students struggled to answer this question. Many simply put don't know, some added jobs to the lists, and some left it blank. The feedback from the students was that the question was confusing as the lists of jobs were not sufficient.	It was decided that the question would be admitted.
Pre-pilot and pilot	Did your Mother Study at University? Did you father study at University?	Some of the students did not like this question and wanted to know why it was important. Many did not know and some refused to answer it.	It was decided that there appeared to be enough valid answers in the pilot to justify keeping the question. The data would provide useful for further analysis of the influence of the internet against socio-economic groups.
Pilot and pre-pilot	About how many books are in your home?	Despite the given categories some of the students did not know the answer to the question. Some asked about new forms of book readers such as Kindle.	It was decided that the question would be kept, but adapted, as number of books in the home is still considered one of the more reliable measurers of socio-

			economic status.
Pre-pilot	Where do you use the Internet the most?	In the original questionnaire the students were asked to rank a list of possible locations in order. This format confused the students and it also took them a long time to work out. Many also got the ranking scale the wrong way round.	It was decided to omit the suggested locations and change to a simple text box that the students could write a response to where they use the internet the most. It was anticipated that the change would make the analysis of the question harder due to a requirement to code all the responses, but the change was nevertheless justified.
Pilot	Have you ever visited the website of a charity?	In the feedback the young people were asked if they understood what a charity was. Many said yes, although some were unsure. It was suggested that an example of a charity could be added to the question to help with comprehension, but it was decided that this might actually confuse the young people more and make the answers lack validity.	It was decided to keep the question in as it is.
Pilot	How many friends on the Internet would	In the feedback some of the students reported that they struggled to give a precise	It was agreed to add percentages as categories to respond to.

	you say you really care about?	answer to this question. They said you could change the question to 'about' how many or provide percentages such as none, about a quarter, about half etc	
Pre-pilot and Pilot	How long do you spend on Facebook?	When asked to reflect on this question the students said that the spent different amounts of time on Facebook of different days. They therefore felt their answer may not be accurate, and many answered based on what they had done on the last week. However when looking at the responses most had put a response.	It was agreed to keep the question but add the word 'normally'. Thus hoping to encourage the respondents not to give an extreme answer, but one closest to reality.

Appendix 3: Questionnaire Research Sites

The following provides descriptions of the six schools selected as research sites for the questionnaire.

School A

School A is located in an inner city area of Birmingham. It is a community school and Birmingham Local Authority is the admission authority for the school. In 2004 it became a specialist science college; the students range from 11-16. The majority of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being from Pakistani backgrounds. The number of students enrolled at the school is 932. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is considerably higher than the national average. For many students English is a second language; however few are at the beginner's stage of learning English. Boys make up a little over 60% of the population of the school. The proportion of students that have learning disabilities or difficulties is average. Attendance overall in Autumn of 2011 was 96.3%, only 36 pupils had attendance rates of below 85%. Attendance has improved over the years and is now above national average. School A is an extended school and holds several national awards, including Healthy School Status, the International Schools Award (foundation level) and Eco schools bronze award. Attainment for the school is higher than average overall, however the number of students gaining five A* to C grades is below the national average. In regards to science School A is above the national average in students attainment of two A*- C grades, highlighting its specialism as a science college. Ofsted have noted that students with learning disabilities/ special educational needs are very well supported at the school and make good progress. Parents are very supportive of the school and the school was particularly commended for its work around communities both at school and the wider community.

School B

School B is located in a rural area serving the Derbyshire. Students range from eleven to nineteen. There is a sixth form unit on site but separate to the rest of the school, about 50% of students stay on for sixth form. The school has very popular in the local area and

is oversubscribed; there are 1375 students at the school. The school is a specialist technology school. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs, with learning disabilities or difficulties is well above the national average, about 6% of students have a statement for special educational needs. In response to this the school has an Enhanced Resource Base for such students. The proportion of students from ethnic minority backgrounds, with English as an additional language and pupils eligible for a free school meal are all below the national average. Attendance is above average, and exclusions are low. Students tend to arrive at the school with average attainment and leave the school with high grades and ready for the next stages in life. At A level students' attainment is well above average in the majority of subjects, the school is increasingly developing vocational opportunities. The proportion of students acquiring five or more A*-C grades is above average, in 2007 it was 72%. At Key Stage four level all students study English, Maths, Double Science and a technology subject, there are Certificate of Achievement courses available for students who would not achieve a GCSE.

School C

School C is a mixed school located on the outskirts of Sheffield, it is a specialist language college and is in the final stages of being converted into an academy. In 2010 it was awarded Trust Status and works in partnership with Sheffield College, feeder schools, nearby universities, as well as local and national businesses. Students range from eleven to nineteen, in 2010 post sixteen education was added to the school. There are 1667 students that attend the school, it is a larger than average secondary school. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. A very large majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is average, but the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Post 16 education is provided on site as part of the Trust partnership with the nearby Further Education College, seventeen different topics are offered taught by the teachers of the school. In 2011 65% of students achieved 5 A*-C grades including Mathematics and

English (above the national average), a quarter of students received three or more A* or A grades.

School D

School D is located in Birmingham and has business and enterprise college status. The school has 597 students, which is below average for a secondary school. Almost all of the students who attend speak English as second language and are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of students eligible for free school meals is above average, as in the number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Government floor targets for academic performance have been exceeded over the last three years. The school is in the final stages of completing a major extension. In 2011 72% of students received GCSE results A*-C including English and Mathematics, with 25% receiving three or more A* or A's, there has been a strong upward trend over the last three years. It has been noted by Ofsted that the majority of students that attend the school make outstanding progress, with students' attainment when they first enter the school being well below average. Attendance at the school is above national average, in addition persistent absence has been reduced and is now below the national average. The school has a number of national awards including the Economic, Business and Enterprise Association Quality Mark and National Healthy School Status. Ofsted have remarked at how well students are prepared for the future and the numerous opportunities available to students to become involved at both a school and wider community level.

School E

School E is a Leadership Training mixed school, with students ranging from eleven to sixteen. The school has recently had an influx of 150 students following the closure of a nearby school. School E is located in an urban area on the outskirts of Manchester. As of March 2012, 944 students attend the school, it is a larger than average secondary school. The proportion of students that are eligible for free school meals is slightly below the average. The majority of students are of White British heritage, a small percentage of students are from ethnic minority groups and speak English as a second language. The proportion of disabled students or students with special educational needs is higher than

average. School E has received numerous awards including the Inclusion Quality Mark, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Artsmark Gold and the Investor in People Award. Students generally enter the school with broadly average attainment and leave with levels of achievement that are broadly average, however students with special educational needs and disabled students make better than expected progress. The school offers a wide range of after school activities to students. Attendance at school has improved in the last couple of years and is now in line with the national average, the number of exclusions has been reduced due to an effective mentoring and tracking system being put in place. The number of students who receive A*-C in their GCSE's (including English and Maths) is above the national average at 62%.

School F

School F is located in a small town in South Yorkshire and provides education for the town and surrounding rural villages. It opened in 2010 in the buildings of its predecessor's school; there are two sponsors of the school. It is a larger than average school with 1150 on the register, including 112 who are in sixth form. Very few students leave or join the academy other than at the beginning of the first academic year of school. The school is a mixed school with an age range of eleven to nineteen. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is slightly above the national average. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above average, however the proportion of students with a statement to meet their special educational needs is lower than average. The students are mainly of White British heritage and hardly any speak English as an additional language. As a school the attainment is slightly below national average, by the end of year eleven attainment has been broadly average and has improved over the last couple of years. The majority of students attain at least five A*-C grades at the end of year eleven, however attainment in English, Mathematics and Science are below average, boys attainment is also below average. In 2011 61% of students gained 5 A*-C GCSE's including English and Maths. Attendance at school has risen but it is still below the national average, Ofsted has

remarked that short term exclusions are particularly high and as a result have started to fall. School F has received a 'Most Improved Academy Award' for two consecutive years.

Appendix 4: Decisions Taken About Preparing the Data for Before Conversion from Excel into SPSS

The data was initially downloaded from Survey Monkey into Excel. The data was collapsed, and cleaned in Excel, before being loaded into SPSS for analysis. The decisions made about preparing the data were:

Variables (Columns):

Closed Questions

All variables that were closed questions were assigned a code.

This was mostly done through the find / replace function in Excel. The original response was kept in the spreadsheet and a duplicate column created which was coded. For example all 'Yes' answers were assigned the codes 2, and No, 1. All missing data was assigned the code -1. Other variables that contained responses other than yes and no were assigned a code accordingly. All codes were recorded alongside each of the questions.

Other closed questions were dealt with as follows:

Question: About how many friends do you have on Facebook?

The total number of friends given – was left as this number. If two numbers were given – say 200-300 then this was 250 and so on. All figures provided were considered to be accurate. Some of the figures over 1000 (a few cases) might be considered as outliers when analysed in SPSS.

Question: About how many of these friends would you say you really care about?

The exact numbers provided were kept. Any comments that were not numerical were interpreted. So for comments such as 'about half of them' the total provided for the question 'about how many friends do you have on Facebook' was divided in two and that total entered. Likewise comments 'all of them' 100% was entered. Comments that were

not easily interpreted were not included. Any amounts that were above the number of friends were adjusted down to match that figure.

Question: About how many minutes do you spend on Facebook on a normal day?

A top amount was set at 8 hours, given the requirements for sleep, school, meals etc. Any figure between 8 and 24 hours was adjusted down to 480 minutes. Any figure over 12 hours was considered unreliable and therefore entered as missing data.

Open Questions

All variables that were open questions and deemed to be useful for the SPSS analysis were assigned a code.

These codes were created depending on the most popular responses, and an 'other' category was also used. The find, replace and sort functions were primarily used for this operation. The following open questions were coded.

i) Where do you use the Internet the most?

1=laptop, 2= at home, 3=phone, 4=bedroom, 5=other, -1=- missing data.

If 2 answers were provided then the first one was selected. If the question was answered in-correctly (i.e. the answer did not make sense) then given missing data coding.

ii) Which website do you visit the most

1 = Google, 2 = Facebook, 3 = Hotmail or Msn, 4= YouTube, 5= Other, 6 = Sports / Games, -1 =Missing Data

If 2 answers were provided then the first one was selected. If the question was answered in-correctly (i.e. the answer did not make sense) then given missing data coding.

Some open questions were not coded, but responses recorded for use in development of the interview schedule and validation of quantities results. These included:

- The best thing about using Facebook is...?
- The worst thing about using Facebook is?

Other open questions were dealt with as follows:

Question: About how many books are there in your home?

A comment box was provided for the young people after they had indicated how many books they had in the home. The reason for this was it was discovered during the pilot that the young people were not all able to understand the question. The purpose of the box was to test the validity and reliability of the answers. It was noted that not many students completed this box, and those that did tended to make a comment about reading such as 'I love books' or 'I am a real bookworm'. It was therefore agreed that in most cases the young people had understood the question and answered it as accurately. The responses in the comment column were checked against the answers given in the number of books, and were adjusted accordingly. So for student who had left the answer to the number of books they had blank, but had commented 'I have loads of books' they were arbitrarily assigned a large score of 201-500 books. His decision was taken in advance so as not to bias any results.

Question: Please use this space to make any comments you have about your answer.

This question related to the section where they were asked if they had ever pretended to be someone else, lied about their age etc. The comments provided some illuminating answer such as 'Me and my friends made a fake Facebook account cause it was funny' and 'I believe that there is no reason to pretend to be someone you are not, and in some cases it is illegal.'. All of these comments were collected and will be used as a basis for the development of the interview schedule as well as qualifying quantitative analysis undertaken in SPSS.

Question: 'Religion Other'

Space was provided after the religion categories to add another religion in if it was not listed. This was rarely used, but was it was it was useful for validating the answers entered in the categories. So for example one responded had entered 'Methodist' but not clicked 'Christian'.

Question 'Live with other'

This was an open question that enabled the respondents to say if there was someone else they lived with other than the categories listed (mother, father, brother, sister, grandparents). Most respondents mentioned pets they were living with. The box was however useful for clarifying respondent's answers – such as one respondent said they lived with 'father and mother' but had not ticked these – so this was adjusted.

I also created a new column to indicate those respondents who live with both parents. It was deemed that this might be useful when undertaking analysis which consider if there is a difference in internet usage by young people from single parent's families. Again this with checked for accuracy and clarification against any relevant comments provided in the comment box. For example 'mum's boyfriend' was not counted in this.

Appendix 5: Summary of the Questionnaire Data

There were 1314 respondents (cases) in total. A total of 1266 respondents were deemed valid to the study and data could be used in the analysis. There are 79 variables – covering the following themes.

Socio-economic data (9 Variables)

- Gender
- School
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Books in Home
- Mother / Father attend university
- Family members

Use of Internet by 11 to 14 year olds (5 Variables)

- Where the Internet is used
- When the Internet is used
- How often the Internet is used
- Most popular websites

Use of Facebook by 11 to 14 Year olds (6 Variables)

- Which social networking websites re used
- Age started using Facebook
- Number of friends
- Time use

Character Virtues and Internet generally (35 Variables)

- Trust,
- Humility
- Compassion

Character Virtues and Facebook (29 Variables)

- Trust,
- Humility
- Compassion

Appendix 6: Group Interview Participant Information

The following information sheet was given to all students in advance of taking part in the group interviews.

Participant Information

Study: The Influence of the Internet on the Character Virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England.

Researcher: Tom Harrison, School of Education, University of Birmingham
Email: [REDACTED]

Supervisors: Professor James Arthur, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Professor Emma Smith, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I would like to invite you to take part in a focus group. During the focus group, along with at least four other students from your school, you will be invited to give your opinion on how you use the Internet and how you think it affects you as a person. In particular we are interested to find out if you think the internet makes you a better person, or not? We believe that by taking part in the focus group you will be helping a valuable piece of research which aims to understand better the impact of the Internet on 11 to 14 year olds in England. It is anticipated that the focus group will last for up to one hour and take place in a room at your school. The session will be lead by a researcher from the University of Birmingham and a teacher from your school might be present for some or all of the focus group.

During the focus group I am interested in your personal views and there are no right or wrong answers. Please keep in mind that:

- Your participation in the focus group is completely voluntary.
- If you change your mind at any point about taking part, before, during or after the focus group, you are free to withdraw from the focus group.
- You may also choose not to answer certain questions.
- During the focus group, other participants will, of course, be aware of you taking part and your responses. I would like to ask you to be considerate in not sharing any sensitive information relating to other participants.

With your permission, I would like to do an audio recording during the focus group. This is purely to allow me to transcribe the data more easily afterwards, rather than taking notes as you speak. In the transcript, I will anonymise the data; that means I will use pseudonyms and not your real names. Please note, if you say anything that could be considered a child protection issue then I will have to pass this information onto the child protection officer in your school. Extracts of what you say during the interview and/or focus group will be used for my doctoral thesis and possible further publications. The research will be conducted according to ethical guidelines set out by the British Educational Research Association. The PhD thesis will be publicly available via the University of Birmingham e-library service.

If you would like to participate in the focus group you will be asked to sign a consent form. You can only take part in the focus group if we have had this signed form returned to us. Also, we need the permission of your parent / guardian to take part on the focus group. Please could you arrange for your parent or guardian to sign the permission form that gives their consent for you to take part.

If you have any questions about the focus group please contact me, Tom Harrison, on



Yours sincerely

Tom Harrison
Project Leader

Appendix 7: Group Interview Consent Form

All students taking part in the interviews had to sign the consent form below before they could take part.

Consent Form

Study: The Influence of the Internet on the Character Virtues of 11 to 14 year olds in England.

Researcher: Tom Harrison, School of Education, University of Birmingham
Email: [REDACTED]

Supervisors: Professor James Arthur, School of Education, University of Birmingham
Email: [REDACTED]

Professor Emma Smith, School of Education, University of Birmingham
Email: [REDACTED]

- I have read and understood the participant information sheet provided.
- I was able to raise any questions in relation to this study and had them answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that the purpose of the study is to explore the influence of the Internet on me.
- I am aware that my participation involves taking part in a focus group with other students from my school. Teachers from my school might also be present for some or all of the focus group.
- I agree to the use of audio recording and understand that this will only be accessible to the researcher.
- I am aware that nothing I say will ever be revealed to my school, my family, or to anyone else. I understand that only the researchers involved in the study will hear your answers, and they will not know who has given what answer, because they do not know you.
- I understand that if I say anything that could be considered a child protection issue that this will have to be passed onto the child protection officer at my school.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can choose not to respond to questions. I am also aware that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, either during or after the research, and any recordings will be destroyed.

I have read and understood the above and consent to taking part in the study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

I have explained the above and answered any of the participant's questions.

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix 8: Group Interview Parent Permission Letter



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Date

Dear Parent / Guardian

Permission for son / daughter to take part in a focus group

Please can you sign and return the form below to give your consent for your child to take part in a focus group that aims to better understand young people's use of the Internet and what impact it has on them. It is expected that the focus group will last for one hour and take place in a room at their school. Up to four other students from the school will take place in the focus group alongside your son / daughter. A teacher from the school may also be present for some or all of the focus group. The session will be lead by a researcher from the University of Birmingham. The focus group will be recorded on a voice recording device. It will not be filmed. Your child will not be identified by name at any point in the research or report. However if your child discloses something that might be considered a child protection issue this will need to be passed onto the relevant person at their school.

If you give consent for your son and daughter to take part in the focus group you must sign the permission form below. You son and daughter can only take part if you have signed and returned this form. Your son or daughter can also choose not to take part in the focus group if they do not want to.



Yours sincerely

Tom Harrison
Project Leader

Parental or Guardian Permission Form

I confirm that I give my consent for my son or daughter to take part in the focus group.

Parent name.....

Parent Signature.....

Student name

Appendix 9: Group Interview Research Sites

The following provides descriptions of the six schools selected as research sites for the group interviews.

School G

School A is a mixed school, with students ranging from eleven to eighteen. The school has a specialist status for engineering. As of September 2009 it has been a foundation school and it gained academy status in April 2011. It is located amongst green fields and private housing in South East Cheshire, close to the border with Staffordshire. As of January 2010, 1074 students attend the school; it is a larger-than-average secondary school. The proportion of students that are eligible for free school meals is well below the average. The majority of students are of White-British heritage; small minorities of students are from ethnic minority groups and speak English as a second language. The proportion of disabled students or students with special educational needs is well below average but an above average number of students have a statement of special educational needs. The school has received numerous awards including the Inclusion Quality Mark, Investor in People, International School Award and BECTA Award. The school has forged partnerships with a number of schools, colleges, universities and companies, here and overseas, aiming to widen provision for learners aged 14-19. In 2012, the attendance rate at this school was 95.6%. The attendance rate has increased by 1.1 percentage points since 2011. The attendance rate is in the top 20% of all schools. In 2013, 64% of all pupils attained five GCSEs grade A* to C including English and mathematics.

School H

School B is a mixed catholic school with students ranging from four to nineteen with 1195 students. The school recently lowered the age of entry to four years of age following acceptance from the county council. School B is located in the Cowley area of Oxford in Oxfordshire. This school of average size is oversubscribed. It serves a wide range of primary schools and has had three head teachers since moving to the present site in 2006. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is much higher than the national figure at just under a half. The largest group is of Asian heritage, followed by

pupils with various Caribbean heritages. There are a small proportion of students with various African heritages. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs, or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is greater than in secondary schools generally. The school has gained several national and local awards including Sportsmark and the Healthy School Award. It was designated a Specialist Music College in September 2007. There is a rich programme of extra-curricular opportunities including visits abroad, societies, clubs and a range of music and sports. In 2012, the attendance rate at this school was 92.2%. The attendance rate has increased by 0.2 percentage points since 2011. The attendance rate is in the bottom 20% of all schools. In 2013, 46% of all pupils attained five GCSEs grade A* to C including English and mathematics.

School I

School C is a mixed school with students ranging from 11-18. It is a larger than average secondary school which is located in Worksop in Nottinghamshire. As of May 2012, 1607 students attend the school. The great majority of students are of White British heritage the remainder being from other ethnic backgrounds, mostly Polish. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals are below average, as is the proportion for whom English is an additional language. The percentage of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement is above average. The school's sixth form provisions run jointly with Outwood Academy Portland. The school has many awards including Healthy School Gold Award. Although attainment in 2011 rose slightly from previous years, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, remained significantly below average.

School J

School D is a larger than average sized mixed middle school. As of January 2012, there were 482 students. It shares its building with the first school, although it takes pupils from a wide range of other schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free

school meals is average. The percentage with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is also average. Most pupils are of White British heritage; a few have minority ethnic backgrounds including some who speak English as an additional language. The school has links with a lot of local community projects through a mentoring programme and through the links formed by working closely with other agencies. In 2012, both the school's result for KS2 English and Maths were in the bottom 40% of all schools. Overall attendance is above average but the attendance of pupils in receipt of free school meals is below average.

School K

School E is a multi-faith school in north-west Birmingham, providing both a secondary school and a sixth form for boys and girls aged 11 – 19 years. It has recently opened in September 2012 and therefore there is a significant number of data missing and there are no recent OFSTED inspections for the school. The School Trust, along with our partners, are committed to providing education that will raise hopes, aspirations and attainment of young people in the area. This will be realised through the implementation of their vision, which has emerged from over 30 years of education/ voluntary work with children within a socially disadvantaged part of the city. The school has been working with government for the last 10 years to find ways of creating a school our community has consistently been seeking. The approach to education has been evolving over this period and has led to the success in delivery of education services.

School L

School F is a mixed school with students ranging from eleven to eighteen. It is located in Essex. As of September 2013, 1922 students attend the college, which is larger than most secondary schools. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is a quarter of the national figure. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational

needs is above average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average. A small number of students are partly educated offsite at Otley College, Tendring Studio School or Catton College to provide them with opportunities to gain work related qualifications. The college is an academy. It is sponsored by the Greensward Charitable Trust and is part of the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET). The college specialism is technology and it has secured the following national accreditations: International School Award; LPPA – Leading Parent Partnership Award; the ICT mark; Geography Mark; Healthy Schools Award; and the Prince’s Teaching Institute Award in science, English, history and geography. In 2013, 71% of all pupils attained five GCSEs grade A* to C including English and mathematics. In 2012, the attendance rate at this school was 93.6%. The attendance rate has increased by 0.9 percentage points since 2011. The attendance rate is in the bottom 40% of all schools.

Appendix 10: Group Interview Schedule

RQ1: How is cyber-bullying conceived and experienced by young people?

a) Understanding the context: Is how you use the Internet changing?

- How long do you usually spend on the Internet every day?
- Has your use of the Internet increased over the last two years? Why – is this because you are getting older / have more ways to access it?
- Has where you access the Internet changed – i.e. use on phones / in your bedrooms?
- Does your behaviour change when accessing the Internet in different places – such as in your bedroom / at school / on your mobile? Do you use the Internet for different things in different places? What do you do on your mobile, compared to school computers?
- Do you feel more ‘free’ on the Internet than face-to-face? In what ways? In what you say, how you express yourself?
- Does the Internet change people’s sense of what is right and wrong? Is it easier to lie, cheat, bully online than face-to-face? Why? What specifically is it about the technology that changes understandings of right and wrong?

b) What is Cyber-bullying?

- How would you describe it? What are the main features? What is the difference to face-to-face bullying? Does how bad the things written make a difference?
- What is the difference between writing unkind words to others on the Internet and cyber-bullying? Does it make a difference if it is sustained and regular?

c) Prevalence

- Have you ever been aware of cyber-bullying / saying nasty things deliberately to others? Is it common and regular? How were you aware? Do people speak about it?

- What is the least caring thing you have witnessed on the Internet? Why was it uncaring? What made it stand out?
- Do you think young people are less or more likely to bully as they get older? Do they grown out of it? Does their behaviour get better? If yes, why? Can you learn good habits online? Does experience make you a better person online?

RQ2: Is cyber-bullying more prevalent than face-to-face bullying? If so why?

a) Is Cyber-bullying worse online

- Do different people get bullied online, than face-to-face? Is there more or less?
- Is there something about the technology that makes it worse? Easy to access all the time? Social networking website? Peer linked networks?
- Is anonymity or bullies hiding their identity an issue? Do many people bully anonymously? Why might they do this? Are they caught? Do people know who they are anyway?
- Do chat rooms make bullying more likely? If yes, what is it about chat rooms?
- Do social networks make it worse? Which ones? What is it about them that makes it worse / different?
- Are bullies more likely to bully if they cannot see their victim? Do they feel less likely to get in trouble, be found out?
- Is Internet more likely to be used away from adults? Does this make a difference to bullying?
- Are you parents more concerned by online or face-to-face bullying?

b) Online / offline bullying differences

- What is the difference between online and offline bullying? Is one more likely to happen? Is one worse?
- Does the absence of visual clues make things worse online – as bullies cannot see the impact of their actions?

- Does cyber-bullying spread quicker than face-to-face bullying – are more people aware of instances of cyber-bullying? Does it spread quicker? Does it spread further? How? E-mail, text, or pictures? Can you give an example? Is it worse if it is so public?
- Does it happen in school or out of school more often? Is this different from face-to-face bullying?
- Are young people more likely to report face-to-face or online bullying? Why the difference? Does being anonymous online matter?
- Is all content the same – or are there things online that don't happen face-to-face? Because of the nature of the Internet? Picture sharing?
- Are the targets of bullies the same – social groups people know – or are the targets different?
- Is the influence of peers the same – are they involved with both online and face-to-face? Do they play different roles?

c) Effects

- Are the effects of cyber-bullying or face-to-face bullying worse for the victim? What are the different effects? Why is one worse?
- What are the effects of cyber-bullying on individuals? Does it affect people's happiness, wellbeing, health?
- What are the effects of cyber-bullying on society? Does it make the world a worse place?

RQ3: Is there a difference in the moral motivations of online and offline cyber bullies

a) Motivation to or not to cyber bully?

- Why would someone not be a cyber-bully? Is it because there are rules? They feel a duty not to? Is it because of the consequences if they are found out? Are

cyber bullies found out? Is it because they choose not to as they don't think it is the right thing to do?

- Why would you choose not to cyber-bully? Do you just know it is wrong? Do you have to make a conscious decision not to? What informs this decision?
- What does it say about the character of someone who is a cyber-bully? Are these unusual or usual character traits in school?
- Should we all be responsible for policing our own behaviour online? Is it our responsibility to behave well online and not to bully others? Should the rules against cyber-bullying be stronger and the punishments greater?

RQ4: Can young people be educated not to cyber-bully? If so, how?

a) Internet literacy

- What is the most effective way to educate people not to cyber bully?
- Does teaching young people about what is right and wrong need to be different now we have the Internet?
- Is it schools or parents responsibility to ensure young people behave well online?
- Should schools teach young people how to behave online? If yes, how might they do this? Should they teach about the rules and punishments or another way?
- How might schools teach Internet literacy? In classes, in whole school activities? What strategies would work?
- Would hearing stories about people being bullied be effective – to encourage bullies to see first-hand the effects? Feel others pain? How about the use of stories?

Final questions

- the best thing about the Internet is,.....
- the worst thing about the Internet is...

Appendix 11: Literature Review Strategy

In order to keep the literature review focused, it only considered academic papers, articles and manuscripts that addressed concepts directly linked to the overarching theme of the thesis; namely the Internet, character virtues and young people. Therefore the literature selected to be included in the review had to contribute to answering the question 'What do we already know about the influence of the Internet on the character virtues of young people?'.

The methodology for selecting the literature that would help answer this question included several stages. Initially, relevant key words linked to the research questions, were identified. The key words identified for 'Internet' were; social networking websites, digital media, digital technology, new media, cyberspace, online network, the net, the web, virtual community and Facebook. The key words identified for character virtues were; character, ethics, morals, virtues and values. Each of these key words were used in combination in a search of the literature available on Copac (which include the British Library). Some searches yielded a large quantity of sources. For example a search using the keyword 'Internet' yielded 1352 books and articles when linked to 'character' and 358 when linked to the word 'virtues'. In cases where there were a large number of potential sources identified, further parameter terms such as 'young people' and 'children' were employed. All the identified sources were further 'filtered' by date (within last 10 years), location (UK prioritised), by title and then by relevance with reference to the abstract. The result of this process yielded more than sixty relevant articles, books and reports which were prioritised as being most relevant to the thesis. Additional sources were also identified as the review progressed, mainly through citations. In addition, recent reports and studies were accessed through a number of avenues, including online and library searches as well as through searches of media reports. Any reports deemed relevant to informing the research question were also included in the literature review.

Appendix 12: Sample Transcription

I: Tell me about how you use the internet and what you use it for, generally in a typical day

F: More social stuff

F: Playing games and doing homework

M: Work and social networking sites, whenever I have free time but its not an unhealthy obsession

F: I use it everyday quite socially.

I: Would you say it was an important thing for you to use the internet? If I was to take it away from you right now would that make you sad?

F: I would cry, if I didn't have it I would be bored.

M: I want it and in some places I really need it, we now rely on it and have conformed to it and can't remember life before the internet so if you were to take it away now then that would cause mayhem.

F: We spend more time on there.

I: Where you say you access the most?

M: I usually use it on the desktop, but sometimes when I'm bored I use it on my phone, but I would say more on the desktop.

F: Mine is on my phone, I use it all the time

F: My phone and my laptop

I: Are your parents concerned or worried about you using the internet in your bedrooms would you say?

M: Not really, my mum doesn't talk about the dangers of the internet or her concern for it because it's kind of a rule that goes without saying and she knows that I would stay safe.

F: It doesn't concern them I don't think they really think about it.

I: I am concerned with the difference in how you behave in real life and how people might behave differently online. Do you think people behave differently? You are all nodding... so can you tell me why?

F: Some people act all confident and rude on social networking sites and in person they are really quiet and that can cause arguments and stuff.

M: Sometimes they would act the complete opposite to what they are usually like and that's because they have opened a new account on twitter or facebook and they would act different on those sites as opposed to real life.

F: Sometimes they act fake, they say nice things to you on the internet, when in real life they are just rude.

F: They might be lying about who they are.

M: If you lie online there isn't a way to tell, because you can tell if someone is lying by their body language or facial expressions but lying online is easy.

F: It can cause arguments and different forms of bullying.

I: Now let's talk about different sorts of behaviour. I know a lot of people who wouldn't steal a CD from a shop, but would be happy to download music. Why do you think that might be happening

M: On the internet if you download something it doesn't feel like stealing, because usually when people think about stealing they think about a physical object and sometimes they don't realise and it's kind of an hold habit and habits die hard so they don't really change that and carry on. They might think it's a victimless crime, nothings going to happen to anyone, no one is going to get hurt. So why not?

F: It doesn't say illegal on it so you don't know if it is or not.

M: When you agree to something, they have terms and conditions but I don't think anyone reads it through. In real life people tell you if something's write or wrong but they don't properly enforce it on the internet or if its write or wrong, if you're not sure then the program might not tell you if your right or wrong.

F: If you do something wrong you can't get out of it. If I downloaded a song illegally I can't give it back.

M: You can delete it but you can't give it back to them because you have already done it.

I: What about behaviour online and then face to face situations, do you think generally your friends behave differently?

M: My friends act the same because they are reserved and they are aware how backstabbing might feel to someone on the internet.

F: People can say horrible stuff and they can be really nice and sometimes people can be really scared because someone is saying something horrible to them online.

F: It is easier to do it online because you don't mind hurting their feelings online because it doesn't mean as much.

M: You aren't face with the guilt of them confronting you and telling you what you have done and you don't feel bad about it doing online.

F: It's easier to express yourself online than in person because when you are typing they can't interrupt you. It's harder because that stays there forever and there is evidence and proof.

F: Yeah so if you are typing and you say something that's not right you can change and delete it as your typing, whilst when you speak you can't do that.

I: Do you think there is a difference between face to face bullying and cyber bullying?

M: Cyber bullying is far more humiliating because you might not be aware of it and it's out there for people to hear about an people can spread rumours and it can cause conflict. If you bully someone on the playground it seems a lot less humiliating cos there is not as many people in the place and it spreads quicker on the internet.

F: If you're face to face cant it become a physical fight?

F: If you're on the internet you can say what you like without knowing their initial reaction. So you can basically say what you want.

M: On the internet, I can say what I want on the internet. I think bullies feel safer on the internet than they do in real life.

M: I don't think the media do blow it out of proportion I think they have got it right because it can lead to suicide. If a stranger was to say something to you, then you would think of that and it would go through your head again and again and eat at you more than if you're friend said to you in real life.

F: Bullying physically you can tell but with cyber bullying, no one can see.

F: If you do it online, no one is there to stop it but if you do it in real life then people can come up to you and tell you to stop doing it.

M: If it was pure cyber bullying, if you didn't know the person you can block them, they're gone that's it, whereas in real life you can't just press the block button they want more and more from you and a reaction.

I: Would you say there is a difference between cyber bullying and the sort of things that happen in the playground?

F: Cyber bullying is worse, cos if it's at school once you have left the playground that is it, they can't do anything but cyber bullying is at home as well.

F: Some cyber bullies don't even know they are bullying someone

F: I think some people forget about the boundaries, so they wouldn't say something like in the playground and boundaries are crossed

F: If you are outside someone can stop you but if your online then

F: The internet could carry on stuff from the playground, you can't get away from it.

F: There are videos on Facebook like the world's best fights. They are always there.

F: I think that there is pressures from friends, because if you had a video and you they were like put it up put it up, then you should because you would be like ohh my friends might see it.

F: I think that only applies to some people though and they might not feel the pressure from their friends.

F: With Facebook for example some people might just get it to talk to their friends or there family that live in different countries and some people just add random people and I think people put themselves at risk, so it's not necessarily peer pressure it's your moral decisions as well.

I: One of the reasons that might stop people is because there are rules telling you not to do things. For me I can see that's a case in schools, but the internet seems looser, do rules work on the internet?

M: No

F: Not really at all

M: Some people cross the line and nothing gets done about it.

F: Because the internet is such a big place there's not enough people to monitor it. So on Facebook there is only so little staff and a billion people on Facebook in the world

F: Even if the rules are there its fairly easy to get away. They have report buttons but there is hardly any chance that anyone is going to see it.

F: I have used a report button and no one has done anything about it

I: There are different ways to work out why you might not do something is because they are worried about the consequences.

F: You might not see them on the internet because you're like oh well, it doesn't matter.

F: You don't actually know what the consequences are, there isn't the case that if you do this you're going to jail... I would never do that, because there not stated clearly no one really cares

F: The rules are usually set in stone, but on the internet it's not clear and people don't think about the consequences. On the internet if you do something its permanently there, at the time you might not think about the consequences when after you actually might.

I: Does your own morality influence what you do on the internet?

F: Yeah it all comes down to your personality, the way you have been brought up with the internet, like from your parents, you've been told that's wrong, that's right, you will bring that to the internet with you, so you're like you can't do that, you can't do that, not really making it clear what's right and what's wrong.

I: So your character might impact at how you act in those sorts of things, do people agree with that?

F: Yeah

I: So if rules aren't really working then consequences, does if you do it or not come down to the person

M: I think a lot of the time some people don't really know who they are and they are pressured by trying to be someone else, by their friends they end up doing the wrong thing, it doesn't mean there a bad person it just means that at that time.

F: Because everyone else says yeah that's right you think you're doing the right thing. In the end you're the one who gets in to trouble.

F: It's kind of like finding yourself, a lot of teenagers who use the internet, they might do the wrong things, but that's not what they are. It's who they have seen.

F: If you post something, and everyone's like it's alright, so you think you're doing the right thing and it's alright to do it.

I: So would you say that using the internet is about your own person values as opposed to what someone is telling you?

M: Yeah probably.

I: Do people use the internet anonymously?

F: Yeah well like things like ask fm. You can ask questions and people reply anonymously.

F: It's such a silly website

F: I think it's ridiculous because you know there is a high chance of getting hate because you're in a position where you are incredibly vulnerable, if you are putting yourself out there and anyone can say anything to you then I don't think you should do it to yourself. On Facebook, you know your friends you can accept them. But on there it's just random people who say things.

F: People are asking for it

I: Okay so tell me about ask fm, is that the only one that you can?

F: Yeah it's the main one.

F: Was it Hannah smith who committed suicide?

F: Yeah she did, some people sent her loads of questions and in general things like your ugly.

F: It's disgusting

F: As well because I have never had it, but because you choose to reply to the comments, it will be a motive for them to ask more because they know they are getting a reaction out of you

F: If you like left it, you could delete it, it's not okay to post these bad things.

I: But you're saying you could ignore it?

F: Yeah I just don't understand what people think when they post these messages, maybe there in a difficult situation themselves and are receiving these messages, it doesn't really make sense

F: I think people are trying to get out all of the things they wanted to say to the person

F: I couldn't just say to Chloe your ugly, in society it's wrong. But on the internet it's not as bad

I: It's interesting that you said on the society it's wrong as if the internet is separate from society

F: It is

F: The internet is like a community, outside the normal community

F: it's like a different culture

F: With the internet you can be someone you're not, on the internet you could be really confident but in real life you could be shy

F: The internet gives you the opportunity to meet so many people, if you started a twitter account and if you could be a fan, it's so easy to talk to other fans and it's so easy to connect.

F: You could also meet people on the internet that are completely different in real life.

F: You don't really know who you're talking to

I: Do you think the rules should be the same?

F: They should be similar, but there not

F: The internet gives you a break from real life, if the rules were the same then there isn't a point, there is a little more freedom on the internet

F: I think with the rules being similar, you shouldn't steal things, but the whole talk to strangers thing on the internet it's kind of different, they could be living in America, but if they have similar likes or something then I think it's interesting because it's almost like a friend, but it could be a similar person

F: How you would speak to a person in general I guess you should be more aware of how you speak to them. On the internet you have your own free will to do what you want.

F: Although there can be the negative side, you can meet people who are excited by the same thing as you. Say the Dr Who 50th anniversary, fans... so you have something in common

M: I don't think I just do it. On Call of duty I go on party mode but you can only invite your friends.

I: What could you do to enable people to take moral responsibility?

M: Not put random comments on it

I: How are you going to encourage someone to do that who always puts random comments on things?

F: I think people just need to be more aware, I don't think people know the consequences

F: You could have your mum's voice in your head

F: I think they don't teach the write things in ICT at school, they should teach you how to be aware of the internet instead of shapes.

F: People need to learn how to cope, if you are in a difficult situation

F: On the internet there are help groups for people that have been in similar situations, if they were led to there it would be helpful

F: Assemblies on cyber bullying at school don't really do anything, because no one really listens but say if you got someone who was in the position

F: There is the mentality that it won't happen to me. But if they had someone our age, we could relate to.

F: It would be interesting to see both sides, the victim and the bully

F: if you know what its like for someone to be bullied

F: If someone gets bullied then they start bullying so its like a circle and the internet it became easier

F: Anyone can be a bully on the internet

I: Do you think schools have a right to play? Do you think there handling this?

F: I think our school is good, it handles it quite well

F: I know a friend who was being bullied on ask fm and because it was someone at the school she went to the school, and the school helped overcome it. School does a lot but it's the internet itself that needs to make people more aware.

F: I think it depends on the person, if they feel comfortable. So they school needs to make sure that everyone's aware they can go to the school.

F: I think if most people hear about cyber bullying there like oh no, not this again because they do it repeatedly

F: Schools say we can't control what happens on the internet and it's not their responsibility. But some people are too scared to go into school because of the internet. So it's sort of their responsibility, because it's their students getting hurt and their students hurting other people

F: We have form where we discuss it but we don't get taught it

F: yeah we need to keep talking about it

F: We need a class on real life, like skills and taxes not just algebra and stuff

I: Do you think rules are as easy to enforce on the internet or is it different?

M: Rules in real life is more intimidating because you know that they have authority, whereas in Facebook there is no person enforces

F: Being cyber bullied, really knocks your confidence about yourself and I don't think people deserve to feel like that

F: I don't think people would follow rules on the internet

M: No one is enforcing it. Some people have common sense and they know not to bully, but someone people ignore that and they don't think there is going to be repercussions.

F: Some social networking sites have more than one person to report it before it gets deleted. So if it was offensive and one person reported it nothing would happen.

M: If you can't see the outcome then you won't feel as guilty and it doesn't help the cyber bullying because they should make someone enforce it.

F: I think cyber bullying mostly happens in the night and in the evening because when people are tired they don't think about what they are saying. Sometimes when you read back, you're like why did I say that?

M: Blackmail, if you went on a public site they could hold something against you and no one wants that, so they are forcing you to do something.

I: Is there a difference between why some people do and don't? Do you think it's to do with your own personal bits or can you be swayed by peers?

F: There background, like their family may not have been nice to them if they are being like that. They won't know what the right thing to do is.

F: I think people who bully have something against themselves, so they feel bad about themselves, so they bring the pain on someone else.

M: I think you would have to help the bully themselves, they could be bullied by someone else and it could be a kind of chain.

I: If there are no rules does that mean there is more of a personal responsibility?

M: Its easy to rely on the internet, you have to take responsibility to yourself and be honest.

F: People can post things anonymously, so you can't see who's said it. So things happen and your stuck and the person whose saying it can be your friend in real life.

M: There is a video on YouTube called the power of being anonymous and if you go on games where you can play online, then you know how people can argue with their characters a 38 year old man might not know they are verbally abusing a 12 year old, so it kind of doesn't help that it's anonymous. But if you're anonymous and you say your problem you won't be embarrassed. There is no way of finding out if people are who they say they are. You have to be responsible about how much information you give out.

I: Are you less likely to report something on the internet because its less likely to be reported or?

F: People can put themselves in danger without knowing, you don't know the consequences

I: Would you say that cyber bullying is worse offline or online?

M: I would say they are the same because they have the same effect as people. But I suppose it depends on who it is. On the internet they don't do it to impress anyone, its more of it just being fun.

F: I think bullying face to face, people can get hurt from it, but online is the same

F: I think online is worse because if you're really like shy and sensitive you will take it personally and you won't know how to speak to other people.

M: If someone is cyber bullied and they don't tell anyone they can get in trouble and they could retaliate and then when it comes to a face to face conflict that person might not be able to deal with it.

I: Do you think the online world is different to the offline world?

F: Yeah, it's easier to lie about yourself online.

M: Making someone that doesn't look like yourself is harmless

F: If its harmless then it's your choice what you want to put on there.

M: Some people might not want to get Facebook but might do it through peer pressure, to feel what it's like to connect with their friends.

F: They could create Facebook to connect with relatives across the world.

M: Really inappropriate stuff could come up on Facebook and you don't know when it will come up so you can't be sure if you want to register when your 13.

F: I think there is an age limit for a reason because if I was 10 and I set up a Facebook I wouldn't be at the right age to know what I was thinking.

I: What might be effective strategies to reduce cyber bullying?

F: Make sure every child is happy with themselves, because if not they are going to bully others and also to let children know they have a voice and that they can speak up for themselves and they know what is going on.

M: I think it should be broadcasted on a wide range and buckle down on the punishments, I would get the message across, so they don't do it again

F: They need to know they have someone there for them and that someone is going through it. On tumblr people make their own accounts of what they have been through like their own accounts and speeches.

M: Report cyber bullying.

F: Children can tell someone

F: I think they should bring it in to PHSE, because that's the lesson you have a voice in and you can talk about society and stuff whereas you can't do that in your other lessons.

M: To have a voice that can be guaranteed to be heard. To show a film of a victim, it would guilt them out of bullying. You can show them the effects of after, cos if you were to cyber bully someone into suicide, and if the police found out it was you, the family wouldn't forgive you.

F: There are a few films going around Facebook already.

F: People who have been bullied take it out on their family.

I: Tell me the best worst thing about the internet.

F: The best thing is to find out information, and also when its cold outside you can stay inside and talk to your friends.

F: The worst thing is people can get hurt or forced information

F: The best thing is to communicate with your family who are far away and socialise, follow famous people and see what they are doing. The worst thing is cyber bullying, affecting self-esteem and confidence

M: The best thing about the internet is Tumblr because I love it and you see really funny things and uplifting speeches and the worst is the type of people that go on it.

F: The best thing is you can do whatever you want on it anytime you want to, and the worst is cyber bullying.

F: The best thing is when you're bored you can entertain yourself, and time passes quickly and the worst is cyber bullying.

F: It stops you from going out

M: It gives me a reason to procrastinate... I can do the dishes... or I can go on Facebook.