



**Department of Sociology,
Maynooth University**

Final Year Project

**Has the emergence of technology affected family life in terms of
socialisation, isolation and communication? If so, how?**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the role technology has within the family home in terms of interpersonal relationships, family bonds, and segregation within the family realm and contemporary household. Technology has become increasingly important in every aspect of life, including the home. This research makes a strong contribution to the field of sociology as it provides a foundation of the effects of digital technology within the private sphere. During this investigation, qualitative methods were used to order to investigate the manner in which family members felt about the presence of technology. Building on existing literature of the family, along with literature on the use of technology, this research project aims to provide a sociological perspective on this topic.

The themes that emerged both from the literature and the findings were communication versus miscommunication, the digital divide or the generational gap, and gender relations. This research topic found that technology affects family life in both a positive and negative manner for each family member. It changes the culture and attitudes of everyday life and gives new meaning to the word 'family'. This project also established how both male and female family members perceive and interact with technology differently due to their conceptual and stereotypical gender relations. It demonstrates that communication technologies harm family bonds within the private sphere of the home as these technologies are used to excess, in order to 'switch off' from family members. In addition, communication technology proves to be quite useful to families who are physically separate by geographical barriers, allowing individuals to talk to their loved ones with the touch of a button. This research makes a significant contribution to the sociological discussion on family life, the role of individuals within the family and how technology affects this.

Chapter 1 Introduction

(1.1) Introduction

Over the last decade, technology has continued to become more prominent and embedded within family life. 'Communication technologies are increasingly being used within family settings to support and expand relationships' (Little Sillence, Sellen and Taylor 2009:125). It has become quite clear that we now live in a digital age, a virtual world. The reason why I wanted to carry out research on the effects of technology on family life was due to the fact that I wanted to examine how we use it, if we depend on it, how we communicate with it, and also, have become isolated because of it. 'Parents need to care about the Internet usage habits of our children' (Palfrey and Gasser 2008:182).

(1.2) Aims and Objectives

The main topic of this research project is how technology within the home affects family life through the realms of socialisation, communication and isolation. Through the research and findings, my research project intends to explore the impact that technology has on family members and to investigate if there is an increased dependence on mediated communications. Furthermore, it will also investigate if family members become lonely or disconnected from other family members due to their use of technology while also exploring the aspects of the digital divide and gender relations that are present within contemporary households. These questions will be answered through semi-structured interviews and interactive journals. For the purpose of gaining insight into the effects of technology on family life, my participants were asked questions on how dependent their children or siblings are on technology, also, did technology connect or disconnect them more from family members? They were also asked did they think it was necessary to have technology present within the

home? The semi-structured interviews also examined the effects that communication technology had on older family members such as grandparents. The findings chapter will be sorted under two headings, Semi- structured interviews and interactive journals. Under these headings the themes of communication, the digital divide and gender relations will be further explored. These themes emerged within the transcripts and will be further analysed through my interpretation and significance of the findings.

(1.3) Potential Contribution

I feel this research project will contribute to the discipline of sociology and beyond as I think it may to some extent, fill a gap within the already existing literature. In terms of methodology, much of the literature that I have focused on has used quantitative methods. In contrast to that, I have chosen to use qualitative methods in order to create a different stance on the research which is based on family and technology through the changing dynamics of family life and face-to-face interactions. I have chosen to use qualitative methods such as interviewing and interactive journals, as it allows me to receive in depth and detailed answers. It also lets me as the researcher receive a deeper understanding of the topic at hand, while using a constructivist approach.

‘Certain users describe technology as a communication medium, a conduit that transmits information from one place to another, a means of keeping in touch with friends, or of avoiding face-to-face contact with the people just upstairs’ (Markham 1998:86). My own personal motivation for undertaking this particular research project is due to my own personal relationship with technology. I have fond memories of my childhood without technology. A child’s biggest source of entertainment was their imagination and their innocence. As I have grown, technology has grown with me and it is becoming apparent that

many families, including my own, are becoming increasingly dependent on technology for social interaction, rather than their own family members.

In addition, through my review of the literature, it is clear that the structure and boundaries of family life have changed in the last number of years. 'ICTs offer multiple formats for collaboration, information exchange, and spending time together, which contribute to feelings of family strength and closeness' (Grant 2009). My research question, I feel, does fit with the previous literature that I have reviewed and it will add a contribution to the outlook of technology and the family through a sociological lens and perspective. 'Much work, then, is needed to detail the contexts in which communication between family members takes place, to detail just how family life is constituted and routinely played out through communicative practices' (Little, Sillence, Sellen and Taylor 2009:125).

Chapter Two Literature Review

(2.1) Introduction

In her article, *Digital Dwelling: Technology in Couple and Family Relationships*, Kathleen Hertlein states that 'advances in technology have also influenced connection between family members' (2012:380). This research project will set out to investigate whether or not the theme of communication, isolation and dependence on communication technology is present within the family and, if so, how it may influence the successful functioning of the family itself. In doing so, it is necessary to explore and examine the literature surrounding family life and technology through an investigation of the data present. It is also crucial to develop a theoretical framework and some comprehension of how technology has become part of our everyday lives in the past decade, and to identify how it has impacted on the dynamics of family life, albeit, communication, interactions and inter-personal relationships for example.

The literature reviewed demonstrates how the presence of these communication technology devices have both positive and negative effects within the family. Current literature suggests that communication technologies are severely impacting on social bonds. For example, Plowman et al. (2010) suggests that on one hand, technology has a positive influence as it 'provides essential stimulation to the growing mind and intellect' (p.1). On the other hand, Przybylski and Weinstein (2012) state that 'a number of prominent theorists have argued that mobile communication technology can have a decidedly negative influence on interpersonal relationships (p.238). This clearly suggests that a strong correlation between families and technology is embedded within the literature. This research project will make a contribution to the sociological knowledge in terms of communication and socialisation patterns between the family and technology.

(2.2) Communication versus Miscommunication

Due to modernisation, technology has increasingly become more prominent within the homes of families. This is consistent with Przybylski (2012) as they maintains that 'little is known about how the frequent presence of these devices in social settings influence face-to-face interactions' (p.239). A review of literature, suggests that the mere presence of technology is becoming more and more important to many children and adolescents than the people physically surrounding them. The presence of communication technology blurs the boundaries within the family structure. For example, as Wang et al. (2015) notes: 'ICTs are able to break barriers of time, space, location, and distance in making virtual communication accessible, feasible, and efficient' (p.207). A possible explanation for this might be the growth and reliance of technology within the family. This arguably indicates that family members are spending more time around technology than they do with their family members. This aspect of technology within the home will be further examined in this research project.

It could be argued that technology has both a positive and negative impact on inner life. Plowman, McPake and Stephen (2010) make a convincing argument that the emergence of technology has had a psychological impact on how children behave. They contend 'the broad range of technologies to which children have access or exposure may suggest that there has been a technologisation of childhood if we ascribe agency to the technology' (p. 72). Conversely, Carvalho, Francisco and Relvas (2015) argue that initially technology was associated with the professional sphere, but as it has expanded into family life it has created a sense of isolation. Moreover, they argue that the loss of family cohesion has occurred and 'has also facilitated the exposure of users to a variety of risks' (p.103). Furthermore, both Przybylski and Weinstein's (2012) argument is based on theorist Sherry Turkle (2011), who

maintains that ‘the mere presence of mobile communication technology might interfere with human relationship formation’ (2012:244), due to a decrease in emotional face-to-face interactions. This has been proven to have deteriorated in both frequency and quality. This will be further investigated this research project. In their comprehensive analysis, Przybylski and Weinstein state ‘that the presence of mobile communication technology may present a barrier to human interactions’ (p.239). This section has attempted to provide a brief summary of the literature relating to the positive and negative aspects of the emergence of communication technology within the family home. However, it is important to note here that selection bias is a potential concern in this study. This is because quantitative methods and the individuals who were studied may have portrayed characteristics that were not general for the whole population – these factors could have potentially been left out of the study. This is important to note as Przybylski and Weinstein (2012) state ‘the mere presence of mobile phones inhibited the development of interpersonal closeness and trust, and reduced the extent to which individuals felt empathy and understanding’ (p.244).

(2.2.1) Isolation and Loneliness

In their study, both Robert Hughes Junior and Jason D. Hans (2001) reference critics who such as Stoll (1995) who claims that technology causes ‘impoverished relationships, isolation of people within families, and distancing between families and the outside world’ (p.777). They take a clever approach in their findings as they focus on specific elements such as the workplace. These scholars rely on Burgess’ (1928) theory as they ‘examine the research on the effects of computers and the internet on families to bring about a better understanding of how this technology influences family life’ (2001:777). However, it could be suggested that their findings are not completely relevant as they examine technological interaction within

both the workplace *and* the home. Originally, many believed that the availability of technology within the household would mean that more people would be taking their work home with them at night but, according to Hughes and Hans (2001), this did not happen. It is interesting to note that, 'some analysts have argued that the Internet socially isolates people and cuts off genuine social relationships (Stoll,1995).

Both Katz and Aspden observe significant differences of the online realm as they forecast that the Internet will lead to better social relationships because people will be freed from the constraints of time and place (Katz & Aspden, 1997). Critics have also argued that not only do surveys provide an inaccurate measure of social relationships and it also does not portray the true feelings of individuals, which is a potential drawback of this study. In addition to Stoll's study, even though some aspects of technology were expected to have a negative impact, other studies including Plowman et al. (2010) and Quadrello et al. (2005) indicate that, once used in the correct manner, technology can somewhat improve family relations. While both publications take a very different approach to their studies, both make a convincing argument by critically analysing the positive and negative affects technology has on individuals.

(2.2.2) Virtual Togetherness

In their writing, Orleans and Laney's (2000) discuss family and technology and the manner in which it affects their socialisation. They argue that once technology is introduced into the home, it could be argued that the amount of time family members spend with each other

decreases which, in turn, affects their relationships with one another. The majority of families use these types of technologies to maintain interpersonal relationships and this, arguably, affects their family relations. In today's digital society, technology plays an important part in helping to understand the modern family environment. Orleans and Laney take a similar approach to Hughes and Hans' study by examining the workplace. They also investigate romantic relationships, family life, and education. These critics investigate the idea that individuals in this digital society find solace in members of diverse internet communities who share similar experiences and expertise online. Since technologies, such as the internet, enhances public participation, it could be argued that the individuals who choose to spend more time embedded within a virtual world may feel more comfortable online in comparison to spending time with their own family.

(2.2.3) The use of the mobile phone

In their book *Mobile Lives*, Anthony Elliott and John Urry (2010) examine case studies of individuals who use technology on a daily basis in order to 'keep on the move, to access information and to communicate with others' (Elliott and Urry 2010:26). These scholars take a different approach to their argument as they examine single case studies rather than an overview of technology. It could be argued that examining an overview may contribute to the generalizability of the topic, which arguably could be a negative aspect of the study. This allows the reader to examine this topic in more detail by looking at the on-going affect technology has on individuals rather than groups. One case study that is particularly thought provoking is a study on Sandra Fletcher (2010), a high-profile advertising executive. Due to her lifestyle, technology and in particular her mobile phone has been a great help. For Sandra, 'the beauty of the digital lifestyle is that she gets to bring her family (or, more accurately, her

emotional connection with her family) along on these virtual networks' (2010: 26). It is clear that technological communication systems allow people to travel whilst still being able to contact their loved ones with the touch of a button. Similar to that both Weinstein and Przybylski (2012) demonstrate the positive affect mobile phones can have as they state 'the use of phones is largely a way to feel closer with family members, to express care for others, and to be available to others' (p.238). However, it could be suggested that while these technologies prove to be useful in the public sphere, they could be damaging family interactions within the private sphere. In turn, this research project intends to address the effects that technology has on the private sphere in the findings chapter.

Similar to Elliot and Urry, Gardner and Davis' (2013) state that 'participants expressed concern that mobile technologies and social media threaten to diminish the quality of young people's face-to-face interactions' (p.106). They make a convincing argument that, out of the majority of social groupings, the notion of family communication and socialisation 'may be particularly vulnerable' (Gardner and Davis' 2013:107). In their detailed study, Gardner and Davis' claim that, - while individuals remain positive about their mobile phone usage, many still believe that excessive use of the mobile phone and other technology within the home can create an isolating affect between family members. Therefore, the term 'post-colonial family' in which individuals spend more time with technology than other family members continues to become increasingly prominent. This controversial hypothesis will be further examined and analysed in the findings chapter of this research project.

(2.3) The digital divide

Pal Andre Aarsand's (2007) writing on *Computer and Video games in Family life* is a useful resource when identifying and examining the effects that technology has had on various

generations within the family structure. Many studies have been undertaken to demonstrate how people interact differently with technology and 'how technology is used in different contexts' (Aarsand 2007:236). This resource is particularly useful in identifying digital technology and social interaction among children and their family. My project intends to determine how technology is used differently in terms of the public sphere and private sphere. It will also investigate how digital technology affects the social development of children. Hertline maintains that due to the presence of the digital divide family relationships both change in structure and in process. Papert (1996) also states that even though many parents and grandparents are excited by the opportunities that technology gives them, they also 'worry about whether children might fall into bad company or pick up corrupting ideas while roaming the highways and byways of cyberspace' (p.2). In their writing, both Valentine and Holloway illustrate the transformation of culture and society through the use of technology. Similar to Hertline, Facer et al. (2001) discusses the fears parents have over the digital divide as they maintain 'the internet, like the geographical space outside, is therefore a site of anxiety for parents and is constructed, in many homes and at a policy level, as a site which must be policed' (p.23).

(2.3.1) Technology and Grandparents

Current literature suggests that, in many families, grandparents hope and desire that their children and grandchildren become technologically intelligent as society and the economy continue to become more dependent on it in order to function in everyday life. As Rempusheski et al, (2012) and Quadrello et al. (2005) point out while hoping for this future for their kids, many older generations have much anxiety about the same wish as they feel

they have a severe lack of skills and knowledge in terms of technology and the use of it. Rempusheski et al. (2012) and Quadrello et al. (2005) examine the positive influences of technology as they examine how both grandparents and grandchildren communicate with one another through the use of technology and believes it enriches their relationship, giving the reader an insight into the relationship between the elderly and technology.

Both pieces of research found that following face-to-face interaction, the use of the telephone was very important. In contrast to that, younger and highly educated grandparents choose to use text messaging and e-mail to communicate with their grandchildren. Finally, Quadrello et al. (2010), examines how grandparents and their grandchildren communicated with one another in today's digital age. Their findings displayed the tendency grandparents have to use cards and letters while text messaging was the dependent variable for their grandchildren. Finally, Quadrello (2010) notes 'taking this aspect into account, it is important that measures be taken to educate especially older grandparents in the use of new forms of communication' (p.275). As this literature review suggests, class has an impact on the type of inter-personal relationships that grand children have with the older generation, through their use and knowledge of the workings of technology.

(2.3.2) Technology and Parents

Seymour Papert (1996), maintains that 'parents should recognize the need to build new relationships with their children and should see the computer as a vehicle for building, rather than an obstacle to, family cohesion' (p.79). He suggests that in this digital age, many parents are not computer literate and are therefore fazed by the jargon, and are intimidated by the workings of technologies such as the computer within the home. Similar to Elliot and Urry, Valentine and Holloway (2001) examined individual case studies. One case study portrayed

how a mother felt about technology within the household. She stated 'I think for the, vast majority of us it's absolutely unknown territory' (p.63). In many cases, several parents feel that the home is no longer seen as a primarily safe place for children once technology is present.

As Facer et al.'s study illustrates, many parents have a lot of worries about their children and who they're talking to online, thus creating a tension and a strain between the relationship between parent and child. This research aims to investigate how inter-personal relationships have either been enhanced or deteriorated through the use of technology.

It is important to note, however, that technologies such as computers and game consoles are handled in different forms. This depends on parents' differential understandings, cultures, parenting styles and diverse levels of social and technological competencies between various family members. While many parents still believe that the growth of technology is a negative risk for their children and their well-being, other parents maintain that these technologies can only advance their children's lives in a positive manner. This is important to take into consideration as Gill and Holloway (2001) note 'both adults and children's fears are not necessarily fears of the machine *per se* but rather are fears about how the technology might transform their social identities and relationships' (p.74). In addition, it is important to take into account, the awareness family members have around the mere presence of technology and the manner in which it can change the family structure. Lupton (1995) succeeds in acknowledging the significance of parents and their identity in the home, their place within the family, and their power within the family home amongst their offspring. 'For them, the internet-connected PC emerges as a dangerous tool that potentially enables online hazards and evils to pollute the home' (Valentine and Holloway 2001:65). Hence this research will

examine both the positive and negative aspects of technology by investigating how technology affects family bonds and inter-personal relationships.

(2.3.3) Technology and children

It could be argued that with the growth of technology within the home, the younger members of the family are creating a growing leisure space for themselves, in comparison to their parents or grandparents. This suggests that this creates isolation and alienation between the generations in the family. As Facer et al's compelling argument suggests that with the emergence of technology such as the computer, many households put them in places such as a spare bedroom, the cupboard under the stairs, or a space that is ill-used. He also cleverly suggests that this gives the impression that this technology is used by a single individual. Similarly, Haddon (1992) states that 'the single chair that sits in front of the screen highlights the computer's infiltration of the home from the workplace (p.18). In this section, it has been explained that technologies, such as the PC give the impression of segregation and seclusion as these objects are placed far away from family communal areas. Therefore, this demonstrates the threat they have upon family communication and socialisation, which relates directly back to the key question of this research project.

Aarsand's (2007) study for example, examines the study of two young girls aged eight and ten playing on the computer in their family guest room. Once the mother of the family enters the room to ask the girls a question, both their body and their gaze are paying attention to the computer screen rather than their mother. She repeats her question a number of times before she gets a response along with a *commentation* on the computer game. This is interesting to note as Aarsand (2007) maintains 'it can be seen, first, how children together exploit digital technologies, creating a 'social space', where they can act as competent

participants' (p.243). One of the negative aspects of technology is displayed in Aarsand's analysis. He maintains that the younger, digitalised generation create these types of spaces in order to exploit control and power over their parents and older family members.

Rudi et al. (2014) takes a similar approach in their writing as they attempt to examine how technological experiences differ depending on the age of children. It is clear that the 'study contributes essential knowledge to better understanding family communication in today's digital age' (Rudi et al. 2014:79). They take a different approach in their findings as they reveal that many parents find it useful for children to have communication technology, such as mobile phones, as they feel it creates tighter bonds within the family structure.

(2.4) Gender relations

While the presence of technology is important in terms of identity, status, and personality, this differs widely in terms of gender. Sonia Livingstone's (1992) study takes a different but important stance on domestic technology. She discovered that women were more concerned with domestic technologies compared to men. This was evident as many women were concerned with the control and the sociality aspect of technologies such as the telephone and the computer. What is interesting about this study in particular is that 'television once brought the family together around the hearth, now domestic technologies permit the dispersal of family members to different rooms or different activities within the same space (Livingstone 1992:128).

During the post-World War II period, television began to become incorporated into the family home. The television interestingly served to reflect the gendered dimensions of the nuclear family structure, through its scheduling and broadcasts. During the afternoons, more feminised media programming was aimed at the full time housewife. As the day progresses and the husband arrived home from work both programming and advertising on television temporally shifted to note this change in the gender dynamic in the home. Television itself then becomes an interesting site of a gendered technology, and one that embeds the broader capitalist structure. This is evident as Jarrett (2016) states 'during their supposed leisure-time, audiences are doing the work of marketing, drawing meaning and value from advertising' (p.81).

This is important to note as Ruth Cowan (1976) argues 'emotionalization of housework becomes both cause and effect of the mechanization of that work; and the expansion of time spent on new tasks becomes both cause and effect of the introduction of time-saving devices' (p.22).

It is important to take into account that the use of media technologies such as the television differs for each family within the study. While some families feel its presence isolated themselves from their family members, other individuals comprehend that the television actually brought their family closer together. In Cynthia Cockburn's (1992) study of gender, identity and power she identifies how 'women commonly experience the masculine relations of technology as relations in which they are dominated and controlled' (p.42). She maintains that there are gender relations associated with technology within the home. However, unlike this research project, she frames her work with the actor network theory approach, to investigate the manner in which technology 'depends crucially on the association with the

process of millions of women (and men) in as many households' (Cockburn 1992: 37). Additionally, Jane Wheelock's (1992), study shows that more fathers, in comparison to mothers play with children and their game consoles or PCs. This is interesting as technology becomes more embedded within the home as the introduction of game consoles are brought into the bedrooms of children. Wheelock (1992) states 'in this case fathers are using a glamorous and expensive tool, a consumer electronic that is frequently perceived as male gendered' (p.107). This is not only the case for mothers and fathers, but also arguably it also trickles down into sons and daughters of the family. In terms of PC computers, recent studies state that sons use it more frequently in comparison to their female siblings. In terms of the computer, very few girls seem to be interested in its use in comparison to their brothers, who are labelled 'computer addicts'. It could be argued, that this statement fits in with traditional gender norms in that many more boys and their fathers were seen to be in touch with leisure technologies in comparison to their female counterparts. It is clear that this aspect of technology alone could make the family more isolated, disconnected or lonely from other family members, especially mothers as 'gendered- segregated leisure may be accepted facet of the different roles of men and women' (1992:109). These gender norms and stereotypes will be further investigated in order to expose whether or not these roles are still as prominent in the home twenty years on.

(2.4.1) Domestic technologies

It is clear that technology is in fact gendered. As Cowan (1976) states 'the average housewife had fewer children than her mother had had, but she was expected to do things for her children that her mother would never have dreamed of doing' (p.13), through the use of technology. Subsequently, Cowan takes a different but beneficial stance within her writing

as she maintains that the mechanization of the home meant that time spent on certain jobs increased, as with new technologies came new household chores as higher standards of housework multiplied. This is clear as Jarrett (2016) states 'domestic work provides for the reproduction and renewal of the labouring body, and, importantly, the labouring subject' (p.3). This project will analyse the growing market for domestic technologies within the home has a significant impact on the communication and socialisation of family relationships and domestic practices. In their study, Morley (1986) and Putnam (1990) maintained that due to the majority of families having at least one television set within the house, this meant that the living room was important symbolically for the socialisation of the family. In today's world, many families of different classes and backgrounds, own many household televisions. This is interesting to note as Livingstone (1992) states 'if television once brought the family together around the hearth, now domestic technologies permit the dispersal of family members to different rooms or different activities within the same space' (p.128). This research will examine – the positive and negative aspects of domestic technology within the context of the bond between family interaction and technology. This aspect of television within the home will be further examined in order to investigate its influences on my own respondents.

(2.4.2) The designed user of technology

It could be argued that the majority of technologies are entrenched in symbols and indications of masculinity. According to Livingstone (1992) 'Kamptner emphasized the importance of objects in exercising personal control over the social environment' (p.114). Also, gender relations are becoming embedded in the technology itself and are seen by many as gender-typed. For example, tools such as chainsaws, hammers, lawnmowers and other outdoor machinery are associated with men, while indoor predominantly white technologies like

dishwashers, vacuum cleaners, and ovens are seen to be associated with women. Evidently, one of the main concepts of the social shaping of technology is the relationship the user has with the artefact, along with interpretive flexibility as Kline and Pinch state 'different social groups associate different meanings with artefacts leading to interpretive flexibility appearing over the artefact'(1985:113). It is interesting to note that Wajcman studied white goods which were used by women in the heart of the home, the kitchen. These objects are portrayed as serviceable and simple to use, while brown goods that are used by men in the workplace are portrayed as complex, clever technologies that require skills in handling (2004:47). It is important to note however, Wajcman applies feminist theory to her work, which potentially could produce a highly selective view of the home and society. The main weakness with this theory is that it ignores the domestic labour of men and the increasing economic and educational achievement of women.

(2.4.3) The extension of the body

According to Hein et al. (2011) upon examination of the mobile phone, it appears that it is a constant, unremarkable companion in the lives of many men and women. The literature suggests that the mobile phone has proven to be quite useful for family members from diverse generations for staying in contact, both male and female. However, while it could be argued that communication tools such as the mobile phone have a positive impact on society, they may also have a negative impact on the home – something that will be later examined in this project. This is important to note as these technologies are the gateway between the virtual and the real along with public and private. In addition, Smith (1987) notes 'the missing aspects of people's lives are the actualities in which virtual community members are situated' (p.167). This has had a detrimental effect on the relationship and bonds within family

relations as many individuals become embedded within the public sphere of society, rather than the private sphere of family life.

(2.5) Theoretical Framework

In the course of reviewing the literature, the theoretical framework that will be used in this research project is Social Action Theory and symbolic interactionism which was developed by Max Weber. According to Macionis and Plummer (2012), symbolic interactionism 'is a theoretical framework that envisages society as the product of the everyday interactions of people doing things together' (p.42). This particular framework will be retained as this method focuses on small scale interaction, such as family life rather than the actions of society as a whole.

In addition, it is also important to note that symbolic interactionists tend to have doubts about quantitative data as they believe it does not provide a detailed insight into human behaviour. As Haralambos and Holborn (1995) state 'Mead's view of human interaction see humans as both actively creating the social environment and being shaped by it' (p.893). Instead, these theories focus on qualitative methods, similar to the methods undertaken for

this research project. Also, this theoretical framework is being implemented due to its connection with identity as Haralambos and Holborn (2013) state 'by possessing a particular identity, individuals internalise certain norms and values that accompany that identity' (p.762). This framework is relevant as it focuses on relationships and the processes by which individuals make decisions. It also interprets, evaluates, and defines their own actions. Furthermore, Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical analysis will be applied to my own research as the majority of the literature review demonstrates the manner in which this theory focuses on the presentation of self between the public and the private sphere. Many family members feel more comfortable in virtual realities rather than their own home. Online they can become active constructors of the social world, by constructing, managing, performing and negotiating their identities. This will be examined further from the theoretical view of symbolic interactionism and dramaturgical analysis in the findings chapter.

(2.5) Conclusion

The findings expressed in the literature enhance our understanding of the effects technology has on family communication and socialisation. This study has identified the present communication patterns present within the family home. It also has identified a pattern emerging in terms of family communication and how the generation gap affects technological use. Furthermore, there is an on-going debate on what type of effects technology has on family bonds, including isolation, togetherness and the designed user of specific technologies, which will be discussed further in the findings chapter. The investigation of the mobile phone has shown that this technology in particular, has the power and control over inter-personal relationships within the family, as it has the ability to bring them closer together, but also pull them apart. All of the literature highlighted in this section is relevant to this research project

as it provides a foundation on the study of technology and family life. This is relevant to the research undertaken for this project as it identifies a gap between the researcher and the literature. The majority of the literature reviewed undertook quantitative methods, while this project will undertake qualitative methods, which identifies a gap within the literature. The next chapter describes the procedures and methods used in this investigation.

Chapter 3 Methodology

(3.1) Introduction

Social research facilitates the 'systematic and organized effort to investigate a specific problem that needs a solution (Sekaran 1992:4). This particular type of research is important as it makes a new contribution to knowledge to the sociological field. Not only is it about finding out something that you did not know, it's also about investigating and in turn, learning something that was not yet known in the sociological world. This is important to note as Zina O'Leary states in her writing that 'our responsibility is to do what we can, learn what we can, improve the solutions, and pass them on' (Feynman 1997).

Silverman states qualitative research also results in both in depth and detailed answers from the semi-structured interviews that I, as the researcher have undertaken. In addition, Benson (2016) states that, qualitative research allows for the aspects of social life to be examined within the economic, social, cultural and historical context in which it is produced (2016).

Qualitative methods were also chosen as it results in the researcher gathering data from a specific place and time which can produce a speculative but explanatory theory about a phenomenon (Benson 2016). One disadvantage of qualitative data is the fact that a smaller population has to be used in order to produce accurate findings. Secondly, during interviews people may give varied answers making it harder for the researcher to gather accurate findings. Lastly, because qualitative findings are subjective, this results in unscientific findings (Benson 2016), which may mean influential bias is present.

O'Leary states that Quantitative research 'is often characterized as an objective positivist search for singular truths' (O'Leary 2014:121) making it less time consuming. This method also gathers hard evidence and findings in contrast to the soft science of qualitative research. Personal bias is also reduced significantly as the researcher is mostly working with numbers and statistics. Furthermore, Chambliss and Schutt state that quantitative data has an 'emphasis on analyses and categories' (Chambliss and Schutt 2016:232) rather than detailed findings, therefore quantitative methods would provide a barrier between myself and the vital information which contains the answers to whether or not the emergence of technology affects the socialisation patterns within the family structure. Through my methodological framework of Social Action theory, my symbolic interactionist approach and qualitative research methods, my research aims to explore the significance of technology within the family home.

The three key themes that have emerged from my research question and associated data are: communication versus miscommunication, the digital divide, and the relationship between gender and technology. The main reason why these are the identified key themes within this research project is due to the fact that, over the last decade, technology has continued to

become more prominent and embedded within family life. Little et al. (2009) maintains that 'communication technologies are increasingly being used within family settings to support and expand relationships' (p.125). It has become quite clear that we now live in a digital age, a virtual world. This research project will contribute to the discipline of sociology and beyond as it aims to fill a gap within the already existing literature. The majority of the literature reviewed have used quantitative methods, while this project primarily focuses on qualitative methods. In contrast to that, I have chosen to use qualitative methods in order to create a different stance on the research which is based on family and technology through the changing dynamics of family life and face-to-face interactions. The main research question that I have set out to explore is the following: has the emergence of technology affected family life in terms of socialisation, isolation and communication? If so, how?

(3.2.1) Sub-Questions

The main sub questions that are incorporated within this research project include: has communication changed within family life since the emergence of technology? Is there an impact on family relationships and communities through the increased dependence on mediated communications? Has technology made family members become more isolated, disconnected or lonely, together with examining the digital divide and the gender relations embedded within household technology? Through these questions and the themes identified, the main areas that will be explored are virtual togetherness, the case of the mobile phone, isolation and loneliness, the study of domestic technologies and the manner in which technology is viewed from the diverse generations of grandparents, parents and their children. I decided to conduct this research project because it has become quite clear that we now live in a digital age, a virtual world. The reason why I wanted to carry out research on the

effects of technology on family life was due to the fact that I wanted to examine how it has affected the family structure, family bonds, along with family interactions among the various generations. 'Parents need to care about the Internet usage habits of our children' (Palfrey and Gasser 2008:182). My own personal motivation for undertaking this particular research project is due to my own personal relationship with technology. Because of my age, I remember the family household without the majority that is present within most houses to date. As a child, I remember life without technology, a child's biggest past time was interactive toys and playing outside. 'Older children dependent on various types of technology also reported that they were socially isolated and wanted more opportunities to spend time with friends' (Heaton et al., 2005). As households have become more contemporary, I have begun to notice how many families, including my own, would rather sit in front of a screen than interact with one another.

(3.3) The Qualitative Approach

This research was guided by an interpretivist approach as, according to Carol Bailey (2007), 'an interpretive paradigm, which holds that social reality is not independent of the social meaning given to it by those in the setting' (p.7). Therefore, as a researcher, I took into consideration the individual's own background and their understanding when using semi-structured interviews as it is based off of my interpretivist epistemological framework which is interlinked with the constructivist paradigm. My data and findings are termed biographical as it focuses on family members from three different generations. In order to do this, I took a chronological approach and conducted semi-structured interviews with individuals aged between twenty one and eighty four.

As I conduct my research, my main goal is to understand the effects of the presence of technology embedded in family life. To do this, it is clear that qualitative methods will be used in order to study the naturalistic environment of family. Bryman (2004) maintains 'qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data' (p.266). This method will be used because it allows for a detailed study from the perspective of the participant. Furthermore, it lets the researcher 'inductively generate a tentative but explanatory theory about a phenomenon' (Benson 2016). Even though this method proved very useful for my project, it did not come without its criticisms. The data itself proved to be subjective and therefore unscientific. Also, bias was hard to overcome as it caused closeness between the participant and I as the researcher can be seen to influence their respondents by asking closed-ended questions.

The pre-existing concept which I am attempting to uncover is gender relations that are embedded within technology. As a result, I selected five males along with five females from different age groups in order to obtain a comprehensive interpretation of this hypothesis. The biographical perspective allows us to see the effects of change temporally and how people negotiate their way through an ever changing societal structure (Miller 2000:74-75). This approach was significant for my research as it allows me to examine the generation differences and the 'digital divide' that are embedded within twenty first century family life. The research strategy that was employed for this project was to formulate a research question, I then proceeded to read and review the literature available on the topic whilst combining it with a suitable theory. Finally, I selected my fieldwork approach, qualitative methods.

According to Bailey (2007), 'field researchers who enjoy some level of flexibility regarding how an interview is administered but who wish to maintain some structure over its parameters might prefer a semi-structured interview' (p.100). This method allows for naturally occurring data to be found due to the fact that semi-structured questions are formed but are not necessarily asked in a specific order, allowing for a more relaxing atmosphere for both the interviewee and the researcher. According to Kaufman (1986) 'the intensive interview can become more like a conversation between partners than between a researcher and a subject' (p.22). As I distinguished my respondents for this study, appointments were made in order to meet with each respondent individually. While some of the respondents felt comfortable to conduct the interview in their own homes, others asked and preferred to have the interview conducted in my home as they felt it was more formal. Before the interview began, each interviewee was asked to read and sign a consent form which stated the rules and regulations that were involved in the participation of the interview. (Appendix A). Originally, semi-structured interviews were going to be the only qualitative method that I was going to use for this research project. However, after the first interview finished, I discovered that my data would become stronger and more in-depth if I asked two of my participants to be involved in keeping an interaction log, therefore I adjusted my research strategy accordingly.

Once each interview was complete, I took notes on important aspects that I observed during the interview which included my own thoughts, the respondents body language, and any bias that I felt developed during the interviewing process. I witnessed how the majority of my respondents were slightly nervous at the beginning of each interview but behaved in a more relaxed manner as the interview continued. As a researcher, I remained encouraging and light-hearted with my respondents. Alias were given to each respondent that participated and

names of individuals that were mentioned during the interview were changed along with place names in order to respect the privacy of all involved. Through my method of logging interactions in particular, I developed 'a plausible (and honest) explanation for myself and my study and [kept] the support of key individuals to maintain relationships in the field' (Chamberliss and Schutt 2016:209), by maintaining rapport with respondents.

In order to investigate the impact that growing technology has on the structure of family life a Social Action theory, along with a symbolic interactionist approach is currently being used. This is being used since, along with an inductive approach, the data was collected and coded and themes began to emerge which developed my research question leading towards my theoretical framework. This is because this research project attempts to address and understand the world of human experience from the perspective of the individuals being studied. Cross-population generalizability was also conducted for this project as individuals from three different generations took part in the interviews and keeping an interactive journal. I found that much of my findings were relevant for individuals of different age groups and backgrounds.

(3.4) Data Sources and Sample

Once the research was conducted I decided that the sample that will be used for this research project would be purposive sampling. The participants that took part in the interactive journal and the semi-structured interviews were selected from a population due to their age and the amount of household technology they had within their homes. These participants were individual family members from various families. They will be used as a source of data. A sample is 'a subset of a population used to study the population as a whole' (Chambliss and Schutt 2016:92). These particular individuals were used in order to gain a primary perspective

of how technology affects the daily lives of families, both in a positive and negative manner. In order to gain access to the data that is needed, I contacted families from my local area as the majority of these families have technology present in their homes, making them feasible to study. As Hertlein states, 'the advancement of technology introduces a new set of vulnerabilities into both couple and family relationships at an ecological level' (Hertlein 2012:376).

The type of sampling that will be carried out for this research proposal will be non-probability sampling. This particular sampling method will be used due to the fact that this research project will be collecting data from a small population and also random sampling is not suitable because of the amount of individuals present within the data. Therefore, the method of sampling that will be used will be availability sampling. According to Chambliss and Schutt (2016), availability sampling is 'sampling in which elements are selected on the basis on convenience' (p.103). As a researcher, I gained access to my findings through the strategy of gatekeeping. I established rapport with my participants by making small-talk before the beginning of the interview while offering them tea or coffee. The majority of interviews took place on a couch rather than at a table as I felt this would create a more relaxed atmosphere for both myself, as the researcher and respondent.

Additionally, after the first interview was completed, the rest concluded with my respondents partaking in a short exercise which included identifying symbols that were commonly found on the internet, for example, the twitter symbol. This method made my data more rich and descriptive and it allowed greater insight into people's interactions with technology and one another. This was due to the gender dimensions and age gap, as well as writing my field notes. As the interactive journal was being developed, this meant that they were much more

descriptive and current towards my research. One challenge that arose was gaining rapport with some of my participants, as some proved to be very shy. In order to overcome this, I began the interview with very simple, straight-forward questions allowing the participant to feel less anxious. I also sat at a ninety degree angle so that I would not face the participant directly, allowing them to feel more comfortable and not pressured into making eye contact. This approach allowed me, as the researcher to facilitate a greater amount of data collection and knowledge as participants began to share more detailed personal feelings or thoughts on the effects of technology on the family. On reflection, if I could go back and rethink my research methods, I believe that I would have taken part in participant observation, which would have allowed me as the researcher, to gather more in depth, richer data relevant to my study.

Table 3.1: Table of interviews/Surveys

Respondent	Gender	Age	What Household Technologies Would you use the most?	Frequency of use
A	F	50	Mobile Phone	10 times or more a day
B	M	52	Television	3 times a day
C	M	25	Mobile Phone	5 times a day
D	F	26	Mobile Phone	10 times or more a day
E	F	84	Radio	2 times a day
F	M	21	Mobile Phone	10 times or more a day
G	F	24	Laptop	3 times a day
H	M	21	Mobile Phone	10 times or more a day

I	F	52	Television	All day
J	M	84	Television	1 time a day

KEY FOR TABLE

Respondent & letter	Name of Respondent
M	Male
F	Female

(3.4.1) Interviews

As qualitative methods were used throughout this entire research project, this method both enriched my data but also limited it. In terms of my semi-structured interviews, qualitative methods allowed me, as a researcher, to gain information on peoples personal lives, their stories feelings and experiences. I gained in-depth information about family life and I obtained insights into peoples interactions along with certain types of behaviour because of my strategy. However, because of my ontological and epistemological approach there were many limitations to my research project which were depicted through my use of qualitative methods. As I used semi-structured interviews, I lost the possibility of receiving feedback from others during the interviewing process along with having to gain and practice the skills to

establish rapport along with listening skills which were time consuming. Entering the field was a unique experience, before I conducted my first official interview, I practised with a mock run through, which allowed me to have more confidence during the actual interviews. I was surprised at how nervous I was at the beginning of conducting my interviews as this was something I had never experienced before. I found that good planning and preparation were essential in making both myself and my participants comfortable. In order to have my participants feel as comfortable as possible, I introduced the study and eased myself into the main questions and themes of the interview. After employing these tactics, I found that my respondents were much more honest and direct more quickly making it easier for me to analyse and collect the data.

As Bailey states, 'ethical considerations permeate every aspect of the field research progress, from selecting the research topic to disseminating the results' (2007:15). In order for the field to remain intact, as a researcher, I ensured that respondents understood the rules and regulations associated with the interview. They signed a consent form, I assured them that their identity would remain confidential, and adhere to all legal, moral and ethical obligations by following the SAI and Maynooth University ethical guidelines. Different strategies were considered in terms of sensitive issues. During each interview, I suspended all judgements and certain attributes were dealt with in a professional manner. Even though I adhered to the strict Maynooth University and SAI ethical guidelines, some participants did have doubts about both anonymity and confidentiality during the interviewing process. According to Hennink et al. (2015), 'the terms 'anonymity and 'confidentiality' are often used interchangeably in much research literature; however the ethical issues of each are quite distinct' (p.71). As the interviews progressed, I found that note taking was an effective way in

recording body language and also allowed me as the researcher to develop certain questions from the respondents answers which enhanced further data collection. It is important to note that semi-structured interviews allowed me to facilitate an in-depth insight into the manner in which people felt about technology within the home. It allowed for the exploration of the subjectivity of the interviewee along with a detailed context 'in which the interviewee lives' (Hennink et al. 2015: 110).

(3.5) Interactive Journals

According to Judith Bell, (1999) interactive journals 'can provide valuable information about work patterns and activities' (p.147). The main reason why interactive journals were incorporated into my research project was because I felt it would provide my research with in-depth and richer data. I also wanted it to interlink with the semi-structured interviews as I wanted to investigate how dependent my respondents were on communication and media technology in comparison with what they stated in their interviews. This is evident as it is outlined in Bell's (1999) argument as she states 'as Burgess (1981) notes, diaries can be used as a preliminary to interviewing' (p.148), therefore establishing a connection between the two.

I asked two of my participants to conduct an interactive journal each over a number of days. One participant was a twenty one year old male, while the other was a fifty year old female. This in turn would allow me to look at the contrasting use of technology by two different generations. I asked both participants to record each time they used any type of communication technology both inside and outside the household. I asked them to note the

time of day or night, along with stating what purpose they were using this particular technology for. It is clear that these interactive journals allowed me, as a researcher, to gain a subconscious insight into the actions of family members on a daily basis. It was extremely significant as it demonstrated the level of dependence my participants had on various types of technology. According to Andy Alaszewski (2006), interviews are based on past events, and therefore, recollecting 'specific decisions was likely to generate generalised and idealising accounts' (p.vi). Therefore, I used and viewed these interactive journals as an extension of the interviewing process allowing me, as a researcher to obtain primary data about the use of technology by certain family members. However, there do prove to be a number of limitations to this particular method. Oppenheim maintains that 'the respondents interest in filling up the dairy will cause him to modify the very behaviours we wish him to record (Bell 1999: 147). Along with that, it also proved to be very time consuming for my participants.

(3.6) Analysis of Data

I commenced my research by reading all the available data in the field of technology and the family. Furthermore, these readings allowed me to develop and understand the theoretical frameworks and concepts such as symbolic interactionism, Social Action Theory and Bourdeau's concept of technology as a social field. Reading the literature allowed me as a researcher, to identify important concepts and themes in order to accurately conduct my research which included communication, socialisation, gender, and diverse generations. In my interviews, I asked my participants about how they felt about technology as the literature stated this would be influenced by age and experience. I also chose to examine the role of gender and technology as research shows the various different interpretations that individuals formed about technology due to their gender roles within the home.

It is important to note that I constantly referred back to my theoretical framework of social action theory, and within that, symbolic interactionism. This was a vital step as it permitted me to finely tune particular aspects of my themes that I wanted to explore as I engaged and conducted my research. In terms of my themes I constantly referred back to symbolic interactionism as it refers to 'humans as both actively creating the social environment and being shaped by it' (Haralambos and Holborn 2013:979). It also represents the process of role taking within society, or in my context, the home. In doing so, this gives the impression of cooperative action in society as individuals tend to become aware of what is expected of them, arguably because of their gender, age and experiences, along with the stereotypes embedded within these aspects and therefore they adjust their roles accordingly.

Transcripts were typed up for each interview and I coded my data by hand in order to distinguish themes that were emerging from the data in relation to my identified themes from my review of the literature. This aspect of qualitative data analysis involves the need 'to understand, explain and interpret human experience, which requires uncovering personal, social and cultural meanings that underlie people's behaviour' (Hennink et al, 2015:2015). Finally, when analysing my data, I selected specific portions of text from my interviews to convey the main findings in relation to my themes. I picked out, what I felt were the best quotes in order to best demonstrate and strengthen my findings. In my findings chapter, I intend to link my findings from my interviews to the literature I reviewed in the previous chapter. Therefore, this will provide me with a primary connection with my themes that already exist in the literature and demonstrate its connection with my initial findings.

Figure 1 - An outline of the steps taken in this qualitative research project

Initial readings surrounding the topic of inquiry (**Family, communication, socialization, technology**)



Developing the idea around (**communication versus miscommunication, the digital divide & gender relations**), conceptualization of the research question, hypothesis. Formation of general research question and initial theoretical framework (**symbolic interactionism.**)



Collection of relevant data – interviewing, interactive journal, literature review relevant to the themes explored and additional information regarding sensitive areas of this research prior to interviews taking place.



Interpretation of data / analysis of data



Conceptual and theoretical framework



Tighter specification of the research question

Write up findings/conclusions

(Figure adapted from Bryman: 2004: 269)

Chapter 4 Findings

(4.1) Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the socialisation, communication and isolation affects that technology has on family life through my interactive journals and semi-structured interviews. As a researcher, I also wanted to uncover how gender was embedded within technology along with an investigation on the digital divide within the home and if this aspect of technology brought families together or pushed them further apart. Through the findings, I analysed the manner in which communication technologies are used for family members who still all live at home in comparison to families who live apart. This is important to note as Noelle Chesley (2006) in his writing maintains the usage of 'a variety of new technologies provides a basis for formulating future hypotheses about what the implications of technology use may be for individuals and their families' (p.588). My study found that communication technologies within the home both 'provides essential stimulation to the growing mind and intellect' (Plowman 2010:1), and *also* have a negative influence on interpersonal relationships within the home. Significantly, my research crucially demonstrates how communication technologies affect family members once they are in the private sphere but improve their inter-personal relations once in the public sphere. Finally, my findings demonstrate how gender relations are embedded within technology, and because of this certain family

members use and view certain technologies differently. Therefore, this affects their socialisation and communication patterns within the family realm.

4.2 Miscommunication or Do We Miss Communication?

The research findings that emerged from my interviews and interactive journals have demonstrated the manner in which communication technology is creating a paradox and a sense of disengagement within family relations. From my research, it could be suggested that media technology has taken on a new meaning in contemporary households as it has affected the communication patterns of families. One stay at home mother who lived with her husband and two children described the new meaning of technology by stating:

'I think there is definitely less simple conversations, obviously if you spend a lot of time on social media, that would impact on the amount of time you have to talk to your family, so you can't cut yourself in two' (Respondent A, 2017).

As Parsons argued the family is the most important agency of primary socialisation' (Haralambos and Holborn 2013:753). This particular view of socialisation has changed dramatically due to the role that technology plays on family members, particularly children. This gives children the opportunity of creating their own social spaces as my research suggested younger members of the family dominate particular parts of the home. My research suggests that social interaction can be influenced by the location of new media technologies within the household. As one respondent's comments illustrate:

'There are two televisions that would be on constantly, one that my parents would use and one that some of my siblings use. Then me and my brother would be playing PlayStation on the third television'.

More importantly, this respondent also discussed socialisation without technology in the home. This suggests that perhaps the growth of technology within the home has created a barrier between family and socialisation as family members become more dependent on communication technology as a means of social interaction rather than individuals within the home.

'Whenever the electricity goes off at home its great criac. It's fun, you're chatting, you're sitting around and you're maybe playing a board game or doing something out of the ordinary, yeah they're the times you remember'. (Respondent G, 2017).

As another respondent reiterates:

I probably wouldn't have wanted to grow up with today's technology cause like I enjoyed my childhood so much and part of that was probably how active I was and that we kind made our own fun, were we didn't have touch screen phones and facebook, and the days before bebo and yahoo and msn.' (Respondent H, 2017).

Furthermore, one of the main findings that was established in my semi-structured interviews was the different purposes technology had outside of the household. The semi-structured interviews illustrate how communication technology is useful for families that were geographically apart. However, from families with younger children or family members who still lived at home, communication and media technology reduced the amount of time that they spent with one another. This is evident as Respondent H's comments demonstrate:

I have a brother in Waterford and I have a brother in England but with Facebook we kinda have our own group chat. Me and the three of my brothers, so we can discuss gifts for mother's day and anniversaries' (Respondent H, 2017).

More importantly, Respondent A discusses how her daughter Megan uses technology within the private sphere of the home as she maintains:

'In terms of Megan she would be addicted to using Facebook and the fact that her phone never leaves her side. When she loses it she would become worried and distressed as if she had lost a puppy' (Respondent A, 2017).

These findings indicate how technology is used in different contexts, depending on your location. This is interesting to note as it becomes apparent that communication technology has a negative impact within the household, while having a positive impact on society as a whole. It has become clear through these findings that these contemporary technologies provide individuals within the public sphere with confidence and independence as they can contact their loved ones with the touch of a button. However, in contrast to that, contemporary technology within the household causes isolation, privatisation and miscommunication among family members. This is outlined in Aasand's (2007) study as he argues that technology is used in different contexts' (p.236), in terms of social interactions.

These two contrasting versions of technology both confirm that technology can in fact damage the social relationships within family life. The introduction of technology within the private sphere has allowed families to disperse into separate parts of the household when using certain technologies. This is not only relevant for the playstation, but also the television, mobile phone along with the internet. It could be suggested that these technologies in turn

separate family members, however on the other hand, these objects can create online communities. However it is interesting to note that, many participants from my study recognise that technologies are not allowed in certain areas of the house such as the dinner table. This area is primarily seen as a space in which families communicate with one another each evening. One participant noted that one you sit down at the dinner table each family member was told to put their phone away until dinner was over. In the findings, Respondent H, discussed how he used technology as a means of an escape from other family members. On different occasions he stated that:

'It kind of gives us a break from each other because we probably would just be fighting all the time yano cause you just wanna be away from everyone for a while. Just a few hours to relax yourself, and keep to yourself' (Respondent H, 2017).

It could be suggested then, that the family members are becoming increasingly more privatised within the home as they choose to pursue activities alone. Interestingly, as his interview progressed, Respondent H believed that if he was having a conversation with someone, such as a friend he would fully pay attention through as his comments illustrate:

'I could sit here for three hours and listen to someone talk away, I wouldn't have to zone out or anything like that yano, I'd be engaged throughout' (Respondent H, 2017).

By contrast when asked if he would use technology while talking to a family member he maintained:

'It's kinda like working on auto pilot, you gave enough answers to keep the conversation going. Just giving the bare-minimum but then you put it (the technology) down and give a proper answer then like' (Respondent H, 2017).

The actions undertaken by my respondents are also outlined in Erving Goffman's theory of dramatic analysis. This is apparent as my participants resemble actors on a stage, as they play out certain roles for family members on their front stage, and completely contrasting actions on their back stage as they construct the social world around them. This is also outlined in Macionis and Plummer's (2012) argument as they note 'society arises as a shared reality that its members construct as they interact with one another' (p.42). It could be argued that these contrasting roles in turn puts a strain on family bonds as in many instances family members are forgotten about and seen as second best in comparison to contemporary technology. This is clear as Respondent A's comments illustrate how individuals cannot both be entrenched with technologies or social media platforms and converse with family members at the same time.

'You're listening as well as you could in a relationship which in turn would mean a strain on the relationship, and people may feel like they aren't being listened to' (Respondent A, 2017).

From my semi-structured interviews and interactive journals, it has become clear that the main motivations for using the Internet are communicating with people, along with creating online identities. Many of my participants desired to become part of the virtual communities online. One of my respondents is currently a student at Maynooth University, she demonstrates:

'Like I wouldn't have them (family members) on Facebook. There's stuff of me drinking and things on it that I wouldn't want them to see... I would prefer to have my separate spheres separate. I would have a different identity then I would at home in general. People are different around different people.' (Respondent G, 2017).

It could be argued that these types of communication and media based technologies are damaging the inter-personal relationships with the family realm. This participant's use of social media technologies primarily demonstrates how individuals are using these platforms in order to aid their socio-personal development along with creating their own life online, and therefore hindering their life offline. In turn this has a positive effect on individualisation and a negative effect on family socialisation. This notion of online communities is interlinked with the concept of Symbolic Interactionism along with Goffman's theory of Dramaturgical Analysis. This is clear through my study of participants as 'the origin and development of a concept of self lie in the ability to take the role of another' (Haralambos and Holborn 2017:979). This is similar to Livingstone's (1992) study as she notes communication technologies 'may facilitate interaction between people, and they may substitute for that interaction, providing instead a social interaction between person and object' (p.121).

In addition, my findings demonstrate how the mobile phone has proven to be the most influential communication technology both in the public sphere of society, and the private sphere of the home. During my investigation, it has emerged that not only have family relationships become damaged due to the emergence of the mobile phone. This causes the activities taking place within the household to become increasingly individualised as Respondent A's comments maintain:

'You go to your room, you go on your own and you are not actually having a conversation, but you have this whole world at your fingertips. Definitely I believe when people become wrapped up in that world they become isolated without even realising it, they don't even know they are living in a virtual world'
(Respondent A, 2017).

It has become clear that the development of these household technologies have resulted in the 'media-rich home' (Livingston 2002:11), as family members are increasingly spending more time around these technologies in comparison to their own family members. This is also outlined in Elliott and Urry's (2010) argument as they maintain 'social theory has witnessed a number of major debates and claims regarding processes of social change affecting intimacy and intimate relationships (p.91). This was also illustrated in my interactive logs (Appendix D). One participant stated that he used his smart phone every ten to fifteen minutes. He also stated that he used it as an alarm clock, for his social media platforms to watch videos as well as shopping online. Arguably, this finding demonstrates how this participant alone, depended on his phone for multiple aspects of his life including social, leisure, along with consumerism.

4.3 The Digital Divide – The Sequel

Through my investigation of communication technology within the home, it is clear that the 'digital divide' or generation gap is pronounced within the family structure. From my investigation, it could be suggested that communication technology such as the mobile phone is a secondary characteristic in terms of social interaction after face-to-face interaction. In terms of the quality of the relationship between older members of the family, it could be suggested that technology both enhances and weakens the relationship that elderly members have with their families. My research demonstrates that the closer geographically that elderly family members live to their children and grandchildren, the less they see them. This is interlinked with Przybylski and Weinstein's (2012) as they note 'communication technology might interfere with human relationship formation' (p.244). This is apparent in my own research as Respondent A maintains:

Respondent A: 'As far as my in-laws, I can ring over instead of having to go over and have a conversation with them, ...em it leads to the fact that you won't see them as often'.

From my research, it is clear that younger generations spend a significant amount of time around both media and communication technology within the home, in comparison to older family members. The concepts of isolation and loneliness became prominent within my semi-structured interviews. From the findings it also became apparent that the more communication and media technology that was present in the home the less time older family members spent with their children or grandchildren. This became very apparent in my investigation. One of the main findings that emerged was the use of online platforms by young individuals. There has been an attitude shift within the way younger family members communicate with their family. During their formative years many feel that their online

identity is more important in comparison to their family relations and therefore, they detach themselves from their families. This is evident as one respondent maintains that her sister has fifty thousand followers on twitter. She states:

'My sister would be on it all day. She'd be in the sitting room on her phone or laptop and you can just hear it beeping the whole time, but I suppose it's because she has so many people to talk to' (Respondent G, 2017).

This reliance on digital technology has resulted in the shifting of personalities for my participants. Various respondents maintain that many of their family members become irritated and their mood is negatively impacted when around technology for a certain amount of time. As one respondents comments illustrate:

'I think there is that need that everything should be on hand, so much can be accessed, I think it leads to lack of patience, irritability, it leaves them less patient, they want things and they want them now' (Respondent A, 2017).

Respondent F is a middle aged lady who minds children of all ages on a full time basis. As technology increasingly becomes more prominent within the home this participant has took note of how its dependence has changed the mannerisms and characteristics of the children which in turn affects their social development interactions with family members. This is demonstrated as she states:

'The teletubbies don't even speak properly, and then the kids are imitating them. They would sit very quiet if their programme came on, down to the youngest of six months old. He knows the music so just stops and listens' (Respondent I, 2017).

This is also evident in respondent H's interview. He discusses how his parents would only know the basics of technology as he talks about his mother:

'She's kinda old fashioned, she would be struggling with the phone enough like. Yano so... even that. Well it's basically me showing them thing, I get the short end of the stick' (Respondent H, 2017).

One example of this is when Respondent F affirms:

'Yeah my brother James blanks me all the time. You'd ask him a question and he'd zone out, you'd get no response. It would frustrate you to the point that you would stop talking to them, because there's no point'. (Respondent F, 2017).

Similar to that, Respondent D states:

Respondent D: *'You never just walk into a house and people are sitting talking anymore. The younger generation probably couldn't sit in the room without the TV on, but mam and dad probably could'*.

It is clear from these two respondents alone that technology has allowed the younger generation to switch off from other family members creating a sense of isolation and seclusion. It could be argued that younger family members, use communication technologies in order to gain power and control over social situations within the family realm as Aarsand (2007) claims 'adults are not able to handle or adjust to the 'new' technology in the same 'natural' way as children do' (p.237). It is also important to note that many respondents

believed that the excessive use of technology resulted in the loss of important childhood years. This is evident as Respondent I comments illustrate:

'They don't experience what we would have experienced, there's no childhood anymore, every child knows how to turn on a phone to watch Pippa Pig, (they are) growing up too fast'. (Respondent I, 2017).

According to this respondent, due to the growth of contemporary practices, many households are now entrenched in technology. As a result, children are no longer given the opportunity to enjoy their freedom and therefore, lose their innocence too quickly because of the use of contemporary technology. The interaction logs and semi-structured interviews have also established the dependence level family members have on technology. Respondent D is employed as a community and youth worker and has first-hand experience with the problems that technology creates. She works with young people on a daily basis while examining their lifestyles, including their technology use. She also lives with her parents and her four younger siblings. As she is in her twenties, she is part of the generation who have witnessed the growing importance of technology within the home while observing how her younger siblings became more dependent on it over time. Therefore, she was particularly concerned about the level of miscommunication in her household during her interview as she affirmed:

'It's overused completely, there are too many devices now it's kind of getting out of hand. It's kinda scary to think what the next ten years will be like. Smart phones are the killer of all forms of communication at this point' (Respondent D, 2017).

In relation to the 'app generation' Respondent D also notes:

'It's so scary, even in terms of kids and social skills, there is a much bigger gap now in terms of where kids should be at and their development as a whole is affected by technology' (Respondent D, 2017).

Similar to Buckingham's (2000) 'death of childhood' thesis, because children now lack in social development, this results in panic and nostalgia for many of my older participants as they continuously worry due to cultural change and growing dependence on technology. My participants were anxious about the fact that many young children now play alone with technology, and as a result children are spending a lot more times indoors which may cause health concerns and problems. The findings also illustrate this as Participant C states:

'Even about the town there sure, nobody be's outside playing or kicking a football these days, everybody's inside playing PlayStations. Kids could be better without it, they would probably get more exercise, and they probably wouldn't be lying about all the time' (Respondent C).

In contrast to that, Respondent B, a farmer who lives with his wife and two children states:

Respondent B: *'I think if we had no technology in the home we would still have the same sort of relationships.'*

This is important to note as the majority of men who took part in the semi-structured interviews maintained that technology had a positive impact on the communication between family members. This will be examined in more detail later in this chapter. This respondent views communication technology, such as mobile phones as convenient method for keeping in touch with his kids. This is clear as later in the interview Respondent B established that:

Respondent B: *I'd text my kids to see if they were alright if they were away from home, if I was worried about them or whatever, peace of mind.*

It is clear that Respondent B solely views communication technology in a positive manner as he looks at the advantages he feels that technology will bring to his children in comparison to the opportunities he had when growing up. This is also indicated in Rudi et al.'s (2015) study as they maintain 'Parents in particular appreciate mobile phones for the ability to text message and call their children, allowing for flexibility in making family plans and monitoring their children' (p.80).

Another pattern that emerged in the findings was the manner in which communication patterns have shifted within contemporary society. Furthermore, these patterns meant that children and teenagers were moving away from toys and using their imagination to playing computer games online and creating identities on social media platforms. Therefore, because of this shift, the generation gap or 'digital divide' between parents and their children is quite diverse as both generations experienced very different childhoods. This is evident in various households as Respondent D' stated:

'When we were young we actually played with proper toys, but when Lucy was that age, it wasn't even acceptable to be looking for toys off Santy anymore. She was asking for a tablet since she was knee high, whereas when I was her age I thought a tablet was something you took when you were sick (laughs).' (Respondent D, 2017).

This proves the hypothesis that communication technology has a significant impact on the development of an individual's childhood. Due to social norms and trends, many children feel that it is no longer acceptable to be playing with toys and instead seek technologies such as

tablets in order to remain a part of kid culture. This shift allows children to become extremely advanced technologically in terms of socialisation but also in relation to establishing a generation gap between family members. It has also become clear from my findings that the idea of the digital divide and the generation gap allows both children and older family members to both enter and leave certain social activities with one another such as playing computer games. This was both developed and discussed during my semi-structured interviews as one respondent discussed how the digital divide was prominent in her home as she talked about her husband attending computer courses:

Tom knows nothing about it (technology), but he is learning, he is going to computer courses now... He has to have someone there with him like Neil or Gary, or it doesn't sink in for him. (Respondent I, 2017).

It is clear then, that in many households, the use of technology can be seen as a non-adult activity, as in many instances adults are seen as the outsiders of these types of interactions. Arguably, this creates a distance between the older generation and the younger generation as there is a distance between participants and non-participants which may create a sense of both inclusion and exclusion within the household. It is also interesting to note, that, in many instances members of the older generation become aggravated at their lack of knowledge about certain technologies. This is evident in Respondent I's interview as she notes:

'When they are showing him (Tom) things, he gets frustrated cause he can't pick it up cause he doesn't know what he's doing. Neil would have more patience than Gary, Gary just flies through' (Respondent I, 2017).

It could be argued that if a parent displays this lack of knowledge this would give them an opportunity to interact with their children. As parents and older family members display the effect of the digital divide, this opens the way for the adult to enter the process as a ratified participant.

During my research, I individually interviewed two respondents who were both in their eighties. The impact of communication technology on communication and socialisation was discussed in detail and both considered technology to have a positive impact on the lives of both their children and grandchildren. One of the main reasons why these respondents felt this way was because new communication technology has almost made the concept of distance obsolete. This remained consistent in my research as Respondent E, a female in her eighties noted:

Respondent E: *'I wouldn't say the grandkids are addicted to mobile phones. I would say they use them to their advantage and my advantage so I can ring them and talk to them'.*

Similar to that, Respondent J, a male who also is in his eighties is convinced that technology is a great advantage for the younger generations to have as he affirms:

Respondent J: *'I would be delighted to see someone using it because I can't. And I love to see it cause I can say to your ma will you put 20 pound in my phone and bobs your uncle! ... I think it would bring them far closer together'.*

It is clear from my findings that my older participants maintain technology as a tremendous benefit for their family members. During their interviews, both respondents stated that neither of them could use these advanced technologies as Respondent J said: *'There's no use*

me trying to learn it now, I can barely learn the Our father'. Both respondents maintain that these technologies are extremely beneficial but believe that it is too late for them to use these types of technologies to communicate with family members. This finding could perhaps indicate that subconsciously both of these individuals may be intimidated by the presence of technology as both discussed how they had the opportunity to take computer classes but both refused. This is also outlined in Quadrello et al.'s (2005) study as they note 'When grandparents see grandchildren often, they also contact them often via landline or mobile telephone but not via text or e-mail' (p.206).

4.4 'Ascribing Gender from Domestic Technologies'

Once more, during my investigation on the effects of technology within the home, it emerged that the gender of the participant made a significant impact on their outlook on communication and media technology, and therefore their level of communication. The findings demonstrate how most domestic technologies are used by both male and female family members, they may be used differently and therefore, are understood differently. My interviews demonstrated how both men and women had different opinions on the positive and negative aspects of technology within the home. The majority of my male participants of all generations believed that it had a positive impact on family life, as they believe it's good for the family and the home. This is apparent as Respondent B states:

'It doesn't matter the amount of technology present within the home, communication between family members would still be the same.'... Yeah well things have moved on. It's for the better, well it's for the good of the society and for the good of the farm, and for the good of the home' (Respondent B, 2017).

In contrast to that, the majority of my female respondents felt that technology had mainly negative effects on family relationships. This is evident as Respondent A maintains:

Respondent A: 'It has led to isolation, for young people especially. It's not real, they're lost almost in it. My daughter more so than my son, he wouldn't depend on it as much as her.'

My findings, therefore, support the idea that 'women were more concerned about control in relation to technologies... (while) men tended to emphasize that technologies are 'purely functional' (Livingstone 1992:119).

In addition to that, one of my male respondents, a mechanic who lived with his partner stated on different occasions throughout the interview that:

'I like to watch telly in peace (laughs), without them, (technology) I would probably talk to my partner and other family members more, probably would have better quality conversations. Sure there would be nothing else to do' (Respondent C, 2017).

Once this participant stated how he felt about technology, he then stopped the interview as a message came through to his phone on two separate occasions. He looked at his phone and did not fully pay attention to any of my questions or comments until he put the phone back down. This small action alone proves that individuals find this difficult and can therefore only focus on one task at hand. Therefore, once family members are entrenched within technology such as televisions, mobile phones or the internet their inter-personal relationships can potentially be damaged and weakened by its mere presence.

It could be suggested that as fathers do take part in childcare within the home, it is often in the form of a special occasion. They do this by using technologies such as games consoles as an opportunity to interact with their children, and therefore perceive technology in a positive manner. These respondents demonstrate the manner in which gender affects their perception of technology. It could be argued that stereotypical gender roles are still prominent within households. This could be suggested as Respondent A's comments illustrate:

'Looking back on my children's childhood, they were blessed in times of Lego and jigsaws and dolls and tractors. I know it's a stereotypical thing that a boy gets a tractor,

but from my perspective it meant that James was outside so he was enjoying the fresh air' (Respondent A, 2017).

Respondent A then proceeded to talk about how her daughter had a contrasting perception as she stated:

'Megan was learning different interactive skills, so the dolls thing was, if you were dressing her up to show her the family, and this was her friend.' (Respondent A, 2017).

This could be due to mothers spending more time with their children, while their partner is at work. Therefore, mothers arguably could notice the change within family relations due to contemporary practices within the home. This argument is also interlinked with the notion of symbolic interactionism along with Goffman's theory of Dramaturgical Analysis as 'meanings (that are embedded within family relationships) arise from the process of interaction, rather than simply being present at the outset and shaping future action' (Haralambos and Holborn 2013:980). Therefore, both male and female family members sub-consciously give themselves roles and meanings within the household from their own experiences and interpretations, and arguably the presence of technology enhances these gender interpretations further while affecting their communication and socialisation skills in accordance with their gender roles.

In relation to technology becoming an extension of the body, my findings determine that devices such as the mobile phone can be extremely useful in terms of keeping in contact with both males and females. It is also interesting to note that participants describe technologies such as the mobile phone as an extension of the users arm. In contrast to that, many of my respondents viewed it as a hindrance within the household. As a result 'it serves as a bridge

between the researcher's personal and professional lives, and links these to the lives of participants' (Hein et al. 2011:267). This is evident in my semi-structured interviews as Respondent A maintained:

Respondent A: *'We depended on my daughter having her mobile to give us piece of mind, she depended on her mobile so she could contact us and keep in touch with her friends.'*

However, when Respondent A discussed mobile technology within the household itself, they perceived in a completely different way as they state:

Respondent A: *'If I was sitting with my daughter and a snapchat happens to come through, than that conversation is broken, because then your natural instinct is to see what it is. It's almost like something pops up and you need to know what it is now'.*

This respondent's interpretation displays how technology has both a positive and negative impact on inter-personal relationships within the household. When certain family members are away from home, technology proves to be very useful in order to keep in touch. However, this same use of technology is distinguished as a negative aspect on family socialisation patterns.

It is also interesting to note that participants referred to social trends online as primarily gendered. These online identities have become predominantly more important to both males and females in comparison to their home life. Respondent A maintained that girls communicate differently to boys through the acts of social trends such as make up and clothes as they have a bigger target audience. Similar to that, respondent D put the best part of their lives on social media platforms such as instagram in order to show the best parts of their

everyday lives, which usually does not include their family but rather holidays, and social events. This is evident as respondent F notes:

Everyone wants to show the best part of their lives, if you look at their instagram nobody sees a picture of you getting up in the morning. You always see photos of the glamorous nights out or the weddings, the holidays' (Respondent F).

During my semi-structured interviews, a number of my participants hinted at the social shaping of technology as gendered. As she employs the actor network approach, Cynthia Cowan (1992) outlines in her writing that 'among the things gender may be able to clarify for us about technology is the nature of its implication in control, exploitation and domination' (p.42). Not only did my male and female participants perceive technology through their gendered experience, they also viewed certain technologies as 'gendered'. Therefore, because they felt that technologies were created for a certain user, their insight into the potential influences are obscured. This is outlined in Respondent I's interview:

Respondent I: Tom stays in the sitting room and I'm usually in the kitchen doing housework (while watching television).

It could even be suggested that the two televisions, both in the kitchen area and the sitting room can be seen as two completely different technologies in terms of gender. Since the nineteenth century, the kitchen has primarily been seen as the heart of the females work. Even though these televisions were created and purchased for the exact same reason, in the household themselves they can be seen as having two completely different purposes and users because of their location. This concept is in accordance with Kline and Pinche's (1985)

study as they investigate the manner in which there is 'a new interpretation of the dynamics of technology' (p.78).

4.5 Interactive Journals

The process of Interactive Journals allowed me, as a researcher to obtain significant primary information about the amount of usage different family members had with technology. Both my male and female respondents were quite surprised once they realised the amount of dependence, power and control technology had within the family realm. My first participant was female, middle aged and a full time housewife. On an average day she spent up to an hour on her mobile phone. She stated that she used it mainly to privately message individuals on social media sites such as Facebook. She kept in contact with her children mostly, who lived in the same household. This is interesting to note as Gardner and Davis (2013) maintain if we now use technology in order to 'bypass the discomforts of relating to others or as sometimes risky entry points to the forging of sustained, meaningful interactions' (p.93).

My second participant was a twenty one year old male who was a college student but also went back to his home town every weekend. The main goal for the investigation of this participant was to identify if his patterns of technology use increased or decreased when he was back home with primary family relations. In his interactive journal, this participant recorded the manner in which his smart phone was an extension of his body as he checked his social media platforms including Facebook, snapchat and instagram every ten minutes throughout his average day. This did not change when he went home. He also relied on television for his primary entertainment as he watched up to four hours of sport every day, which arguably signifies that he spent more time around technology in comparison to family members. My participant and his family members only conversed when 'commenting every

time something big happened'. This issue with socialisation is also prominent in Facer et al's. (2001) study as they similarly argue that technologies are 'a site of anxiety for parents and is constructed in many homes and at policy level' (p.23).

4.6 Conclusion

The growth of technology in the twentieth and twenty first century has had a tremendous impact on family socialisation and communication within the home. The findings show that family patterns are continuously shifting because of the dependence of technology for family members of all generations. Both positive and negative aspects have fostered within the home because of the reliance on communication technologies. The main aim of this chapter was to investigate and analysis how my findings illustrate this reliance, and the manner in which it has affected the bonds between family members. In addition, these interviews are relevant to my research as they revealed the manner in which technology has allowed families to communicate in a different form, allowing them to enter virtual worlds in their own home. Arguably, grandparents are closer with family members because of their use of technology in order to communicate with younger family members. Remarkably, gender relations have had an effect on the interpretation of technology within the household, in terms of domestic technologies. Overall, it is clear that household technologies have a fundamental effect on the lives of family members.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the main aim for this research project is to investigate and examine the emergence of technology within the home and how it has changed the dynamics of family life in terms of socialisation, communication and dependence. The purpose of this project is to fill a gap within the literature as in terms of methodology, most of the literature reviewed resulted in quantitative results. Therefore, I conducted semi-structured interviews through non-probability sampling in order to receive the perspective of the participants about technology within the family home. The literature review displays how already existing literature exists on technology within the family, showing how different types of technology has took over the family home, while in some cases leaving older members of the family behind as Hertlein states that 'new technology facilitates couple and family relationships on a way that influences daily rhythms and routines' (2012:381).

On review of the semi-structured interviews and interactive journals, the findings have consistently shown how technology has both positive and negative effects on family life depending on the context and setting that the technology is in. Although some of the results were to be expected, others proved to be very surprising. From the findings, it is clear that the role of socialisation within families has shifted dramatically due to the emergence of technology. This allows younger family members, such as children to play a bigger role within the family as they now dominate certain locations of the family home due to their technological interactions. This is important to note as Facer et al. (2001) maintains that this may 'impact on the ways in which young people negotiate the relationship between their physical and 'virtual' realities' (p.18). Furthermore, from the findings, it could be suggested that the presence of technology damages inter-personal relationships within the private sphere, while enhancing them in the public sphere of the home. This is evident as technology

allows individuals to break the physical boundaries of geography by communicating with our loved ones with the touch of a button.

Also, the findings illustrate that the 'digital divide' or generation gap is prominent within contemporary Irish households to date as younger family members spend significantly more time around technology in comparison to their parents or grandparents, leading to isolation and loneliness as on many occasions, participants stated that they use technology as a mode of switching off from their relatives. Similar to Buckingham's 'death of childhood' hypothesis, the findings illustrate how children are experiencing a lack of social development as game consoles take over the role of soft toys. In doing so, participants stated that children are growing up too fast due to societal and cultural change. Once more, from the findings it is apparent that the gendered role of the participant impacts on their perception of technology within the household, and therefore their use of it. This is evident as females were more concerned with the controlling aspect of technology, while males tended to view technology as practical and efficient.

Even though my findings are current and important, this study did not come without its limitations. While my findings do imply that technology has a negative impact on the socialisation and communication patterns within family life, further data could be obtained to further prove this hypothesis. Future researchers could in turn, use case studies, and in doing so use a method such as participant observation to observe families as a whole unit. In doing so, a more detailed study could be undertaken if there are no time or cost restraints, more families could be studied. The method of participant observation would allow myself, as a researcher to paint a clearer picture of the effects that communication technology has on family life. Perhaps in future research it may be important to consider combining the

concepts of generations and gender in order to investigate a new aspect and point of view on the effects digital communities has on family members.

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I am currently researching the effects of technology on family life in terms of socialisation, communication, dependence and isolation.

This interview will take up to one hour and with your permission I would like to tape record the conversation. A copy of the interview tape will be made available to you afterwards if you wish to hear it.

All of the interview information will be kept confidential. I will store the tapes/notes of our conversation safely. Your identity will be kept confidential and I will use a code number/pseudonym to identify your interview data. Neither your name nor private information will appear in the final research project.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to refuse to take part, and you may refuse to answer any questions or may stop at any time. You may also withdraw at any time up until the work is completed.

If you have any questions about the research, you may contact me at

Mobile: _____

“I have read the description above and consent to participate.”

Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix B - My list of interview questions

1. Do you think that technology has an impact on the level of communication within your family? If so, why?
2. How dependent do you think your children are on technology?
3. Do you think it differs for boys and girls? Why?
4. Do you think girls follow social trends more? Why?
5. Do you think adverts on Facebook effects online experience?
6. Did your children become more dependent on technology as they got older? Why or Why not?
7. Before 11/12 not as much dependent?
8. Kids growing up with technology Are they lucky?
9. Do you think members of your family are addicted to using technology? How?
10. Do you think it affects other addictive behaviour?
11. Do you think technology effects yours and others capacity to pay attention? Why/Why not?
12. Do you think technology changes the personality of people within family?
13. Do you think video games would have affected your children?

14. What is the impact of increased dependence on mediated communications on family relationships and family communities?
15. Due to technology are have your family members become more isolated, disconnected, lonely?
16. Have different family members become disconnected with each other because of technology?
17. Do you use technology to switch off from family members?
18. Do you think technology connects or disconnects us more to our friends and family?
19. Has technology limited your child's control of other aspects of their life?
20. Do you think your children are very dependent on social media websites? If so, which ones and why?
21. In today's digital age, would you rely on technology to keep in touch with family members? Do you think it's useful?
22. Do you think the use of information technology (e.g. mobile phones) affects face- to –face interactions among family members?
23. Do you think technology affects inter-personal relationships?
24. Do you think the mere presence of information technology affects the bonds of relationships of people within your family?
25. Are you comfortable with the amount of time your children spend with technology?

26. Do you think it is necessary to have technology present within the home?

27. Do you regret having technology in your home?

28. In terms of older family members do you think technology affects the way grandparents communicate with you and your children? How?

Appendix C – Transcript of one interview

Date: 4th December 2016 Time:5:47pm Location: Clones, Co. Monaghan

1. Interviewer: Do you think that technology has an impact on the level of communication within your family? If so, why?

Respondent A: Yes, I do think it has a detrimental effect on communication within the family. Mobile phones being the culprit because in your instance and Shane's instance and Facebook but we will deal with mobile phones first. With being on phones so much and watching phones and texts coming through and snap chats and all that, it definitely means there's less communication on a one to one basis in the house. And eh... Facebook is another one which would be very common in this house, that, em Obviously when you're on Facebook you're not talking to somebody so in my experience here yes. Because obviously Facebook and mobile phones take up a certain amount of time so it would eat into the time that I would be communicating with my children, so obviously then they have a detrimental effect on that communication.

2. Interviewer: How dependent do you think your children are on technology?

Respondent A: Well I think it differs for both kids. I think that James doesn't depend as much as Megan, I think James has his mobile phone quite a bit and that would be for more interacting with his friends at the weekend or just for communications with his girlfriend and whatever, and that maybe happening you know, maybe three or four times a day. I think in Megan's particular instance she would depend on it more so, she tends not to leave her mobile phone down, it's almost an extension of her arm and yeah, just remind of the question again sorry. Ok so I think in her instance, em, she is very dependent on it, James is less dependent on it but still dependent on it. And I think if I took away the technology they almost would have some sort of em... some sort of reaction to it because they have grown up with technology, it's always been a part of their lives and I think without it they would definitely feel they were missing out.

3. Interviewer: Do you think it differs for boys and girls? Why?

Respondent A: Em, in the instance in this house and I can only talk about that because I don't know about other boys and girls but Yes for James I find that he is not nearly as .. He doesn't watch ... he comes in at dinner time and he goes onto Facebook and that it. So its once a day for him. So, I imagine, I could be wrong that Megan would be on Facebook and snap chat a lot often but that could be a time restriction thing for James am not sure em.. I think girls from my experience, that in my house, you would be em,, you would be more... you would do more things than he would.

Interviewer: Was there a particular reason for that?

Respondent A: I think that girls communicate different from how boys communicate em ... boys probably just tend to be you know ... girls.. tend to have more to talk about, maybe it's a more social thing and following social trends that boys don't feel they have to follow while girls are following things like the Kardashians, the latest make up, things that are popping up on Facebook and what have

you, and have a following where fellas wouldn't necessarily would be annoyed about you know.... Yeah. That's just what I think.

4. Interviewer: Do you think girls follow social trends more? Why?

Respondent A: Totally. I think girls are far too ... em... focused on those trends. And I think because they have grown up with so much media and so much technology, it's almost like its brought it into all of our houses and they are given the .. the impression is that you have to be up with the latest trends or you're not with it and obviously that information is right to hand so they know exactly what's the latest thing, and so in my interpretation they are given the impression that if they're just not with that then you know they are not with it.

5. Interviewer: Boys don't focus on them as much?

Respondent A: No, and that could be having something to do with to a lesser extent they have less to be targeted at and for girls you have the makeup the clothes, you have ... there's so many more elements for girls, fellas probably .. obviously make up is not in their realm of thinking, I think maybe over the years it's been, like if a woman was going out she has the make up and the clothes and whatever, while the man goes out and he has a good shirt and a pair of trousers or whatever and he's happy days. Like there's so many other elements to a woman going out than there is to a fella so I think there's a bigger target market there for a girl as a pose to a boy and with all the advertising and if we like it or not, the likes of Facebook .. there's a lot of advertising, a lot of businesses now bought into the whole thing with Facebook and em ... I know myself as I said to you before if I go out and if I go to a business looking for something it's not,... I don't say to them anymore it's not do you have a phone number or a website, it's are you on Facebook. And so the business are now latching on to the fact that Facebook is a wonderful way of advertising and then for girls have a massive market there for makeup trends, clothes and everything and its always been.. in my lifetime there's more target there for a girl than there is for a boy.

6. Interviewer: Do you think adverts on Facebook effects online experience?

Respondent A: Yes em, I absolutely think so, because again especially yano when you are at a young age, when you're a teenager and in your formative years, your pressure from your peers ... everyone wants not to be the one that's different, everyone wants to be the one that's popular and to be the one that fits in with everybody else, nobody wants to walk into the party not wearing the latest gear that everybody else is wearing. It's an inherit need for us all to fit in and yeah I mean ... yes I do. It's almost like your mind is directed so you're given these ideas, they're implanted in your head, and you

can run with them or not, but if you have three friends and they're all talking about getting the latest this, that or the other then, well as a natural instinct, again because of the whole pack thing, I want to get that too. And I know that myself from talking to businesses, they're telling me, people who never use Facebook are telling me my business has took off because everyone is on Facebook and if you're not on Facebook, like myself, you're definitely the exception to the rule.

7. Interviewer: Did your children become more dependent on technology as they got older? Why or Why not?

Respondent A: Yes, well I mean, because they were very young, and technology was only really starting to take off when James was about 11, so when they were between the ages 1-10 they didn't have that big impact on technology. He for example, got a PlayStation when he was 11 or something, so that wasn't a big part of our house. It's different for the kids coming along now obviously that's yesterday's news. Em yes, so from that end of things it was the gaming, the PS1, PS2, there fun element of being in the house was based on technology, and come santly time, it was technology. He wanted the best technology and the new technology. For Megan, not so much, she was still em the child that wanted to play with the dolls and stuff like that, and I tried my best to limit the technology impact it would have had when she were younger and was always a row as to whether James could get the PS. But then I obviously fell in with most of the people at that stage, well Johnny has it and Mary has it so I don't have to be the only ones that don't have it. So yes, in the gaming end of things, very dependent. Megan got her first phone when she was 12. And yes it was a great thing because we knew we could contact her if she was away with her friends, obviously she wouldn't have been going too far at 12, but even if she needed to come home for her dinner, from school or whatever, it meant that we could communicate with her at all times, and it got to the point that we had piece of mind because we believed that she had her phone with her and if she was ever in trouble she could contact us. So we depended on Megan having her mobile to give us piece of mind, she depended on her mobile so she could contact us and keep in touch with her friends and that was the other end of it.

8. Interviewer: Before 11/12 not as much dependent?

Respondent A: That was the age when that was all just starting, I mean that was when the PS1 was coming out, and that was when there was a when new era in tech. They were bringing the PlayStations out and the mobiles were becoming more affordable as well. And that meant that then friends were getting them. For my kids in particular technology wasn't a problem but that was because of the problem of their age. If that was arriving when they were 6 or 7 it would probably impacted a lot more

than, so we were lucky then we had those formative years to enjoy the basic toys and the toys they could interact with.

9. Interviewer: Kids growing up with technology Are they lucky?

Respondent A: Absolutely. I mean I would actually feel sorry for the kids today to have such a basis of technology today and children who .. looking back on my children's childhood, they were blessed in times of Lego and jixlaws and dolls and tractors, and I know it's a stereotypical thing that a boy gets a tractor or whatever, but from my perspective it meant that James was outside so he was enjoying the fresh air. It meant that jigsaws were making the mind work, Megan was learning different interactive skills there, so the dolls thing was, if Megan were dressing her up, to show her the family, and this was her friend. So they were very lucky. To me, if they were born ten years later, they would have been less lucky, because if they were younger that would have impacted on them.

10. Interviewer: Do you think members of your family are addicted to using technology? How?

Respondent A: Ok, well my husband first of all wasn't born into an age of technology so he's in his 50s now and he has a mobile phone. But actually an example of him being addicted to technology was when we went on holidays a couple of years ago, we couldn't get any phone coverage and he nearly lost his life because he couldn't contact home and they couldn't contact him. It was only going to be a matter of hours before we bought a new phone but still he couldn't settle, ... and I couldn't get over how dependent he was on it. Because obviously we depend on it for our farm work, it has the work element, we have alarms attached to our phones so they're like an extension of our arm, so we are very dependent on that technology for our work. That's to say the phone end of it. He also has discovered done deal which has become a big part of his weekend now. He could set having a drink, looking up done deal, he doesn't have to go to the pub, and it's almost like a social occasion for him. He can almost interact with people on done deal, to look at tractors and see what people are selling. For Terry, he is definitely addicted to his mobile phone, and that's surprising for me but true. He'd be lost without it. Em and I think if we took the internet away from him he would enjoy it less. But he enjoys that interaction with it. The television has always been a part of our lives, we almost have a television in every room which I said would never happen. So it definitely limits our communication. It's almost a case of if we miss a program that we like, while we aren't really into soaps or whatever, I can't imagine the house without television, we would feel like we were missing something or would miss something. I would definitely feel out of the loop if I couldn't see what was happening in the world. It's so instantaneous when you turn it on, sky news is on, or BBC news is on. So I know at any time of the day or night what is happening in the world, so we would miss it in the house. My children were born into the house with television. It's just expected to be there. If there wasn't a television in our living room that would definitely be strange so that addiction is definitely there.

James yeah, he grew up with the PlayStation which he has grown away from, he would still use it a little bit. TV absolutely. He likes to watch telly after work, it's part of the social scene. He would depend on his phone for simple things like his alarm in the morning, he would be addicted to that and facebook to keep in touch with his friends, and he would use it once a day.

In terms of Megan, she would be addicted to using Facebook and the fact that her phone never leaves your side and when she loses it she would become worried and distressed as if she had lost a puppy. And you know she would have to find her phone. And that's a part of the value of it and instant access to her friends.

In terms of myself, I would feel out of the loop without the news on telly. As far as phones are concerned we use it for our work, the great thing is though, when am not working I love to leave my phone down and forget about it. So am not sure am addicted to it, expect maybe in terms of business, I use my memos and my calendar. My life is literally in that phone and if I lost it would be very upsetting. I would miss it. We don't really use Skype because we don't have anyone who's away in other countries or anything.

11. Interviewer: Do you think it affects other addictive behaviour?

Respondent A: That's a difficult question. As an addiction I don't know. It's hard to quantify that. Does it lead to social situations? I never really thought about it like that, but when you put it in that context I think that it might follow through. However I think an addictive personality would come pre technology, in other words, I think some people become addicted to technology because its inherit in them so before technology arrives, if they have that type of personality then it would manifest itself. Then you have the type of people who that would never happen to, they don't get addicted to tech. I'm not even sure the word addiction is right, you may become dependent on it. You become dependent on it socially, for things like your business, and things like to communicate with people, it's easy, it makes life easier for people like me. It means that I don't have to go tramping through a book looking for a number for a business or anything. It's like black Friday, I can go online and see all the deals without going off and tramping off to Currys or somewhere. What I believe is, it's not my reading of the situation. If you have an addictive personality, you become addicted. It's if you like to take a few drinks but obviously I don't think it's the main reason. One may affect the other.

12. Interviewer: Do you think technology effects yours and others capacity to pay attention? Why/Why not?

Respondent A: Ok, well again the fact that technology is with us all the time, if I was sitting with my daughter and a snap chat happens to come through, which would often happen in this house, and if you are concentrating on anything, a job at hand, a conversation, than that conversation is broken, because then her natural extinct is to see what that is. It's almost like something pops up and she needs to know what it is now. She's not going to wait ten minutes, she is going to look at it now. So in that respect, I believe that it does have an effect.

As far as myself is concerned, yeah I mean if I'm in the middle of doing something, I would maybe leave whatever I was doing and go online instead. So in that regard I am. James, em, ... yeah defiantly I think it's got to the point were three quarters of your mind is focused on the job at hand and the other part is zoned out. If that phone goes off, I think it's the biggest, not really the gaming end of thing anymore, because of their ages, but defiantly the phones, because it's so accessible now. If it

would affect concentration I couldn't say. For Terry, he would laps his concentration on a conversation if his phone did go off.

13. Interviewer: Do you think technology changes the personality of people within family?

Respondent A: We are more impatient due to TVs, for example the soaps, they can cover three weeks of events in an hour, so I think that started with the whole TV thing, they skew the whole time process which my children grew up with. I think there is that need that everything should be on hand, so much can be accessed, I think it leads to lack of patience, irritability, it leaves them less patient, they want things and they want them now.

14. Interviewer: Do you think video games would have affected your children?

Respondent A: Absolutely. I find that very scary. Because they are what you call the formative years and your mind is continuing to form from it, your morals are forming, you're learning what's right and what's wrong. To me, if the child is watching films that are 18 or over, if there's a lot of violence, I think that, eh, it's detrimental to their perception of what's real and what's not real. I was very strict with my children when they were growing up, they would not have access to films that were for an age earlier than their own, and I would always have kept a tight eye on that. There seems to be much more gore in PlayStation games and even on the telly, I was even remarking that lately. If a child is left to that, it will affect them. I tried to keep my children away from that so it wouldn't affect them.

15. Interviewer: What is the impact of increased dependence on mediated communications on family relationships and family communities?

Respondent A: The higher dependent you are on technology, the less interaction there is going to be in a family. So tech has a high impact on family and relationships, because again it comes back to the fact that it's all very, em, if it becomes that someone believes that they need to have their Facebook on all the time, they need to be in the loop all the time, to see what's going on Facebook or whatever, snap chat, instagram or twitter. So if you're focused on that, with the latest crowd, the latest fashion, it's always going to have an impact on your relationships, your family, your partner, or whatever. You can't be doing both at the same time. You're listening as well as you could in a relationship which in turn would mean a strain on the relationship, and people may feel they're aren't being listened too.

16. Interviewer: Due to technology are have your family members become more isolated, disconnected, lonely?

Respondent A: Yeah I actually thing that em... that technology does lead to that. The one issue in this house is the mobile phone. And the reason for that is, because you can take a mobile phone down to

your room, you can disappear off with your mobile phone, it's almost like you have your friend in your hand, and you go off down to the room and your friends are on the other end of the phone. You go to your room, you go on your own, you are not actually having that conversation, but you have this whole world at your fingertips. Defiantly I believe when people become wrapped up in that world they become isolated without realising it, they don't even know they are living in a virtual world. Because there's this whole thing of texting and you are not actually speaking any words, it has led to isolation, for young people especially. It's not real, they're lost almost in it. My daughter more so than my son, he wouldn't depend on it as much as her. That could be because of their ages, yano, she was introduced to it at an early age in comparison to him, so maybe it's got something to do with that.

17. Interviewer: Has technology limited your child's control of other aspects of their life?

Respondent A: Yes I think it has in some respects. In that when you become dependent on technology almost for your everyday existence and you feel out of the loop if you're not watching what's going on with the latest trends... so when you become so dependent on other things like exercise, going for a walk, you are less likely to do those things, when your mind is taken up with other things. Because you're addicted to them, other things are forgotten about. I think it's the whole instantaneous thing, it's that need for the latest thing all the time that can't be fed anywhere else. You are getting your kicks from that, why would you be getting your kicks anywhere else.

18. Interviewer: In today's digital age, would you rely on technology to keep in touch with family members? Do you think it's useful?

Respondent A: Very useful. As I said before, they're catching a bus, my daughters at college so she's catching buses and trains all the time so while if she's late she can let me know so I don't have to go early. Its piece of mind, I know they're safe, if I need to tell them something or let them know about something, however, I often think back to when I was at school, yano there was no such things as mobile phones, and yet we still could communicate, nobody died, we didn't suffer terribly without it. We got on just fine, and if you were going to be late for the bus well then it wasn't the end of the world. People just waited. Now it seems to be that we are time poor, we never seem to have time anymore. Maybe it's because we are so used to using technology we have less time so we have to feel that every minute has to be filled in our lives.

19. Interviewer: Do you think the use of information technology (e.g. mobile phones) affects face-to-face interactions among family members?

Respondent A: Yeah I mean I think it definitely does. I think there is definitely less simple conversations, obviously if you spend a lot of time on social media that would impact on the amount of time you have to talk to your family, so you can't cut yourself in two. I think there is much less communication within families through the use of technology.

20. Interviewer: Do you think technology affects inter-personal relationships?

Respondent A: Yeah I think it does... I think for kids that have grown up with tech, for some it's such a virtual world that they actually find it difficult to communicate with people face to face. And I know there's certain children I would meet they can hardly say hello to you, and they probably have conversations on Facebook of all descriptions. That probably comes down to confidence, you don't have to be confident to sit in a room on a computer and send a message off to somebody in Taiwan, they could be in Dublin, they could be anywhere. I think that because you are isolated and using technology, then it probably affects inter-personal relationships be it at home, or your friends. You can almost be cuckooed into thinking you have these relationships, when in fact they are not relationships at all, you aren't having face to face discussions with these people, it's all very virtual and not real for the want of a better term.

21. Interviewer: Are you comfortable with the amount of time your children spend with technology?

Respondent A: I would much prefer they spent less time with technology, especially Facebook and snap chat, I think that for me, technology should be used as an information tool, to buy things, you want a phone number, great, social media is almost.... Not the root of all evil but it has a detrimental effect on families to a very high degree. I think there's a time and place for everything. If I had to live my life again, I think I would defiantly had put some sort of limit on the amount of time that was spent on social media especially, so that there was a time for it and then you left it down and walked away.

22. Interviewer: Do you think it is necessary to have technology present within the home?

Respondent A: Em... yes in our instance for work we would need to have technology, we have alarms set to our phone for the farm for safety reasons, and em..., I think it is necessary to have it for camera systems or whatever, as far as social media is concerned no, defiantly not necessary. You can lift the phone and talk to somebody, you can watch the news, you can meet them at the weekend, em, for things like PlayStations, for the fun element, absolutely not. There are loads of great games out there, interactive ones, they can be done without. TVs, I was always used to one. If it disappeared in the morning, we could live without them, and we could find much better ways of spending our time rather than spending our lives watching a box were you are not actually gaining anything from that experience.

23. Interviewer: Do you regret having technology in your home?

Respondent A: I mean I think again, if I was to live my life again, if I was going to have a good nurturing environment for my children then and if I was strong enough to stand up and say I am not going to have TVs in my house, I am not going to have mobile phones in my house and eh things like PlayStations. If I had the virtue to know, instead of playing virtual games, I would have brought my children out to football matches, to camogie matches, bring them out to this, that and the other. They

were introduced to that early on in their lives and would have done a bit of that. I defiantly think if I was to live my life again I would have done it differently, weather I would have been able to keep that up or not is another thing, I'm not sure, maybe if it was the perfect family scenario I could. It's a tough one because of the fact that people of our friends and family depend on technology I think it would infiltrate a house, even after you fight to keep it out.

24. Interviewer: In terms of older family members do you think technology affects the way grandparents communicate with you and your children? How?

Respondent A: We have the telephone obviously, and that's how I would communicate with me mother, em... yeah if I didn't have the telephone I would probably go to see her more often. Em.. As far as my in laws, I can ring over instead of having to go over and have a conversation with them. The whole thing of visiting, it used to be a great thing, the fact that you don't have to leave your own house, you can lift the phone, talk to them, text them or whatever, em leads to the fact that you won't be going to see them as often. From their perspective, I think it's great, it gives them a sense of a feeling of security because they have a mobile phone beside their bed, they know they can contact family members if there's anything wrong. If they're out in their car and it broke down they can ring us. They can text their grandchild which does mean less face-to-face communication. So, the advantageous end of it, were you have the communication and you have the fact that people feel safe but it is also disadvantageous. It's obviously a much richer experience to actually go and see them.

Interviewer: Ok, great, thank you taking part in this interview. Do you have any questions for me?

Respondent A: No, no I don't.

Appendix D – Interactive Journal

Sunday

iPad - Spotify and slides 30 minutes

Laptop - college presentation 25 minutes

Phone - messages/insta/Snapchat 5 times per hour iPad - one hour YouTube and Spotify

Smartphone - listen to podcasts 2 hours

Laptop - 1 hour college work

Television - 4 hours watch sport

Monday

Smartphone – alarm clock

Ipad – Youtube videos (1 hour), Online shopping (30 minutes)

Laptop – Word for college work, browser college work (1 hour)

Television – Football (3 hours)

Smartphone – Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, Messengaer (Every 10 – 15 minutes)