11 Space, place, and identity

New pressures in the lives of young people

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Chapter overview

This chapter examines the relationships between young people, social media, and health through an analysis of issues related to space, place, and identity. Underpinned by the work of Bourdieu and drawing on work within the field of youth geographies, we argue that the contemporary lives of young people are complex, multi-dimensional, and inter-contextual, requiring individuals to manage competing demands in both real and virtual spaces. We examine how an analysis from a broad sociological perspective can help us to better understand young people's complex engagements with social media and the resulting impacts on their negotiation and performance of identity.

Space, place, and identity

Complex social landscapes

To begin this analysis, it is important to first examine the nature and structure of social life in modern times. To do this, the broad field of sociology and specifically the social theory of Bourdieu, as well as related discussions within youth geographies, are particularly helpful. Youth geography attempts to unpack the complex spaces that young people engage with, by drawing on interdisciplinary research both within and beyond the social sciences. Importantly for this chapter, central to such research is the interrogation of children and young people's experiences of the spaces that comprise their everyday lives (both physical and virtual) and the changing nature of these spaces.

It is routinely argued that contemporary society is characterised by change and that factors such as the increased interconnectedness of peoples and the pace of evolution in human ways of life are having a significant impact on the nature of social practice and the process of identity construction (Hopkins 2010). Identity, as discussed within this chapter, is no longer perceived to be the pre-given concept of previous times, but rather a complex, multi-dimensional understanding of self that is inherently reflexive and influenced by situation and context (Blundell 2016). Changes within social structures can impact the nature

of experience and thus play a key role in shaping individuals' conceptions of self. The breakdown of traditional social institutions (e.g. family, community, and religion) and changing patterns of migration and mobility, for example, are each cited as reasons for contemporary social life now being less structured and predictable than in previous generations (Allan and Crow 2001; Office for National Statistics 2017). The rapid pace of technological change adds to this complexity, changing individuals' perceptions of how we live, learn, work, and communicate (Shulman 2016). For young people 'embedded in the ebb and flow of their social worlds' (Blundell 2016, p. 8), these changes are seen to be particularly significant; leading as they do to new patterns of youth transitions, modes of communication, and agentic social action (i.e. where individuals can act independently and make free choices).

The lives of young people in contemporary Western society are complex and characterised by an increasing sense of reflexivity; meaning that individuals both shape and are shaped by their engagements with numerous social spaces (Giddens 1991; Shilling 1993). It is recognised that young people in contemporary society play an active role in the construction of spatialised identities and have the capacity to construct multi-dimensional biographies influenced by the various spaces in which they spend time. The body plays a key role in this process, being both the means by which individuals move through their social landscape and engage with social practice (Shilling 1993). As such, it is argued that bodies come to reflect the structures and practices of an individual's social world.

Concepts of space and place are important when seeking to understand and explain young people's everyday social practices, including their uses of social media, as they play a significant role in the negotiation and performance of identity. Certainly, Blundell (2016, p. 41) argues that it is important to recognise the spatiality of young people's worlds because this allows them to be positioned as social actors 'enmeshed in richly diverse social worlds rather than as separated out, disconnected individuals'. Others emphasise the importance of the relational nature of identity, reminding us that it is reliant on establishing differences and similarities between individuals and groups (Hopkins 2010). Furthermore, Anderson and Jones (2009) highlight the significance of connections between people and places in their exploration of young people's 'lifescapes' – a concept that describes how individuals are connected to places through social, spatial, and economic interactions. In a context where the nature of social life is progressively more mobile, varied, and challenging, it is perhaps easy to appreciate the challenges young people can face in navigating such complex social landscapes.

Interconnected social spaces

It is argued that one of the key challenges faced by young people in contemporary society is the interconnectedness of social spaces and the porous boundaries between these. As Hopkins (2010, p. 11) notes, 'place is now recognised as having open and permeable boundaries, shaped by complex webs of

local, national and global influences, and different social and cultural flows and processes'. Literature suggests that the core social spaces for young people in contemporary society include key sites such as the family, school, peer groups, and, more recently, social media (Blundell 2016). It is noted, however, that the transient nature of these spaces means that it is possible for individuals to be simultaneously engaged in, and influenced by, the practices of different contexts at the same time e.g. discussions with peers within the school context, or connecting with friends/family via social media. This, we argue, has real implications for young people's negotiation and performance of identity.

Several authors have noted the complex nature of 'borderland' areas between interconnecting social spaces, which often require young people to navigate competing norms, values, and ideals (e.g. Somerville 2010). With the rise in the use of digital technologies, there is also an increased blurring of boundaries between real and virtual spaces (Jordan 2009). Collin *et al.* (2010) argue, for example, that young people often experience online and offline social worlds as 'mutually constituted'. There is a challenge here for identity construction, for as Chambers and Sandford (2018) note: 'Not only are individuals being required to navigate the complex, intersecting landscape of physical (actual) space, they increasingly need to do so whilst simultaneously engaging with multiple realities' (p.3).

Young people therefore not only live within localised communities that share geographical space but are also part of 'communities without propinquity' (Blundell 2016, p. 47) where interactions take place remotely and are often facilitated by technology. Appadurai (1996) argues that the global configurations of technologies that can be seen to shape social processes in contemporary society can be thought of as 'technoscapes', shaping and influencing the ways in which individuals experience technologies in their everyday lives. The rise in new technologies, and the forms of connection these support (via social media, for example) can be seen to add to this technoscape; supporting an interconnected network of virtual and physical spaces (Black *et al.* 2015). Ergler and colleagues (2016) stress the importance of theorising how technologies have changed, mediated, and affected young people's spatiality. This, they argue, better places us to learn about and understand young people's digitally mediated childhoods.

A particular area of relevance here is the degree to which digital spaces have become a fundamental part of young people's social experiences; representing taken-for-granted extensions of the physical space and becoming, as Paiva (2014) has argued, 'culturally, actual spaces' (p.2). There are some important implications here for the ways in which young people negotiate and perform identity within different interconnected socio-spatial and digitalised contexts. In the section below, we identify a theoretical framework that provides a useful lens for examining such issues in further detail.

Bourdieu's theoretical approach

As noted, it is now recognised that young people can be understood to have identities that are multi-dimensional, intercontextual, and spatialised. The subsequent discussion draws on theoretical concepts from the sociological work of Pierre Bourdieu, specifically practice, habitus, field, and capital (Bourdieu 1993, 1986, 1985, 1984) to help analyse and make sense of the social practice outlined in the case studies (Chapters 2–7). We argue that this framework offers a useful lens through which to view young people's engagements with social media and the influence of these on their conceptions of health.

Bourdieu's (1985) focus on the social world as a multi-dimensional space helps us to appreciate the intercontextual nature of social life. For Bourdieu, social processes operate within a network of social *fields*, described as partially autonomous social arenas, each with their own logic and structure to which members of the field all tacitly adhere. Fields don't stand ring-fenced but interrelate and configure in dynamic ways, thus rendering their boundaries malleable (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Given that fields do not always occupy the same physical locality, it is necessary to accept the transience of field boundaries and the potential for individuals to be engaging with more than one field at a single point in time. The structure of fields is determined by the differentiation and distribution of various resources – or forms of *capital* (Bourdieu 1986).

Capital can be economic (e.g. money), cultural (e.g. qualifications), or social (e.g. status) and is valuable not in itself per se, but in the exchange value it affords an individual – for example, in changing cultural capital (e.g. educational qualifications) for economic capital (e.g. a job/wage). For Shilling (1993), the body can be viewed as a resource, functioning as a form of physical capital, with greater value being afforded to those bodies that best meet the norms, ideals, and expectations of a particular social field. An individual's capacity to acquire, consolidate, or translate capital within/across different fields determines the nature of their social practice (including their tastes and dispositions) which is then 'written into the body' via the *habitus*. Habitus is socially constructed and represents the unconscious manifestation of a range of embodied values and dispositions (Bourdieu 1984). These dispositions generate perceptions, appreciations, and practice. Importantly, habitus can be viewed through individual tastes, for example through an individual's orientation toward or preference for particular lifestyle choices. In this way, we can appreciate how social practice comes to directly influence the construction of embodied identities.

When viewed through a Bourdieusian lens we can see how the practice of the characters in the case studies (Chapters 2–7) is influenced by the values and norms embedded in their social environments and driven by the desire to acquire relevant capital that can influence (or maintain) their social position. Bourdieu's tools also facilitate an understanding of the digital landscape and allow for a focus on how 'the unequal distribution of resources may shape processes of digital inclusion for young people' (Newman *et al.* 2017, p. 565). Importantly, this theoretical framework also brings the physical body into play and helps us

understand the way in which dominant ideas, norms, and values (for example around the shape, size, and appearance of bodies) come to influence individuals' tastes and dispositions. Interestingly, recent work within the physical education field has also adopted such a framework for exploring how society and culture shape young people's health (see for example, lisahunter, Smith, and emerald 2015; Wiltshire, Lee, and Williams 2017). Finally, and perhaps most importantly in the context of this chapter, a Bourdieusian framework allows for a focus on the intersections between different social spaces (real and virtual) and the processes that underpin an individual's negotiation and performance of identity within these.

Young people, social media, and space, place, and identity

This section applies the notions of field, habitus, capital, and practice to analyse the case studies (Chapters 2–7). We identify how social media sites act as specific fields (and sub-fields) to shape practice and influence young people's embodied identities in relation to health.

The field of social media

As discussed earlier, young people's social landscapes comprise a number of social fields. Each field has a specific structure and taken-for-granted logic that influences how individuals come to learn and understand the requirements of social practice in that space. With regard to issues of health, young people – such as Kelly, James, Jess, Leah, and Yaz (Chapters 2–7) – learn and acquire health-related beliefs, values, dispositions, and identities in a variety of different contexts (at home, in school, with friends) and through a variety of different pedagogic encounters (Tinning 2008). Tinning (2010) has argued the need to recognise not only 'formal' pedagogic encounters that take place in institutional sites such as schools, but also 'informal' pedagogic encounters that occur in different fields (e.g. around the table at home, in conversation with peers, reading the content of books or magazines). Social media, it could be argued, is one such pedagogic field (Bourdieu 1984); a context in which informal pedagogies (in this case about health) may be produced and reproduced. This can help to explain, for example, how engagements with social media are a means by which Kelly comes to know about diet drinks (Chapter 2), Yaz learns about the 'transformation' of the body through weight training (Chapter 3), or Leah (Chapter 4) refines her understanding of the value of particular bodies.

Bourdieu (1993) defined a field as a structured space in which beliefs and values are established and imposed on those agents within it through the various relationships and practices that occur. In the context of the case studies, this emphasises that it is not only the young people themselves, but also their family context, friendship groups, networks of connections, and, importantly, status within the broader community of social media users, that influence the nature of practice (e.g. their access to social media, what platforms they engage with, the

shaping of core views/ideals etc.). Importantly, fields are also spaces of conflict and competition, structured internally in terms of power relations which locate individuals in different positions within the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). As noted, these power relations are determined by the distribution and accumulation of relevant capital (Bourdieu 1986). An individual with more capital (e.g. peer status – evidenced, perhaps, through peer endorsement or 'likes') would thus be able to secure/maintain a stronger position within the field – something that we see driving James' engagement with social media (Chapter 5). For James, having peer endorsement was a means of securing social capital and, in his mind, aiding his own personal sense of wellbeing. Something of the conflict and competition within fields, however, can also be seen within Leah's narrative (Chapter 4). While she recognises the capital (status) afforded to 'skinny girls' by posting pictures that are then 'liked', she also criticises the pressure she perceives this peer-to-peer body comparison places on others (like herself).

Negotiating practice within fields, as the case studies demonstrate, is not always easy. Although amorphous in nature and with fluid boundaries, the characteristics of social media enable it to function as a field where power is accumulated by social actors (such as Kelly, Yaz, James, Leah, and Jess). Moreover, social media can be seen to act as a distinct field of production, circulation, and exchange; rendering it an extension of the social world and part of an individual's wider lifescape (Paiva 2014). However, we should remember that the transient nature of fields and the fact that they configure in different ways for different people, means that the nature of experience is uniquely individual. While there may be shared practices, there will not always be shared impact.

Connected individuals in interconnected spaces

Social media platforms, in their various guises, are powerful tools that can connect individuals not just locally, but on a transnational scale (Papacharissi and Easton 2013). Social media collapses the boundaries through which individuals typically interact and socialise; thus, one of the most obvious forms of capital acquired within the field of social media is social capital – primarily in the form of connections with, and status among, peers. Social capital is particularly evident in Chapter 5. As James comments, ' "likes" for one of your posts is a form of peer endorsement'. James' case study highlights that on social media, social capital can be acquired by increasing connectivity (though likes) and followers, which in turn increases an individual's social status.

This is also exactly how Kelly (Chapter 2) was reported to use social media as a means of connecting with her friends (both in terms of contacting them and being contacted by them). Kelly sought to enhance her connectivity by having multiple social media accounts, and this demonstrates the perceived importance of connectivity, but also hints at the need for economic capital. For instance, easy access to economic capital (i.e. money to purchase platforms) might be needed to facilitate connections with friends. This demonstrates, perhaps, how

the distribution of resources can indeed shape (or hinder) processes of digital inclusion (Newmann *et al.* 2017) and determine if/how young people can be connected. It was evident from the case study chapters that social media platforms offer young people an opportunity to accumulate and convert capital. For instance, Kelly (Chapter 2) can use social media – specifically, the group chat functions on particular platforms – to convert social capital to cultural capital. While social capital refers to an individual's stock of 'social connections' (Bourdieu 1986, p. 47), cultural capital relates to all symbolic and material goods that might give an individual a higher status in society. In this context, Kelly can draw on her online networks (her connections) to gain help and support with, for example, completing her homework.

Social capital is also relevant to the concept of resilience. Being able to draw on a stock of social capital was evident in Leah's case study (Chapter 4) as potentially useful for building resilience, since the posts circulating around Instagram had a negative impact on Leah's sense of self ('posting one picture can make someone feel insecure about themselves'). Resilience here is understood as the ability to recover from adversity and react to stressful situations (Masten 2009). Social capital, defined in a variety of different ways by various authors, has been argued to provide a useful resource for young people to draw on to access social support (connections) to overcome challenges/difficulties (e.g. Holt 2016). However, since social media collapses the boundaries through which individuals socialise, bringing fields together in virtual space, this presents an interesting dichotomy with regard to the value of these social connections and how individuals interact. Arguably, through social media young people are more connected than ever (as Kelly says, 'everyone' has social media accounts – Chapter 2). Yet, by communicating at distance, young people can also be regarded as physically more alone; in some cases, therefore, their social capital may be less effective in helping to develop resilience.

As noted, the theoretical lens of Bourdieu can help us understand how young people both shape and are shaped by their interactions with others within the field of social media (e.g. with regard to the content they access, the images they share, and the views they express). Thinking about the context of health-related social media, it is apparent why interactions between individuals can also influence their health-related practices. Fields can nurture health-related preferences, interests, and tastes (as the conscious expression of habitus) but they also mediate what social agents do in specific social, cultural, or economic contexts (Bourdieu 1984). Thus, while Kelly (Chapter 2) initially stated that she didn't choose to view images or videos related to health, these messages permeated the space to such an extent that she became resigned to the *doxa* of the field (Bourdieu 1977) and ultimately explored health-related content in the same way her friends did ('her use of social media is influenced by what everyone else does'). Arguably, those who occupy the same field, or in this case the same social media platforms, may share similar dispositions (of habitus) and reproduce the culture of their shared fields through practice (Wacquant 1992). In essence, as we grow accustomed to a new social space, our tastes and dispositions change

accordingly. This perhaps reminds us that young people, like Kelly, don't fully act in and of themselves, but are influenced by the contexts in which they find themselves – that is, structure and agency are both important. Bourdieu reminds us, however, that while habitus is not fixed, it is durable. Such modification of the habitus (dispositions/tastes etc.) due to emersion in different spaces would therefore happen over time.

Spaces within spaces: the sub-fields of social media

While we may view social media as a broad field, the case study of Jess (Chapter 6) points toward the fact that different social media platforms may act as distinct sub-fields in and of themselves. Jess articulated how Instagram and Snapchat are used differently, serving different functions, by her and her friends. Her narrative suggests that Snapchat is a space to share more anecdotal stories, while Instagram serves as a space for expression and to portray a particular identity to an individual's network. There are parallels to draw here with Goffman's (1990) work on the presentation of the self, with Instagram functioning as a 'front region' and a stage on which to present a polished (managed) version of self and Snapchat representing more of a 'back region' (Bullingham and Vasconcelos 2013). Each of these sub-fields operate differently and is made distinct by the types of capital that offer the most value to the individual holders.

For Jess, for example, social capital (shared conversation) was valued more within Snapchat and physical capital ('perfect images') within Instagram. Since the taken-for-granted assumptions that help govern the practices in these sub-fields (in this case, Instagram and Snapchat) vary, and they require a different set of dispositions to act, we might consider that each social media site may encourage individuals to develop slightly different elements of habitus. These dispositions are framed by the architecture of the social media platform and therefore a young person's 'Instagram habitus' may be slightly different to their 'Snapchat habitus'. Habitus – and specifically the concepts of tastes and dispositions – are therefore particularly important in terms of analysing the case studies, especially with regard to how young people's practices shape and are shaped by engagements (their own and others') with different social media sub-fields.

The notion of individual practice both shaping and being shaped by engagement with different sub-fields is furthermore reflective of Bourdieu's notion of habitus. Rather than being deterministic, Bourdieu contended that habitus is a mediating construct shaped by the living conditions characteristic of a particular social space, whilst also operating as a 'generating principle, of classifiable practices and judgements of taste' (Laberge and Kay 2002, p. 247). The habitus is thus both structured by conditions of existence and generates particular practices in accordance with its own structure. Hence, individuals exercise agency within existing social conventions. As an example, Jess can choose to engage and express her own views within the Snapchat conversation, but is influenced both by her own tastes/values and the shared understanding of the group. This means her behaviour is socially constructed with interactions already influenced

by social predispositions and rules, emanating from different social media fields.

On Instagram, the normative behaviours of the sub-field include individuals expressing and projecting their identity onto others. More specifically, individuals create narratives about their identity through images. Consider, for example, Leah's reference to the 'skinny girls with perfect hour glass figures' (Chapter 4), Yaz's affinity for body transformation videos (Chapter 3) and Jess' reference to the 'Instagram model', where you can become famous through the images that you post to social media (Chapter 6). However, when young people engage with Instagram (and other platforms), they are immediately exposed to the power relations evident within that arena. As such, young people begin to fight to acquire capital, power, and recognition in line with the rules of the field. While in the 'real' world this power and recognition may come through buying the latest designer clothes or having the latest iPhone, in the 'virtual' world, social status is recognised through the size of the social networks or the number of 'likes' and comments received. As Yaz (Chapter 3) argues, 'likes' imply 'relevance' or 'appeal'. Thus, the behaviour of accumulating connections, 'likes', or comments reflects various power relations among social actors and emerges out of the social contexts in which they find themselves (Bourdieu 1984).

In further considering power, as young people transition across different social media spaces, they are ultimately exposed to different power relations. Hence, in some sub-fields, young people can be powerless and exposed to those in charge of what Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) would label 'pedagogic authority'. In this sense, young people often uncritically believe what is communicated to them through social media platforms and consume information about health that reproduces the dominant messages about health equalling body shape. In the case of Yaz (Chapter 3), YouTube acted with pedagogic authority; identifying and suggesting videos for him to view that are reflective of the videos he has previously explored. As discussed above, the messages conveyed through these informal pedagogic encounters about body transformation, and thus health, reflect the dominant doxa of the field. That is not to say, however, that alternative perspectives on health cannot be experienced within these different arenas. For example, Yaz's friend Amy was able to recognise and reflect on these messages, demonstrate critical awareness, and identify alternative possibilities (heterodoxy) for Yaz. However, it is interesting to consider whether it was easier for Amy to adopt this critical view of Yaz's behaviour from her largely external perspective.

Performing and pausing identity in the social media field

Papacharissi and Easton (2013) have identified Instagram as a site of dramatisation and performativity, which is particularly evident in the cases of Leah (Chapter 4), James (Chapter 5), and Jess (Chapter 6). Leah's narrative depicts her friends posting pictures of their bodies; an overt display of their physical

capital (Shilling 1993). Due to the doxa and pressures experienced in that space, Leah felt 'pressured' to engage in similar behaviours. In contrast, James and Jess both welcomed the opportunity to perform and display their physical capital in a space where this type of capital (in the form of bodies that conform with dominant social/cultural norms) is particularly valued. Due to the competitive nature of fields, when an individual enters a given field they will unintentionally try to extract the maximum amount of capital from every symbolic exchange (Bourdieu 1986). James and Jess are prime examples of this, whereby they both strive to convert their physical capital (their images of their appearance) into symbolic capital (in the form of likes and comments). Likes and comments on Instagram thus function as symbolic capital and shape the practices evident within that arena. For James and Jess, increasing the number of likes and comments enhances their social status.

In relation to notions of health and what is perceived to be healthy, how likes and comments function as symbolic capital in platforms such as Instagram is particularly problematic. Applying a Bourdieusian lens, the more likes and comments health-related images receive, the more the content within the image is legitimised. This, in turn, reinforces the power of the messages conveyed. If particular images portray health as synonymous with body shape, as is common within the field of physical culture (e.g. Evans *et al.* 2008), then receiving likes and comments will ultimately reinforce that as the dominant ideology. Equating health with body shape and appearance was particularly evident in Jess' case study (Chapter 6). Unlike James (Chapter 5) who drew on his social capital (connections with peers) to exchange likes with others to build his standing in the field, Jess took more drastic measures; using Photoshop to edit images of her 'ideal' self.

It would seem, then, that young people look to convert physical capital into social and symbolic capital by building social networks and accumulating followers, likes and comments based on their manufactured images. Interestingly, Papacharissi and Easton (2013) suggest that we have always tended to engage with performativity and self-editing when we present ourselves to others in real space, yet social media platforms provide an opportunity for self-editing prior to sharing. As such, they offer a 'pause' in the process of presentation; virtual space allowing for an opportunity to refine the physical self to better align with social norms. The process of self-monitoring, acknowledged as a key influence on embodied identity in contemporary society (e.g. Giddens 1991) is thus heightened through social media, which may be particularly problematic with regard to potentially harmful health-related behaviours.

The broader field of social media is therefore unique and particularly powerful since it can mobilise action both within and outside of defined spaces (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat etc.), blurring the lines between the 'virtual' and 'real' worlds (Jordan 2009). Editing and manufacturing images that portray specific identities and perceptions of health is an example of action within that space (e.g. Jess' use of Photoshop, Chapter 6). On the other hand, action outside of that space would consist of, for example, individuals altering their diet, going to the

gym, or using harmful devices to change their identity in the real world, which is then reflected back into the social media space (consider Yaz's pursuit of physical activities to increase muscle, Chapter 3, or Jess' use of the potentially harmful waist trainer, Chapter 6). Arguably, this comes down to the fact that social media platforms offer numerous arenas in which young people can engage in various actions to increase their social status; yet all form just part of their broader social landscapes.

Implications for addressing young people, social media, and space, place, and identity

This chapter has drawn on a Bourdieusian framework to offer insights into the way in which young people's use of social media shapes their practice across fields, influences their engagements with others, and impacts their negotiation/ construction of embodied identities. The discussions so far have highlighted that social media is a key field within young people's social landscapes; a space in which they exercise agency and create their own multi-dimensional biographies. However, social media is also a space that overlaps and intersects with other key fields of influence (e.g. physical culture, school, peers, etc.) which has implications for how young people negotiate and perform identity. Certainly, the increased blurring of boundaries between front and back regions (Bullingham and Vasconcelos 2013; Shulman 2016) in contemporary society and the ease with which borders between fields can be crossed suggests there may be a need to rethink our understandings of how individuals present the self in such digitally mediated landscapes. Moreover, there is potential for the borderland spaces between social media and other fields to be places of conflict or contestation; with multiple meanings, messages, ideals, and perspectives vying for prominence. As such, a key question is if, whether, and how informal pedagogic encounters within social media – in particular, concerning health-related issues – contrast with more formal pedagogic encounters (e.g. in families, schools, or sports clubs) and how best to manage potential tensions that may arise between different spaces, places, and identities.

It has been argued that young people's transitions 'within, between and across different social spaces represent a challenge for educators that has perhaps not fully been appreciated' (Chambers and Sandford, in press, n.p.). In this context, the transmission of messages within and across fields (e.g. about 'ideal' body shape, size, or appearance) can reproduce dominant norms and (mis)conceptions; with accompanying implications for an individual's health and wellbeing. This has been highlighted as a key issue within the physical education/sport literature (e.g. Fisette 2011) but some authors also note that the prevalence of engagement with social media has exacerbated this situation (Fardouly *et al.* 2015). The social practice described in the case study chapters (Chapters 2–7) illustrates this and points to the need for critical inquiry not only on the part of young people, but also for those who work with/for them, particularly with regard to promoting positive messages around health and equipping

young people with the knowledge to challenge those practices that might cause harm.

Chambers and Sandford (2018) also argue that in such complex social landscapes there is a need to equip young people with 'values fluency', as a means of easing their transition between interconnecting digitally mediated social spaces. To do this, it may be necessary to meet and engage with young people in those online spaces that form such a central part of their social landscapes. Evers *et al.* (2013, p. 264), talking about sexual health communications among Australian youth, argue that it could be valuable for health professionals and educators to 'explore and create ways to listen to and engage with young people' in social media spaces; to facilitate critical discussion and debate about key issues. However, they also note that mobilising social media in this way requires sufficient resources and has implications for issues such as staff training, monitoring, and safeguarding. In addition, as this chapter has shown, there are also questions to be asked with regard to if and how adults – as individuals perceived to lack cultural and symbolic capital (consider the WhatsApp conversation about the school assembly in Chapter 7) – are able to access the field and engage in such conversations with youth.

Finally, the narratives presented appear largely homogenous, with little account taken of differences in gender, class, race, or disability. Therefore, key questions remain about how diversity is played out within the field of social media and how individuals' engagements with this space are also influenced by other aspects of their biographies. For example, how do young people with a disability engage with social media and how do they view messages about health? (How) does the lens of age, religion, class, or culture influence the way in which individuals engage with social media? How are individuals' social media experiences shaped by issues of marginalisation? Take, for instance, the example of care-experienced young people who may struggle to access social media and be under surveillance by adult carers when using it. For many care-experienced young people, use of social media may be associated with safeguarding issues and therefore restricted – or closely monitored – because of legal orders (Wilson, 2016). It would therefore be remiss to assume that all young people can access social media in the same way that their peers might. Would care-experienced youth, for example, have the same experiences (or freedoms) as Kelly, Yaz, Leah, James, or Jess (Chapters 2–6)? And, if not, would they miss out on the opportunities to build connections, acquire social capital, or work on their performance of identity? This is a good illustration, perhaps, of how social resources can shape the processes of digital inclusion or exclusion for young people in very real ways.

Building on the arguments related to homogeneity, we also need to remember that not all young people will have 'media literacy', due to varying degrees of marginalisation or disadvantage (Bird 2011). Newman *et al.* (2017, p. 559) remind us that: 'Despite the seeming ubiquity of young people's internet use, there are still many for whom access to the internet and online social networking remains inequitable and patterned by disadvantage.' The composite case studies

presented in this book offer a useful initial insight into the relationships between social media, young people, and health, but we argue that further work – focused on the diverse experiences of youth – could continue to facilitate our understanding of this significant social space and the experiences of young people who engage with it.

Summary of key messages

The following key messages can be drawn from this chapter:

- Identities in contemporary times are complex, multi-dimensional, and spatialised. With digital spaces now also representing a fundamental part of young people's social experiences, there is also an increased blurring of boundaries between real and virtual space. This has some important implications for young people's negotiation and performance of online and offline identities (see also Shulman, 2016).
- The dualism of structure and agency is pertinent when considering how health is understood, portrayed, and performed in relation to social media. This dualism is helpful in understanding how individual choices pertaining to health may be shaped or constrained by wider structural forces. Hence, while young people may choose to act in certain ways when using social media platforms, these choices may be ultimately shaped by the wider social conventions and rules that govern those sites (which are, in turn, shaped by individual practice).
- Young people's dispositions, tastes, and preferences to act in certain ways are likely shaped by, and aligned with, their choices of social media platform. Thus, each social media site may encourage individuals to develop slightly different tastes or dispositions and, as such, a young person's 'Instagram habitus' may be slightly different to their 'Snapchat habitus'.
- Social media platforms, as distinct sub-fields, offer numerous opportunities for young people to accumulate and convert capital. However, when young people engage with different platforms (e.g. Instagram, Snapchat), they are immediately exposed to the power relations evident within that arena. As such, young people enter the contest to acquire relevant capital ('likes', comments, status etc.) in line with the rules of the field.
- Young people's experiences are necessarily unique, due the different ways in which fields configure in their social landscape. While these general case study narratives offer insightful perspectives on how some young people engage with social media, there is a need to further consider how different individuals may be marginalised or excluded from the digital world and, importantly, how those with different biographies view messages about health.

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